Sites of Resistance: Disability and Inclusion in Canadian K-12 Education

By

Michael Samuel Baker

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Abstract

If there was a country called disabled, I would be from there. (Frazee, 2023, p. xv)

Ableism in Canadian K–12 education remains pervasive. As a site of resistance, this research explores the ways in which ableism is manifest in schools while offering recommendations for transformative praxis. This research is comprised of an autoethnography, policy analysis, and case study as a manuscript-style dissertation. Overall, these three research studies contribute to the continued rupture of ableism and disability marginalization in Canadian K–12 schools. Most importantly, this dissertation contributes to a growing understanding that there is nothing wrong with being disabled or being part of the disability community (Kafai, 2021). Concurrent themes that flow through this dissertation include: the importance of voice, equitable representation, empowerment, knowledge, identity, and calls for transformation. This research seeks to contribute to the field of inclusive education and critical disability studies in Canada.

Acknowledgements

In nature, nothing exists alone: I want to thank all those that helped, encouraged, supported, and stood by me in my pursuit of a PhD.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Enns, for her steadfast support throughout this journey. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my committee, Dr. Melanie Janzen and Dr. Nancy Hansen.

I owe a great deal to my wife and kids for their support and love throughout this process.

My body of work is dedicated to the disabled community and its allies. Barriers will continue to fuel me, as it has done these many years. I acknowledge your expertise, lived experiences, stories, and dreams. They have guided my work, practice, and life.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Sites of Resistance

Inclusive education as a practice, movement, and philosophy in Manitoba kindergarten–Grade 12 (K–12) education regards students with disabilities through a deficit, medical–based model. At times, K–12 Canadian education perpetuates stigmatizing notions of people with disabilities systematically, structurally, and within curriculum. Although guided by a philosophical basis that is grounded in notions of equity, inclusive education continues to look and feel exclusionary (Freer, 2021). On the contrary, the field of disability studies is a broad arena of theory, research, activism, and practice (John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke U, 2019) that contests the popular view that disability equates with human failing. Grounded in human rights and social justice, disability studies explores, confronts, and challenges systemic ableism. In an educative sense, the purpose of disability studies is to bring disability perspectives and voices into the curriculum while confronting systematic and structural ableism.

Although ableism is a complex term with multiple meanings and nuance, Hehir (2002) contended that “ableism is the devaluation of disability that results in societal attitudes that uncritically assert that it is better for a child to walk than roll, speak than sign, read print than read Braille, spell independently than use a spell-check, and hang out with nondisabled kids as opposed to other disabled kids” (p. 1). As a process of devaluation, ableism describes an array of discriminatory nodes enacted through varied practices and beliefs. The intersectional qualities of ableism are vast and far-reaching with ever-expanding socio-cultural application.

Disability is a diversity, inclusion, social justice, and human rights issue (Linton, 2005). As a forum for critical consciousness and praxis (West-Burns, 2020), disability studies resists the hegemony of normativity said to be inscribed in some bodyminds (University of Minnesota, 2022).

Historically, disability has been the exclusive domain of the biological, social, and cognitive sciences that have shaped contentious practices in education, rehabilitative medicine, and social work. Due to limited inclusion of disabled people and their allies, they are generally stereotyped (Ware, 2001), excluded, and stigmatized in these fields. Despite claims to the contrary, the field of inclusive education and K–12 Canadian education is culpable of ignoring the complexity of disability (Ware, 2001). As such, people with disabilities continue to experience pervasive and entrenched disableism in K–12 education.

Canadian K–12 education is a system founded on and maintained by ableist discourses. The current system perpetuates disablist knowledge, opinion, and perceptions while maintaining a structure designed to exclude and confine nonconformist bodies and minds (Hansen, 2020). This system perpetuates, as Terry Eagleton (as cited in Grue, 2021/[2018]) contended:

> signs which pass themselves off as natural, which offer themselves as the only conceivable way of viewing the world…. It is one of the functions of ideology to *naturalize* social reality, to make it seem as innocent and unchangeable as nature itself. (p. 40)

These words describe the perceived immutability of the current social reality within Canadian K–12 education, which upholds ableist discourse and practices (Towle, 2015). As a social construct, the very nature of Canadian K–12 education pedagogy, ontology, and ideology is purposive, carried out with structural and systematic intent. Designed for some bodies and minds, inclusive education and Canadian K–12 education continue to degrade people with disabilities through the enactment of exclusionary measures and approaches.

Canadian K–12 education and inclusive education perpetuate disability stigmatization "through segregationist practices, policies, and attitudes that enable *separate but equal* structures, and curricular ontologies that perpetuate stereotypical notions of impairment" (Stienstra, 2020, p.

47). All the while, these happenings are enacted as functionally *natural*. These *naturalized* occurrences are set to maintain the utilitarian–ableist functions of division, sorting, and categorization essential to the maintenance of our neoliberal–ableist systems (Goodley & Lawthom, 2019) and continuing institutionalizing practices.

People with disabilities endure stigma, marginalization, and segregation systematically, structurally, and within curriculum in Canadian K–12 education (Horne-Shuttleworth, Somma, & Wlodarczyk, 2024). Viewed in their entirety, these facets amount to unequivocal discrimination and transinstitutionalization. Educational transinstitutionalization is the processes by which the education system, both K–12 and post-secondary, secludes, contains, monitors, categorizes, sorts, isolates, diverts, marginalizes, and controls neurodivergent, nonconformist, and diverse bodies and minds. In response to these actions, Armstrong and Tsokova (2019) asked: "to what extent do we believe that constraints and barriers to inclusion can and should be explored and challenges removed through critical engagement and struggle?" (p. 6). As a redress to these practices and a commitment to meaningful inclusion, I contend inclusive education as an ideology and pedagogy, and Canadian K–12 education, must undergo extensive reform and transformation.

As an educator, I agree with Mooney's (2019) assertion:

> One is not born a person with a disability. One is *made* into one. Normality, ability, disability are not features or facts inside a human being but a relationship *between* the reality of human variability and the social environment that surrounds, constrains, enables, or disables difference. Ability and disability are contextual. The dominant ideas, attitudes, and customs of any society determine the perceptions of which bodies, brains, and humans are called right or wrong. (p. 154)

As Mooney (2019) asserted, locating disablement within the socio-political, cultural, and economic barriers of society illuminates ableist foundations in all areas of life, including Canadian K–12 education. Moving away from a deficit-based and individualistic understanding of disability, Canadian K–12 education must incorporate disability studies into all structures, systems, policies, and curriculum as a process of reformation. However, it must be understood that abandoning previously uncontested notions about disability in schools and society is a challenging, complex process that begins with recognizing that unexamined attitudes and beliefs about disability have shaped schools and schooling practices in ways that inevitably interfere with inclusive philosophy and practice (Connor, 2019).

This manuscript-style dissertation is comprised of three studies which explore the interconnection between disability studies and current K–12 Canadian inclusive education philosophy and practice. Throughout these three studies, I use qualitative methodologies, particularly autoethnography, critical discourse analysis, and case study. These three studies are invariably tied together by themes of discrimination, ableism, and the continued marginalization of people with disabilities in Canadian K–12 education. I believe these studies are best suited to illuminate the social and educational experiences of people with disabilities in an ableist society (Berger & Lorenz, 2017) generally, and in Manitoba K–12 education specifically. Much of what I study can be extrapolated, in whole or in part, and applied to various other educative contexts. In conducting three interwoven studies, I have endeavored to connect to the widest audience possible in a personal, analytical, or practical sense, creating relationships and connections through these experiences. In doing so, I hope these studies create dialogue and change.

My overarching research study questions are: In what ways is Canadian K–12 education ableist? How is ableism manifested structurally, systematically, and within curriculum? And, as a process of resistance and praxis, what actions can be taken for the enhancement of equitable and inclusive practices, philosophies, structures, and systems in inclusive education and Canadian K–12 education?

In each study, I explore and analyze different facets of embedded ableism in K–12 Canadian education while providing recommendations for the field of inclusive education. Specific sub-questions guide each manuscript and connect with my overarching research questions.

The first study sets the stage and background for my involvement within inclusive education and disability studies, illuminating in-depth researcher positionality and community connection. My first study is an autoethnography and explores: In what ways have my lived experiences shaped my role as an educator, ally, and academic? In what ways do disability-related assessment practices shape identity? And, in what ways can resistance to ableism be enacted in Canadian K–12 education?

Connecting my experiences to the wider Canadian K–12 education milieu, this exploration navigates ableist discourses through reflexive analysis, introspection, and emotional recall. It is evocatively written, providing implications and recommendations for K–12 Canadian educators and the field of inclusive education. Using a critical disability studies theoretical framework, I navigate my experiences to problematize various K–12 educative processes that can be understood as ableist and experienced as marginalizing. Connecting my reflexive analysis to a wider K–12 socio-cultural environment, my recommendations advocate for various reforms, resistance, and critical consciousness building as avenues for transformative praxis.

My second study explores Manitoba’s provincial inclusive education philosophy/statement through critical policy analysis, focusing on one research question: How/in what ways does Manitoba’s provincial K–12 inclusive education policy enlist ableist discourses? This study explicates the relationship between inclusive conceptualizations in Manitoba and embedded K–12 ableism. Applying a critical disability studies framework, I centre disability knowledge, understanding, and perspective within and throughout my analysis. Situating disability as a central node in knowledge production, I locate meaning-making within a disability, or crip, worldview. I conceptualize a crip worldview as an intellectual location that surpasses baseline notions of inclusivity, celebrating the disability identity and community, in all its intersectional strength and creativity. It is an ideological space to embrace, learn, and grow without reticence. Based on my findings, I provide implications and recommendations for Manitoba and Canadian K–12 education and the field of inclusive education.

Finally, my third study explores a Grade 9–12 course entitled *Introduction to Disability Studies (41G)*, which I developed and taught. This case study considers curricular relevancy, breadth, depth, and attitudinal influence on participants. I interviewed past students and the teacher to discuss: What are the students' perceived effects of participating in a Grade 9–12 disability studies course? Through design, this course seeks to challenge subjugating systems, structures, and attitudes through critical consciousness building while engaging in human rights and social justice in education. Conceptualizing this course as the enactment of transformative praxis, I studied participants' experiences and learning, locating potential ways resistance to ableism can be enacted in Manitoba and Canadian K–12 education.

As a guiding principle, reflexivity was continually applied to this collection of work as a means of clarifying researcher positionality and as a tool of data analysis and distinction. An inherent aspect within qualitative methodology is a researcher's charge to reflect upon and examine their personal points of view and feelings as a part of the process of studying others (Berger & Lorenz, 2017). As a result, these studies are informed and influenced by disability studies and inclusive education, grounded in a critical disability studies theoretical framework. I strive to provide highly detailed accounts—what Geertz (1973) called thick description—of relevant material and participant data. In doing so, I aim to reveal elements of attitudinal relationships, assumptions, and experiences that are not amenable to statistical representation (Berger & Lorenz, 2017). By exploring my autoethnography, critical policy analysis, and case study insights, I endeavour to add to the current literature in inclusive education and disability studies in an education context.

These studies move from experience (autoethnography) to policy (critical policy analysis), through to current practice (case study). Combined, these research studies provide insights into the ways Manitoba, and potentially Canadian K–12 education is ableist. The studies pull together methodological support and evidence for the implementation of transformative practices and processes. Probing and naming the multiple ways that Canadian K–12 education continues to perpetuate and promote ableism is one step toward redress. I ask, as a process of resistance and praxis, what actions can be taken in the enhancement of equitable and inclusive practices, philosophies, structures, and systems in inclusive education and Canadian K–12 education. It is hoped my findings, discussion, and recommendations will significantly contribute to the fields of education and disability studies in Canada.

Throughout the following section, I briefly explore my theoretical framework, critical disability studies, which is the foundation and lens for my analysis in all three studies. I also briefly explore my position as a researcher before outlining the purpose for my research studies.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Disability Studies

A critical disability studies framework guided and anchored my research studies. Critical disability studies applies criticality as a poignant means of analysis. For Shildrick (2009), “Critical

Disability Studies rethinks conventions, assumptions, and aspirations of research, theory, and activism in an age of postmodernity" (p. vii). The word "critical" denotes a sense of self-appraisal, reassessing where we have come from, where we are at, and where we might be going. Through time and space, political and economic systems, linguistics and semiotics, texts, and historical to contemporary movements, a critical disability studies lens has far-reaching application. Titchkosky (2014) in *Reading and Writing Disability Differently* pointed scholars toward considering not only the physical or material manifestations of disability but also extrapolating it to the world of writing (Titchkosky, 2014). Furthermore, Sherry et al. (2021) explored pervasive ableism in their influential work *Disability Hate Speech: Social, Cultural, and Political Context* as a means of confronting the biopolitics of degradation embedded within 21st century neoliberalism. Goodley et al. (2019) contended that the word "critical" denotes a qualitative shift in studies of disability from…

> … the established to the new, from the orthodox to the evolving, from the specific to the expansive. The latter point recognizes the importance of intersectional thinking that works through mutual processes of exclusion associated with multiple identities (around race, ethnicity, gender, sex/sexuality, age, class, nation and, of course, disability). (p. 5)

In my work, I view disability beyond the physical and biological definitions and consider the more expansive and intersectional contexts. Grounded in a social model conceptualization (Oliver, 2013), I take into account disability justice and human rights models to enrich my analysis (Thomas, & Loxley 2007).

Mladenov (2016) contended that critical disability studies scholars and researchers must move toward themes of social justice, especially in current times defined by notions of austerity and socio-economic liminality. In a similar vein, Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2012) challenged presumed notions of vulnerability and what is perceived as a less agentic *vulnerable subject*

(Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2012). These assumptions are pervasive in research and in Canadian K–12 education, stultifying empirical research and opportunities surrounding disability precisely because a presumption of *lack* is predetermined. This process is akin to the objectification of the disability community writ large.

Critical disability studies adopts a version of the social model, outlining basic principles that include, but are not limited to, the following assumptions; a) disability is a social construct, not the inevitable consequence of impairment; b) disability is best characterized as a complex interrelationship between impairment, individual response to impairment, and the social environment; and c) the social disadvantage experienced by disabled people is caused by the physical, institutional, and attitudinal (together, *the social*) environment that fails to meet the needs of people who do not match the social expectations of *normalcy* (Hosking, 2008, p. 7), or what Garland-Thomson (2012) referred to as “the normate.”

Critical disability studies in this dissertation is applied in a practical sense following Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) and Hall (2019), moving away from disability theory (Siebers, 2008) as a changing and perhaps nuanced theory. In essence, critical disability studies encompasses a framework of analysis, a worldview, and a way of being and experiencing/interacting with the world that is representative of the disability community and its allies. As indicated by Hosking (2008):

> … different Critical Disability Theory elements are often used in interdisciplinary studies on disability. However, it is important to note that the theory has its origins in the tradition of critical theory of the Frankfurt School, whose philosophical sources did not always correspond with the assumptions of Disability Studies. (p. 2)

Despite the interplay between critical disability studies and critical disability theory, I used critical disability studies as my framework because it more closely aligns with the advocacy purpose of my studies. Linton (1998) contended, “the border between what is considered disability studies and what is not is fixed at different points by different authors and researchers, although it is unlikely that anyone would suggest that there be an absolute boundary” (p. 132). Critical disability studies recognizes and welcomes the inevitability of difference and conceives of equity within a framework of social justice and human rights.

Critical disability studies is intentionally political in that its objectives are to support the transformation of society so that disabled people in all their diversity are equal participants and fully integrated in society. Finally, this approach provides a conceptual framework to “understand the relationship between impairment, disability, and society [and] to inject equity into all areas of policy” (Hosking, 2008, p. 17). As Hosking (2008) pointed out, critical disability studies infuses intentionality through critical analysis as a form of rupture.

The application of a critical disability studies lens allows for a systematic rights-based review of Canadian K–12 education. To this end, critical disability studies can be considered to engage in research, policy, and action that:

- contextualizes disability within political and social spheres;
- privileges the interest, agenda, and voices of people labeled as disabled people;
- promotes social justice, equitable and inclusive education opportunities, and full and meaningful access to all aspects of society for people labeled with disability/ as disabled people; and
- assumes competence and rejects deficit models of disability. (Connor, 2019, p. 11)

The aforementioned theoretical framework grounds my work, providing unique insights and direction for my studies. My research is focused on illuminating current context and is grounded in research and lived experience as an impetus for amelioration and growth.

Throughout my review of the literature embedded in my studies, significant gaps and areas in need of redress were identified. I contend with some of these areas within my three studies, including: a) attitudinal barriers of staff and students, b) widespread ableism, c) inaccurate curricular representation and exploration of the disability community, and d) inadequate policy and programs.

In each manuscript, I explore distinct facets of embedded ableism in K–12 education in Manitoba and in Canada as a whole. Each manuscript is guided by specific sub-questions that interconnect with my overarching research questions yet remain noticeably defined in their own right. These three manuscripts flow together to create a tapestry of research that points to the presence of systematic and aversive ableism in our schools. Through this research, I aim to speak out against the multiple ways schools continue to act against the best interest of disabled students.

Researcher Positionality

My story begins on the margins. It is a story not all that unique in Canadian K–12 education but consistent in its intended outcome. The outcome I am referring to is conformity to a system not designed for certain individuals in mind. As a child, I was rambunctious, unfocused, uninterested, and slow to adopt the *norms* of education protocol. Sit still, regurgitate what you are taught, make eye contact, listen intently, and do not question. Do not question the teacher, material, purpose, or outcome. My story is also not a tale of overcoming, inspiring, surpassing, or succeeding. It is a story of inequality, stigma, marginalization, and segregation. It is a story of insidious processes sold as benevolence and support.

As a young child I was unable, or unwilling, to conform to Ontario K–12 educational *norms* of the 1990s. I was active, sporty, and predisposed to movement. I was also from a lower socio-economic family living in Toronto, Canada. My journey in the education system began by attending a private Jewish school at the behest of my grandparents, paid for by my uncle, for one year before being switched, due to behavioural challenges, to the local neighbourhood public school. What I do remember is like shards of glass, crystalline at this angle, clouded at that angle. My memory brings me back to isolation, difference, anger, yelling, and not fitting in. I remember as a young boy coming home from school every day with a headache that at times left me unable to play or function in the evenings. As a result, I would lie or sleep on my parents' or grandparents' couches—recovery time. The yelling by educational staff was the result of me not sitting still in class, being disruptive, *wild* they said. It did not take long for pathology to find me.

From a young age I was told I had a learning disability (LD), that I learned slower than other students did. Clinical and educational staff told me I should consider going straight into the work force because I would never go to college or university. They made me feel like I was taking up a space at school that would be better inhabited by another, more intelligent and obedient student. They pressured my parents to have me assessed to figure out what was wrong with me—a problem within, an aspect of me that was considered broken. At seven years and six months, they administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Third Edition (WISC-III), Blender Visual Motor Gestalt Test, Classroom Reading Inventory (Silvaroli), Informal Writing Assignment, Kinetic School Drawing, Kinetic Family Drawing, and House-Tree-Person Drawing.

As an educator and a person pursuant of higher education, I am critical of *school-based* diagnosis aimed at Otherization (Césaire, 2000/[1972]). Built upon epistemologies of normality, students are measured against fictional standards. This process of mold making is an ideal, a narrative told and retold with redoubled effort. As an educator who works for and with students with disabilities, I come across assessments on a regular basis. Approaching them with a sense of distance and desensitization, dissonance and agitation, I read about *what students have*. Their diagnosis is their clinical passport to my educational world. The world of Canadian K–12 education is polarizing. Categorizing students based on the fiction of ability and the pursuit of *making normal* is maligning. The results of these systematic and structural practices include, but are not limited to, student containment, marginalization, segregation, and transinstitutionalization.

As a visibly Jewish cisgender white male, I hold an insider–outsider complex identity. I was diagnosed as LD as a child and academically marginalized and segregated throughout my Canadian K–12 years. Inhabiting an athletic body and having an atypical/nonconformist mind, I have experienced some forms of segregation and marginalization. Subjected to an Individual Education Program (IEP) and specialized programming, my experiences in K–12 education can be categorized as problematic and limiting. Praised in athletics, derided in academics, I lived in an insider–outsider world. These experiences as a K–12 student have shaped and formed my approach to Canadian inclusive education and disability studies. Due to my experiences, I have never inhabited one identity; I live in between worlds.

Community Engagement

As a researcher, advocate, and ally, it remains important for me to be consistently engaged with the disability community. Reflective of the disability rights movement’s mantra *Nothing About Us, Without Us* (Charlton, 2011), I intend to publicize the findings of my studies to community organizations, the disability studies community, the education community, and applicable organizations and conferences. Moreover, it is also important for me to collaborate with other researchers from the Faculty of Disability Studies and with those faculty members who engage in disability research, including education as a means for continued development and learning. Finally, by engaging with the disability community, advocacy groups, and the academic community, I hope to garner feedback in a constant reflexive process that is both multifaceted and life-long.

To date, my community engagement includes regular interaction with leaders in the disability community, such as Dr. Nancy Hansen, as well as advocacy and knowledge mobilization. Specifically, I have participated in academic and professional conferences (e.g., the Canadian Association of Teacher Education Conference, 2023), published op-ed articles (e.g., The Conversation), served as a special area expert for Barrier Free Manitoba, and taught courses in disability studies and inclusive education. As part of this reflexive process, I continually reflect upon the following questions:

- What would people with disabilities say about this course/research?
- How are their voices and perspectives considered in developing (i.e., curriculum) and teaching (i.e., pedagogy) the course/research?
- In what ways does this research study involve people with disabilities (research with), aim to improve their lives, and challenge normate discourse and categorizations of disabled? (Enns, 2021; Hansen, 2021; Janzen, 2021).

Although the aforementioned questions are not my main research questions, they remain important for reflection and grounding purposes. Being cognizant of identity, education, representation, access, employment, strategies for empowerment and activism, and most significantly, personal meanings of disability (Ware, 2001) is constantly at the fore as a researcher, educator, and ally. These tenets, frameworks, and provocations of disability studies and critical disability studies (Goodley et al., 2019) serve as constant markers for research with people with disabilities and as tools for challenging oppression.

Purpose of Studies

Working to support systematic reform of current systems, structures, and research by raising awareness of embedded ableism is a main facet of my intended purpose. Inclusive education reform involves critical examination of values, practices, and ways of seeing in the wider context of school and society. It requires an understanding of the means and pathways through which children and young adults learn and the many ways in which they experience exclusion and marginalization in education (Armstrong, 2019). I will bring to light ableist discourses, policy, and practice in Canadian K–12 education through these three manuscripts. Policies, structures, and curricular shortcomings will be explored and critiqued as an avenue to spur systematic, curricular, and policy development, innovation, and reform.

Working toward the betterment of Canadian K–12 inclusive education must inculcate the work of scholars of disability studies, disability studies in education, and critical disability studies and their knowledge and insights as foundational tenets moving forward.

As a foremost institution in Canada, K–12 education sets the socio-economic, political, and civil foundation of society and is permeated with the morals, ethics, and traditions of the nation (Government of Manitoba, 2021). This is reinforced by “individual attitudes, cultural images and practices, and structures and institutions in Canadian society” (Stienstra, 2020, p. 90). Probing and naming the multiplicitous ways that Canadian K–12 education continues to perpetuate and promote ableism is one step toward redress.

In accordance with John Dewey, I tend to lean to the side of meliorism in education. Meliorism is:

> the belief that specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event may be bettered. Meliorism encourages intelligence to study the positive means of good and the obstructions to their realization, and to put forth endeavor for the improvement of conditions. According to Dewey, it is akin to hope. (Rios, 2018, p. 175)

Finding K–12 education to be of the utmost importance, I believe that educators can work toward its betterment wherever they find themselves. Undertaking these three studies is my contribution to raising awareness, struggling with and through ableism, and exploring the application of critical disability studies as part of praxis. Ameliorating key aspects of Manitoba's and Canada's K–12 system has been my fuel for engaging in this lengthy and arduous journey. These studies are akin to my hope.

References

Armstrong, F., & Tsokova, D. (2019). Social constructivism and action research. In F. Armstrong & D. Tsokova (Eds.), *Action research for inclusive education* (pp. 5–16). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351048361-2

Berger, R. J., & Lorenz, L. S. (2017). *Disability and qualitative inquiry: Methods for rethinking an ableist world*. Routledge.

Carleton History. (2020, November 2). *On the cutting edge: Disabled Canadians and rights acquisition Oct 23 with Nancy Hansen* [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3odGZHPs6LU

Césaire, A. (2000). *Discourse on colonialism* (J. Pinkham, Trans.). Monthly Review Press. (Original work published [1972]).

Charlton, J. I. (2011). *Nothing about us without us: Disability oppression and empowerment*. University of California Press.

Connor, D. J. (2019). Why is special education so afraid of disability studies? Analyzing attacks of disdain and distortion from leaders in the field. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, *34*, 11–28.

Dion, J. (2017). Falling through the cracks: Canadian Indigenous children with disabilities. *Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP) Working Paper Series*, *5*(12), 2–38. https://www.mcgill.ca/humanrights/files/humanrights/ihri_wps_v5_n12_dion.pdf

Douglas, P., & Martino, A. (2020). Introduction: Disability studies in education: Critical conversations. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies, 9*(5), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v9i5.688

Duffy, J., Cameron, C., Casey, H., Beresford, P., & McLaughlin, H. (2022). Service user involvement and COVID-19: An afterthought? *The British Journal of Social Work*, *52*(4), 2384–2402. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcac007

Enns, C. (2021) *Personal communication.*

Fabris, E. (2019). *Tranquil prisons: Mad peoples' experiences of chemical incarceration under community treatment orders*. University of Toronto Press. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442696884.

Freer, J. R. (2021). Students' attitudes toward disability: A systematic literature review (2012–2019). *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *27*(5), 652–670.. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1866688

Garland-Thomson, R. (2012). New conversations in disability studies. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 32*(4). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v32i4.3362

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Basic Books.

Goodley, D. (2013). Dis/entangling critical disability studies. *Disability & Society*, *28*(5), 631–644. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.717884

Goodley, D., & Lawthom, R. (2019). Critical disability studies, Brexit and Trump: A time of neoliberal–ableism. *Rethinking History*, *23*(2), 233–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2019.1607476

Goodley, D., Lawthom, R., Liddiard, K., & Runswick-Cole, K. (2019). Provocations for critical disability studies. *Disability & Society*, *34*(6), 972–997. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1566889

Government of Canada. (2021, June 4). *Making an accessible Canada for people with disabilities*. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-canada.html

Government of Manitoba. (2021). *Belonging, learning and growing: Diversity education*. https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/diversity/educators/index.html

Government of Ontario. (2014). *Equity and inclusive education in Ontario schools: Guidelines for policy development and implementation: Realizing the promise of diversity*. http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf

Grue, J. (2021). *I live a life like yours: A memoir* (B. L. Crook, Trans.). FSG Originals/Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (Original work published [2018]).

Hall, M. C. (2019, September 23). *Critical disability theory*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/ENTRIES/disability-critical/

Hamraie, A. (2017). *Building access: Universal design and the politics of disability*. University of Minnesota Press.

Hansen, N. (2020, February). *Disability history: A roundtable* [Symposium]. The Dalnavert Museum, Winnipeg.

Hansen, N. (2021). *Personal communication.*

Hehir, T. (2002). Eliminating ableism in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, *72*(1), 1–33. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.72.1.03866528702g2105

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Taylor & Francis.

Hosking, D. L. (2008, September 2–4). *Critical disability theory* [Paper presentation]. 4th Biennial Disability Studies Conference, Lancaster, United Kingdom.

Janzen, M. (2021). *Personal communication.*

John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke U. (2019, May 10). *Disability studies across the disciplines: Theory & praxis* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zvk0_m4sck

Haley, L.T., & Temple Jones, C. (2020). Sites and shapes of transinstitutionalization. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, *9*(3), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v9i3.643

Horne-Shuttleworth, M., Somma, M., & Wlodarczyk, K. A. (2024). *Teaching inclusive education through life story inquiry*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Linton, S. (1998). *Claiming disability: Knowledge and identity*. New York University Press.

Linton, S. (2005). What is disability studies? *PMLA*, *120*(2), 518–522.

McRuer, R. (2007). Crip theory: Cultural signs of queerness and disability. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *27*(4). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v27i4.60

Meekosha, H., & Shuttleworth, R. (2009). What's so "critical" about critical disability studies? *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, *15*(1), 47–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/1323238X.2009.11910861

Mladenov, T. (2016). Disability and social justice. *Disability & Society*, *31*(9), 1226–1241. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2016.1256273

Mooney, J. (2019). *Normal sucks: How to live, learn, and thrive outside the lines*. St. Martin's Griffin.

Oliver, M. (2013). *The social model of disability: thirty years on*. Disability & Society, 28(7), 1024–1026. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.818773

Peers, D. (2017). Cramping our style: Critical disability studies as axiological affinities. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *37*(3). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i3.5959

Rios, R. (2018). *Teacher agency for equity*. Taylor and Francis.

Rioux, M. H. (1997). Disability: The place of judgement in a world of fact. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 41*(2), 102–111. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.1997.tb00686.x

Sherry, M., Olsen, T., Vedeler, J. S., & Eriksen, J. (2020). *Disability hate speech: Social, cultural and political contexts*. Routledge.

Siebers, T. (2008). *Disability theory*. The University of Michigan Press.

Shildrick, M. (2009). *Dangerous discourses of disability, subjectivity and sexuality*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Stienstra, D. (2020). *About Canada: Disability rights* (2nd ed.). Fernwood Publishing.

Titchkosky, T. (2014). *Reading and writing disability differently: The textured life of embodiment*. University of Toronto Press.

Thomas, G. & Loxley, A. (2007). The Theory Behind Special Education: Where has it taken us? In *Deconstructing Special Education and Constructing Inclusion* (pp. 11–26). Open University Press.

Towle, H. (2015). *It's time to re-examine inclusive education policies in our classrooms*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

University of Minnesota. (2022). *Critical disability studies collective: Terminology*. https://cdsc.umn.edu/cds/terms

Ware, L. (2001). Writing, identity, and the other. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *52*(2), 107–123. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487101052002003

West-Burns, N. (2020, February 12). *Building critical consciousness for educational equity* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/evndCfQ92s4?si=luGqBq5gnUasYwqh

Chapter 2

In the Process of Becoming: An Autoethnography of Resistance

Abstract

Throughout my time as an educator in the field of inclusive and special education, I have felt the need to reflect on my experiences in relation to disability. As a student who experienced ableist segregation and stigmatization in Canadian K–12 public education and later became a special education, resource, and student service educator, I have found voices like mine are limited in Canadian research. Reclaiming voice and autonomy in Canadian K–12 education is imperative given the implications for inclusive education and Canadian K–12 education. As a teacher–researcher, I wrote this autoethnographical account to contribute to altering power relations (Denshire, 2014) and to the creation of sites of ableist resistance in Canadian K–12 education. This research explores: In what ways have my lived experiences shaped my role as an educator, ally, and academic? In what ways do disability-related assessment practices shape identity? And, in what ways can resistance to ableism be enacted in Canadian K–12 education? The findings of this study advocate for transformative reforms to curriculum, professional development, graduation requirements, school to community transitions, and identity representation. Recommendations for future research are provided. I hope that, by learning my story, the readers of this autoethnography can connect and make their own context more inclusive.

Keywords: inclusive education, ableism, site of resistance, critical disability studies

In the Process of Becoming: An Autoethnography of Resistance

As a child, I navigated a learning disability (LD) categorization that was delivered as a fatalistic judgment, and it is not a situation anyone should experience. Emotionally recalling the struggles, assessments, stigmatization, isolation, and diagnosis is difficult in a way that is hard to describe, but I will try. Bringing others along on a journey of devaluation, the kind inflicted on children without remorse or even delicacy, is a cerebral *door* I have avoided since I graduated high school in 2005. The contents therein are regrettable. Removed from this experience, outsiders may see sterility, a series of assessments etched on paper. Lived experience tells me otherwise.

This autoethnographical exploration navigates ableist discourses, processes, and practices through reflexive analysis, connecting my lived experiences to the wider Canadian K–12 education milieu. Methodologically, I use a personal narrative autoethnography, applying a critical disability studies theoretical framework. A narrative approach links concepts from literature to a narrated personal experience, evoking descriptive forms of writing and recognizing the researcher as a representative of a multi-layered lifeworld worthy of expression (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

I navigate my experiences through distinctive *phases*, commonly referred to as “critical incidents” in autoethnographical research (Akpan, 2023, p. 169). My point is to problematize various K–12 educative processes, including psychological assessment, that can be understood as ableist and experienced as marginalizing. My distinctive phases emerged in a continual process of refinement, crystallized through the research, writing, and revision process. The “ontological assumption underpinning this type of narrative links the storied world with my individual present reality” (Mulligan, 2023, p. 115) as a K–12 educator in Manitoba. Elucidating my targeted phases, I connect my reflexive analysis to a wider K‒12 socio-cultural environment, weaving my experiences together to explore the following research questions:

In what ways have my lived experiences shaped my role as an educator, ally, and academic?

In what ways do disability-related assessment practices shape identity?

And, in what ways can resistance to ableism be enacted in Canadian K–12 education?

My *phases* are representative of my lifeworld formation, highlighting specific experiential incidents for the purpose of analysis. I start with my personal life: my life as a child and then as a teenager. I read my psychological assessment and high school diploma, recalling meetings with educators and administrators through which memories and emotions come flooding back; the segregation and humiliation I experienced as a student becomes palpable. I paid close attention to my physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions. I used "introspection and emotional recall to analyze and understand these experiences" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 737) as a method of iterative elucidation, bringing to the fore processes of theorization and meditation for the purpose of analysis. Then I wrote my experience as a storied narrative.

The emotions that arose as I read these documents were surprising, an evocation I did not expect. Brought forth in volcanic style, they invaded. My face turned red with anger, frustration, and confusion. As Mulligan (2023) contended:

> Evocative writing focuses on the voice of the individual. Readers are invited into the world of the writer as a particular cultural incident, explored from the writer's unique perspective. Through this lens, the writer hopes to share their story that enables the reader to find some common ground with the writer's experience. Meaningful exchanges are created that provide linkages to social change. Additionally, the writer is afforded an opportunity to challenge widely held cultural stereotypes and behavioural tropes. (p. 117)

Evocative writing infuses this study with emotions borne from trauma and discomfort, situating experiential data as a significant source of knowledge production and reflexive and critical research praxis.

Using evocative writing as a tool for constructing meaning, in this study I sought to create a reader/writer connection through storied data and analysis that spurs transformative resistance to ableism in K–12 education. I conceptualized resistance not as a cessation of participation but as a continual process of reshaping and making anew through involvement. Resistance is the confrontation of subjugating mechanisms, reclamation, advocacy, and critique for the purpose of transformation. I believe changing the way we see, feel, think, and act on/about disability (as a community and culture) in schools is an essential act of resistance. I enacted resistance in my autoethnography by retelling and analyzing my story, by reclaiming personhood, promoting positive disability community and cultural affiliations, contesting conformity, advocating for an inclusive realignment in practice and curriculum, and demonstrating the importance of disability leadership, acknowledgement, and representation. Barley (2023) understood this form of knowledge production and analysis through a social constructivist perspective, contending: “We understand the world through the stories that we tell ourselves about the world and about ourselves” (p. 14). Lived experience as data forms a key aspect of my autoethnography, eliciting value through expression.

This autoethnography contributes to the literature on the many ways Canadian K–12 education continues to marginalize and stigmatize students with disabilities. Emergent recommendations advocate for various reforms, resistance, and critical consciousness building as avenues for transformative praxis. I invite the reader to accompany me as I once again walk through that cerebral *doo*r so long ago abandoned. My goal is for both of us to emerge with greater insights and a connection that builds empathy and creates socio-cultural change.

In what follows I will first describe critical disability studies and then, to set the context, I will briefly explore the connection and application of psychometric testing and LDs (diagnosis) in education as a means of prescriptive ableism. I will explore what psychometric testing is, why it is used, to what end it is used, and its impact. I then will engage in narrative autoethnography. Finally, I will provide recommendations for future research.

Critical Disability Studies

This study employed a critical disability studies theoretical framework, drawing on surrounding context and literary scholarship (Schalk, 2017) in the analysis of Canadian K–12 education practices and the ways in which ableism is perpetuated. The word *critical* denotes a sense of self-appraisal: reassessing where we have come from, where we are at, and where we might be going. Moreover, the word *critical* denotes a qualitative shift in studies of disability from the established to the new, from the orthodox to the evolving, and from the specific to the expansive. The "latter point recognizes the importance of intersectional thinking that works through mutual processes of exclusion associated with multiple identities (around race, ethnicity, gender, sex/sexuality, age, class, nation and, of course, disability)" (Goodley & Lawthom, 2019, p. 5) as a means of resistance and confrontation.

The role of critical disability studies must be central in the exploration of K–12 education and the continued fight for equity. Critical disability studies brings diversity in thought and perspectives into the educational arena long dominated by traditional conceptualizations of disability that continue to justify ableist practices and beliefs, enabling problematic practices in the current fields of special and inclusive education (Connor, Gabel, Gallagher, & Morton, 2008).

Critical disability studies recognizes and welcomes the inevitability of difference and conceives of equity within a framework of social justice and human rights. “Any systematic response to disability which purports to make disability invisible is inherently incapable of effectively protecting the rights of disabled people to be full participants in their communities” (Hosking, 2008, p. 11). Critical disability studies is intentionally political in that its objectives are to support the transformation of society so that disabled people in all their diversity are equal participants and fully integrated.

Critical disability studies researchers seek to rupture, blur, and interrogate common assumptions about disability. Informed by emerging cripistemologies, researchers are cognizant of axiological affinities and transformative paradigms that inform and are in favor of a collective, interdependent flourishing (Peers, 2017). I conceptualize a crip worldview as an intellectual location that surpasses baseline notions of inclusivity, celebrating the disability identity and community in all its intersectional strength and creativity. It is an ideological space to embrace, learn, and grow without reticence. Moving beyond the medical model, critical disability studies explores the complexity that is the human experience, signifying a move from charity to a rights-based approach and from paternalism to empowerment (Dion, 2017).

This personal narrative autoethnography uses critical disability studies as a lens to elucidate discriminatory and ableist practices, policies, and beliefs in Canadian K–12 education. I mobilize personal narrative as a channel of empowerment to deconstruct the veneer of paternalism through lived experience and professional engagement. I present my personal narrative autoethnography not as a personal story turned public but as a way of knowing and creating community, as a discourse on the multiplicitous ways of seeing and communicating with others (Keller, 2013), and as an act of resistance.

Psychometric Testing as Portraiture

Psychometric testing for the purposes of diagnosis and categorization holds a contested space in the field of disability studies and inclusive education. Psychometric testing can be defined as “the science of measuring mental capacities and processes” (Rust, 2017, p. 3). More specifically, it is a series of “tests or assessment tools, observations, biographical information, and clinical interviews” that attempt to situate a participant when compared to a statistical norm (van der Ark et al., 2023, p. 49). As Saklofske and Janzen (1990) and DeLuca and Miller (2008) contended, school assessment methods in Canada are still seen as essential. Testing, in the overall assessment process, is considered integral to schooling in Canada. School psychologists are frequently required to administer intelligence, personality, and achievement tests to aid in describing and understanding school-aged children (DeLuca & Miller, 2008).

In Canadian K–12 education, psychometric testing, sometimes referred to as psychoeducational testing, is commonly used to identify, sort, and categorize students who deviate from a perceived norm. Testing tools include subjective judgments (observations, checklists, and tallies) about students’ abilities, behaviours, and general intelligence (IQ) in an attempt to explain an individual’s *deviancy* for the purposes of educational programming. The findings often include a fraught narrative or ableist discourse that provides a clinical portraiture of the student in question, explaining their so-called deficiencies and providing recommendations as an access passport to various ameliorating services that can include school and private practice. As Barkley (2009) contended:

> using general intelligence as the platinum standard against which to judge all other human psychological traits or one’s performance in various major life activities is fraught with numerous problems, not the least of which is that its conceptualization and measures of it

> were never originally intended to serve as the guiding light for judging strengths and weaknesses in all other human abilities. Intrapersonal disparities between any human psychological ability and IQ as the sole definition or standard of impairment would lead to people being judged impaired and hence disordered even when those psychological abilities still fell within the generally normal range of the population. This consequence alone makes a mockery of the very terms impairment and disorder. (pp. ix–x)

The application of IQ as the primary, if not sole, measure by schools of future economic or social performativity, or supposed lack thereof, leaves bare the broad spectrum of diversity of learners, socio-economic contexts, personal challenges, and teacher–learner connections. These significant limitations call into question whether IQ testing is at all worthwhile.

Founded on eugenic principles, psychometric tools in education were designed for the purposes of perpetuating segregation based on perceived inability or undesirable traits. These practices are enforced through diagnosis, such as the LD categorization. Sleeter (2010) argued that:

> The category (LD) was created in response to social conditions during the 1950s and early 1960s which brought about change in schools that were detrimental to children whose achievement was relatively low. The category was created by white middle-class parents in an effort to differentiate their children from low-achieving low-income and minority children. (p. 211)

Critical disability studies locates psychometric testing and the LD category, with their intended divisive nature, as tools for purposeful marginalization, particularly when other intersecting identities come into play: tools for separating the *abled* from the *disabled*, the *desirable* from the *undesirable*, and the *normal* from *ab-normal*. Coupling disability and marginalized identities can accentuate this process of purposeful devaluation, stacking stigmatized markers one on top of another as *proofs* of justified otherization. In their book *Pathologizing Practices: The Impact of Deficit Thinking on Education*, Shields et al. (2005) documented cases in K–12 education where specific forms of curricula led to pathologization. Building on this, Shields et al. (2005) illustrated how pathologizing within education takes many forms, contending: "Most salient is the ascription of deficiency to the characteristics of difference, with these deficiencies being seen as located within the lived experiences of children (home life, home culture, socioeconomic status) rather than in the education system itself" (p. 4). There is a prevalence of disabling narratives in Canadian K–12 education that construe culture and community difference as divergent, ascribe deficiencies for the purpose of suppression, and are justified through psychoeducational assessment and diagnosis. As a method of separation, these assessments and diagnoses continue in Canadian K–12 schools as clinically sanctioned arbiters of value and function, streamlining children towards speculated academic and vocational ends. Rust (2017) contended:

> The same technology that, 100 years ago, introduced IQ testing to military recruitment and university entrance, giving us the new meritocracy that underpins modern education, also gave us the disastrous dead ends of eugenics and scientific racism. What had proved to be fair to individuals was showing massive discrimination between groups, spuriously justified by evolutionary pseudoscience during the race/IQ debate. (p. xvii)

Used as assessment and categorization networks to affirm the selection of the young for future work roles, these practices also "affirm the use of class and race biased procedures and beliefs for conducting schooling and for distinguishing amongst children" in an attempt to maintain racist, classist, and ableist stratification (Sleeter, 2010, p. 233). Fraught in origin and application, these tools serve to reproduce uniformity and conformity in schooling and society. In this study, I will explore how these tools contributed to my own negative academic experience and created a narrative within my school charged with value judgments.

In many ways, psychometric testing in schools is, in a clinical sense, attempting to create student portraiture. Portraiture is a medium that is reflective of a subject, containing essential aspects and revealing certain truths. This approach remains flawed and misguided. In the section that follows, I will describe autoethnography as my research methodology and how it allowed me to draw out my experiences and emotions in the exploration of discriminatory and ableist practices, policies, and beliefs in Canadian K–12 education.

Narrative Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a research methodology that uses personal experience (auto) to describe and interpret (graphy) cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices (ethno) (Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2017). As Anteliz et al. (2023) contended, “narrative autoethnography is phenomenological educational research that explores and recalls lived experience. It is an inquiry which explores multiple layers of consciousness, connecting personal story to a wider lens of cultural understanding” (p. 15). Autoethnography is a distinctive and rigorous methodology, enlarging and enriching the assumptions and concerns of educational research. In doing so, “autoethnography invites and enables focused attention on the informal, personal, and private dimensions of the otherwise formalized and official discourses attending curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment” (Anteliz et al., 2023, p. 1).

From student to K–12 educator, my personal narrative autoethnography problematizes the very system I waded through as a student and am currently employed in as an educator. This study problematizes taken-for-granted assumptions and norms by engaging in storied data, thickly described, which challenges power relations and are contextualized within scholarship (Stanley, 2020). Dyson (2007) contended:

> The enacting of the story (research journey) is to unravel of the complexities of the research and the gradual revealing of that which was unknown. Narratives provide the sources of meanings that people attribute to their experience. Stories not only express meaning given to experience but also determine which aspects of experience are selected for expression. In this sense narrative or story provides the primary frame for interpretation of experience. (p. 40)

I have selected stories in this autoethnography that will help bring to light my experiences, accentuating a certain level of clarity and universality of understanding. These narratives guide the reader in their interpretation of my experiences, connecting my *phases* for the express purpose of meaningful expression.

Supported by scholarship in the field of inclusive education and critical disability studies, personal documents (psychological assessment) and artifacts (personal records), I applied emotional recall as a means of engendering deep reflection and as a process of research praxis and resistance. Artifacts included: *The Board of Education for the City of North York Progress Report: Special Education*, *Yorkview Public School Progress Reports (1995–1997), Program Plan Review, Student Progress Conference Form*, *CPRS-Parent Feedback Form*, my high school transcript, and *Diploma*. Reading these documents and artifacts, I forced myself to confront the associated traumatic experiences and to recall the emotional context. I did this continuously over the course of writing this autoethnography, roughly over the course of a twelve-month period, embedding the findings and analysis as storied data. These data are filtered through the lens of critical disability studies, a field I have engaged with for many years as a student, K–12 educator, university sessional lecturer, conference participant, and researcher.

Following Adams and Manning (2015), I recognize that autoethnography possesses six criteria that necessitate the relating of an individual's lived experience as data. These criteria include: "the story illustrates and evaluates the researcher's personal experience, recognizes the significance of the researcher's relationship with others, is intensely reflexive, makes meaning of life experiences, is authentic and can be an agent for social change" (pp. 1–2). Building on these criteria, I also applied Ryan and Mulligan's (2023) criteria to ensure methodological and analytic validity, which include:

> - Storied data must be authentic in that it speaks to the lived experience of the authors and that it applies a rich description of the experience;
> - Storied data must be agentic in order to allow a growth in the subject topic and to make a contribution to the field, as well as society; and
> - The autoethnography must be rigorously supported by research so that it conscientiously follows the nature and purpose of the methodology. (p. 137)

Using a reflexive approach to research, I embarked on the process of autoethnographical writing to situate myself, personally and professionally, within a wider context of inclusive education and critical disability studies, rights, culture, community, advocacy, and allyship, as well as their intersectional correlates. As part of this reflexive process, I centred my experiences of embodiment to theorize non-normative morphology not as a failure but as another way of being in a K–12 Canadian education context (Titchkosoky et al., 2022). This reflexive approach challenges the hegemony of ableism, confronting the idea of ablebodiness as a prerequisite for full participation and inclusion in Canadian K–12 education institutions, while setting the groundwork for an ethic of resistance.

I explored, as an avenue of reflection, the many subjectivities that comprised my experiences, seeking to engage a wider audience in transformative practice. Within each document and artifact, I looked for key events, words, or phrases (what happened); recorded my experiences (images, feelings, reactions, meanings); and analyzed my accounts (explanations; Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). As I read through each document and artifact, I isolated words or phrases that demonstrated themes, such as "not yet apparent … not at expected stage." Using emotional recall, I recorded my feelings and reactions, and I reflexively read and re-read my documents, artifacts, findings, and analysis, examining them for accuracy and consistency. I paid close attention to tonality, original meaning, and the intention of each document singly and as a group.

As an educator and researcher, I explored various socio-cultural experiences enmeshed in Canadian K–12 schooling, drawing out connections and meaning for analysis. As Ellis et al. (2011) contended:

> The autoethnographer not only tries to make personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging, but also, by producing accessible texts, they may be able to reach wider and more diverse mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people. (p. 5)

My research has taken the reproducibility of accessible text seriously with the intention of reaching a wide audience. Writing this autoethnography, I have attempted to make my narrative engaging and without exaggeration as I explored cultural and social experiences in school, their impact on me, and my learning through this research process.

Reliability in personal narrative autoethnography is connected to the narrator's credibility. As a long-time high school educator, university student, lecturer and researcher, community activist and consultant, and advocate, I understand the importance of reliability. Reliability was enhanced in this study through the use of documents, artifacts, emotional recall, and embedded reflections grounded in empirical research. I closely followed my research methodology and method, checking and re-checking my data and analysis for consistency. I recorded my findings and analysis over time, checking them against my theoretical framework and weighing my findings against other research (Anteliz et al., 2023). Ultimately, this study connects lived experiences to cultural rules, practices, beliefs, emotions, and values in Canadian K–12 education through accessible and compelling text (Holman-Jones, 2005).

Through active engagement in autoethnography, I situated myself within a research context that was reflective of personal and circumstantial aspects, coupled with professional and academic constructs. As Berger (2015) contended:

> reflexivity is a researcher's conscious and deliberate effort to be attuned to one's own reactions to respondents and to the way in which the research account is constructed, it helps identify and explicate potential or actual effect of personal, contextual, and circumstantial aspects on the process and findings of the study and maintain their awareness of themselves as part of the world they study. (p. 221)

This reflexive process permeated my manuscripts with consistency and cohesion, shaping my own experiences into an avenue for explicating meaning, knowledge, and critique in Canadian K–12 education.

Working to support the development of inclusive education and disability studies in a Canadian K–12 education context involves critical examination of values, practices, and ways of seeing in the wider context of school and society. It requires an understanding of the means and pathways through which children and young adults learn and the many ways in which they experience exclusion and marginalization in education (Armstrong, 2019). A vital pathway in this process is the use of first-person accounts. As Berger and Lorenz (2017) contended:

> A crucial element of autoethnography is connecting writers' stories and experiences to larger social forces with the expressed goal of explicating shared and taken-for-granted assumptions. The method acknowledges that the self is situated in a temporal and local context, and the goal is to use the self to understand, identify, and expose dominant cultural and social patterns. As such, the autobiographical stories that are part of this method may be conceptualized as a form of narrative inquiry intended for contemplation, analysis, and interpretation with their wider sociocultural frame. (p. 111)

My autoethnography highlights personal narrative as lived experience, exploring facets of discriminatory, stigmatizing, and marginalizing processes inherent in Canadian K–12 education. This study sets the stage and background for my involvement within inclusive education and disability studies, illuminating in-depth researcher positionality and community connection as a form of narrative inquiry. Working toward the development and reform of inclusive education must inculcate the knowledge, insights, and research that have emerged from the work of critical disability studies as foundational tenets moving forward (Baglieri & Lalvani, 2020) in order to combat systemic and aversive ableism.

Finally, the fields of disability studies and inclusive education have a substantiated tradition of autoethnographical and narrative inquiry publication (Ndopu, 2023), positioning academics and activists within a nexus of thought and development that seeks to confront and destabilize ableist discourses, processes, and practices. With my autoethnography, I seek to add to this tradition by furthering a transformative discourse that confronts the embedded ableism in K–12 Canadian education. By recounting my personal journey, I engage in a process of naming the many ways K–12 Canadian education constructs meaning, assigns value, and displaces students as a form of resistance and confrontation. More broadly, I hope this study acts as a launch point for the creation, establishment, and maintenance of crip-centred spaces and places that promote disability culture, identity, and community. I conceptualize crip-centred spaces as locations, both physical and attitudinal, that surpass baseline notions of inclusivity, celebrating the disability identity, in all its intersectional glory, with all of one's soul, heart, and mind. It is space to embrace, learn, and grow without fear.

As I begin my autoethnographic narrative, I draw connections between the uses of psychometric testing, categorization, and identify formation as pinions of an education system determined to resist change. Anchored in critical disability studies, my story blends research, analysis, personal documents, and artifacts as I navigate my lived experiences in evocative ways. By doing so, I hope to make a connection with you, the reader, as we journey, wading toward a time of social change.

My Liminal Phase

Conceptually, liminality is used to explore a process of transition, the leaving of one position toward the new. It has been explained by Turner, Abraham, and Harris (1969) as a threshold encountered within the restructuring of a new meaningful identity (Turner et al., 1969). It represents a turning point wherein our identity, in relation to the cultural practices, beliefs, and values we are immersed in, morph. The stories we tell about ourselves, to ourselves, and to others take on a different tone. We become textured and molded into a new form; a new identity is being constructed. Grue (2021) described a liminal phase as:

> The most vulnerable part of a rite of passage, the point at which one finds oneself between worlds. It is the period in which a younger person is no longer a child, though not yet an adult, or when the dead have abandoned the world of the living but cannot yet be counted as ancestors. During these phases, things can go drastically wrong. But they also are where transformation takes place. Without them, the world could not go on. (p. 3–4)

Caught in between multiple worlds and identities that include disability, Jewishness, and athleticism, my story began on the margins. It is a story not all that unique in an Ontario K–12 education context specifically, or in Canadian K–12 education generally, but consistent in its intended outcome. The outcome I am referring to is conformity to a system not designed with you in mind—the rambunctious, unfocused, uninterested, and slow to adopt the *norms* of education protocol. Sit still, regurgitate what you are taught, make eye contact, listen intently, and most of all, do not question. Do not question the teacher, material, purpose, or outcome. When these constraints are enacted in these terms, significant devaluation of disabled people becomes foundational and openly disdainful actions set an ableist tone, reinforcing exclusion. These messages justify ableism when evoked by people in positions of power and are widely consumed and thus perpetuated by the public without interrogation (Keefe, 2022). My story is not a tale of overcoming, inspiring, surpassing, or succeeding. It is a story of inequality, stigma, marginalization, and segregation. As Slee (2018) contended:

> Maybe it would be more honest now to confess that some societies, especially the economically unequal ones, really want a hierarchical education system, which reproduces itself by sponsoring the children of the elite into elite positions. Market competition to reproduce the *best* schools, placated by forms of selection for the “more able,” and residual

> education for the less able, the disruptive and the disabled – categories which usually include the poor and many minorities – exclude them from comfortable life chances. (p. xiv)

Although contentious and context specific, Slee's (2018) assertions, in spirit, contain truths that continue to be present in Canadian K–12 education. Taking into consideration the effects of residential schools and institutionalization, amongst many other experiences and atrocities, it is evident that schools continue to reproduce unequal life opportunities for some.

As a young, white, visibly Jewish child (Kippah, Tzit Tzit) I was unable, or unwilling, to conform to Ontario K–12 educational *norms* of the 1990s. I was active, sporty, and predisposed to movement. I was from a lower socio-economic family living in Toronto, Canada. My journey began by attending a private Jewish school at the behest of my grandparents, paid for by my uncle, for one year before being switched, due to behavioural challenges, to the local neighbourhood public school. By behavioural challenges, I mean I was a student who enjoyed experiential learning and outdoor education in today's nomenclature. The attempt at a privileged private education was a failure. Private school necessitated stillness and conformity, two things I was not good at. It demanded academic proficiency coupled with religious rites that shaped students toward an ideal mold, accentuating uniformity, and by contrast, deviancy.

As a child I detested the robotic rites that made one a good student, the stagnation of atmosphere produced by lecture-style classes, silent sterile work, and curricular reproducibility. The seeming cessation of time was torturous; classes always seemed to last forever, the clock remaining still, unrelenting. In many ways, visualizing this time in my life is like living in Magritte's (1929) *The Treachery of Images*, obfuscating as Foucault's (1983) rendering of *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (Foucault & Magritte, 1983). The meaning of my day was lost on me, hidden behind the images, people, places, and processes of schooling, obscured and abstract.

Truth be told, I remember little from this phase in my journey as a small child; to claim otherwise would be disingenuous. What I do remember is like shards of glass, crystalline at this angle, foggy at another. My memory brings me back to feelings and experiences: isolation, turmoil, unrest, anger, and yelling. I remember being berated constantly at school for being ill-suited for academic study, mostly due to my inattention and need for movement, and for my disinterest. Constantly sensing my presence as disturbing to educators, I retreated deeper and deeper inwards. The price I paid for this retreat was heavy. Incessant visits to the principal's office gave way to fierce stigma from students and staff alike. The stress I felt manifested itself in physical pain in the form of headaches, as if blows rained down on my head. I remember feeling worthless, like something was wrong with me. From a very young age I was deemed an excludable type. As Titchkosky et al. (2022) contended:

> A deep provocation lies in the fact that the very ways that disability is included in everyday life are, also, part of that which structures the continued manifestation of disabled people as a non-viable type. It is, for example, provocative to think about how disability is both excluded and included simultaneously in the interstices of our lives, or included as an excludable type. (p. 178)

Disability-based exclusion in Canadian K–12 education is always manifested in a deeply personal process, one often categorized by a defective descriptor followed by a rehabilitative narrative, always individualized. I remember as a young boy coming home from school every day with a headache that at times left me unable to play or function in the evenings. I remember being unable to understand why: Was this the way school would always be? As a result, I would rest or sleep on my parents or grandparents' couch—recovery time. The teachers' yelling was in reaction to me not sitting still in class, being disruptive, *wild* they said. As Foucault (2003) in *Abnormal* contended:

> the subjection of the body can very well be direct, physical, play force against force, bear on material elements…It can be calculated, organized, technically thought out, it can be subtle, make use neither of weapons nor terror, and yet remain physical in nature. (p. xx)

The mechanisms of control and subjection, as Foucault (2003) elucidates, in K–12 schooling sought to ensure uniformity, much the same as industrial processes, separating out the non-adhering. Confining and constricting students' bodies, despite the absence of weapons or direct contact, remained physical in nature, and I experienced this as constant and totalizing suppression. As a student, these experiences often resulted in a blurred passage of time, following the cessation of school in the evening, as I attempted to sequester the pain I felt from the day. As agonizing as it is to recall, I was often left in disabling pain that led to my exclusion from the evening's extra-curricular athletics. Indoor ball hockey was a coveted event I was often too nauseated to make, compelled to reinforce my small body for the next day's turmoil. School was a calculating place of compliance that restricted space and organized children into binaries—normal and abnormal. It was a Foucauldian confining that remained physical in nature. Holding space for me on the opposite side of this binary, the valued side, was nonexistent. It did not take long for pathology to find me.

I was told by educators and clinical staff that I had a learning disability (LD), that I learned slower than other students. They told me I should consider going straight into the work force because I would never go to college or university. They made me feel like I was taking up a space at school that would be better inhabited by another, more intelligent and obedient student. They pressured my parents to have me assessed to figure out what was wrong with me and how to fix it. As Hansen (2022) contended:

> When social discomfort equates difference—in this case, disability—with weakness and deficit, this can result in unplanned encounters with strangers projecting sympathy,

> difficulty, pity, pain, and "fixes" (such as assistive devices or some form of medical intervention measures) onto those individuals defined as "different". Our space and place are tenuous in that it is perceived that the space we occupy would be better used by non-disabled people (p. 212–213).

At seven years old, I was made keenly aware that a *fix* is what I needed in order to be *normal*, like the rest of the students. To be different meant isolation and, at times, castigation. Spaces for students like me were segregated and heavily stigmatized. At seven years and six months, the school administered the *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Third Edition (WISC-III)*, *Blender Visual Motor Gestalt Test*, *Classroom Reading Inventory (Silvaroli)*, *Informal Writing Assignment*, *Kinetic School Drawing*, *Kinetic Family Drawing*, and *House-Tree-Person Drawing*.

The *WISC-III* Verbal Results concluded that Michael Baker's functioning was as follows:

General information	- weakness
Verbal reasoning	-weakness
Mental arithmetic	-weakness
Expressive vocabulary	-average
Social comprehension	-average
Short-term recall	-low average

Within the visual performance or nonverbal area of the *WISC-III*, Michael's functioning was as follows:

Perception of detail	-weakness
Visual-motor speed and accuracy	-low average
Visual sequence/social awareness	-significant weakness
Visual reasoning	-significant weakness

Visual organization	-weakness
Visual discrimination and scanning	-strength
Visual planning	-weakness

Conclusion and Recommendations read:

> On the basis of testing, Michael displayed a statistically significant 20-point gap in his score in favour of Verbal over Performance or nonverbal tasks. The former fell within the Average range at the 25th percentile; the latter within the Borderline range at the 2nd percentile. Thus Michael performed significantly better on tasks requiring verbal comprehension and expression than he did on tasks requiring visual-motor activity and the manipulation of concrete materials.

Before discussing these assessment results, let me provide some context of what I remember about the testing. I remember being taken by my mother to a private psychologist, as the story goes, to refute or support (mostly refute) the psychological assessment done by the school. Yet, the refutation never materialized. I remember feeling like this was not something *normal* kids had to do. And that is it. That is as far as my memory wants to, or will let me, remember. And yet, as a traumatic event, I can still recall it—the office the testing was conducted in and the general profile of the psychologist who conducted it. The testing took place in a beautifully kept home in Toronto in a two-story brownstone with a fully finished basement, the likes of which remained true to the neutral colours of a medical setting. We were let in the side door and directed to the basement office where the assessments were conducted. I remember it smelling a little musty, perhaps stagnant, the way older basements do sometimes, as if the old concrete walls were beginning to decompose, the smell slowly seeping out into the common area. The psychologist was a woman in her midlife, perhaps 50 years old. I remember her being very nice and accommodating. It was not the private psychologist’s demeanor that made this experience unpleasant; it was the knowledge that the tests being conducted were attempting to explain my failures as a student. It felt like an external pressure, kind of like slowly being crushed by a large object. The pressure around me mounted until my face turned red and I felt constricted in a way, discredited. It was like belonging to the Island of Misfit Toys in the 1964 *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* film, outcast and exiled.

It is remarkable that non-normative morphology, or bodily difference, is universal, and yet things we learn (and tolerate) about the body and our movement through social space makes it seem like every-body is the same (Titchkosky, 2022). The hegemony of *sameness* carves out binary spaces in K–12 schools, us-and-them spaces, locating students’ value and socio-cultural place in a state of precarity based on perceived ablebodiness. The assessment continues:

> Michael’s academic difficulties appear to stem from a number of areas. Firstly, both his below average auditory memory and visual memory suggest that he may not grasp new learning or instruction…. Secondly, Michael exhibited weak reasoning abilities, both verbal and visual. These weaknesses may cause Michael confusion during academic instruction and could keep him from understanding the ‘main point’ of a lesson. Thirdly, Michael’s weaker visual performance profile indicates that he will encounter difficulty attending in the classroom, following teacher direction, organizing his work in a meaningful manner, and completing his written work. Michael …. would benefit from a classroom environment that is able to offer a low pupil-teacher ratio and much individual attention. To progress academically, Michael seems to need time to consolidate his learning and to work at his own pace. Remedial support that addresses his weak areas (as outlined above), is strongly indicated.

I like to think I was a generally happy kid, athletically talented, most of the things Western society values. And yet, when I entered a K–12 school for the purposes of classes, I was “low-average” and described as having “weakness” and “significant weakness.” My file, my pathology, preceded me into classrooms, foreshadowed my arrival at school day in and day out. I was made to feel different for the express purposes of the system. I floated between two categorizations: subjected to pull-out programs and the *learning centre* academically, while maintaining a gifted status in athletics. In high school, being the quarterback of the football team and the anchor for my school’s 4x100 meter relay team afforded me some wiggle room within the nexus of confinement. Navigating this tenuous relationship between myself and the system placed considerable weight on me as a child. I continue to carry this weight as an adult. Stigmatized, I was allowed to succeed in physical education and in organized sports but segregated and made to feel inadequate and disquieted in the realm of academics. I have learned K–12 schools are not for everyone. They can be places of exclusion, resignation, and at times, places of forced desperation.

A Requiem

The clinical gaze awaits me in every reflective surface. I see what is noteworthy about my body, what a clinician would take note of. I see the restless legs and disinterest, agitation at the stillness demanded of the learner who is forced and derided. But I also see that this is me. “The clinical gaze will follow me all of my life, as it has done until now. I can attempt to face it with writing, to write it into submission, but I cannot write it away. I cannot think it away any more than I can think away my own life story” (Grue, 2021, p. 143). Forced to confront my clinical portraiture, I understand it as a tool of ableist oppression, a distortion of personhood. The clinical gaze awaits to incarcerate, not to redeem. It is a weapon in the hands of mold makers—forgers, not artists.

Reading my psychological assessment elicits a strong emotional response. Who is this *Michael Baker* they are referring to? As expected, the emotions range from sadness to anger. The obfuscation between me and this *Michael Baker* in these assessments is resounding. The separation of self from this Other (Césaire, 2000/[1972]) begins a process of drawing out and devaluing the person I am. It is reminiscent of a geological assessment: isolating the impurities within a formation to extract that which is desired, discarding the refuse thereafter. Although, as an adult, its flaws are apparent, the weaponization of this assessment, the violence that it carries out, and the disproportionate negativity that follows are disconcerting (Erevelles, 2005). It makes me wonder why K–12 schools continue to use these sets of controls today. I wonder, “How is life improved for disabled students if access to an education means suffering the brutality of having their disabilities exploited to protect the integrity of their abled peers’ own securities?” (Smilges, 2023, p. 6).

Identified as “pseudoscience” (Freeze, 2023, p. 163), psychometric testing for the purpose of accurately identifying cognitive ability, and thus accessing support and therapeutic services, continues to be legitimized for the purpose of upholding structural ableism in Canadian K–12 schools. Keefe (2022) defined this as a complex system of hierarchical and discriminatory processes, policies, and institutions that privilege and prefer abled-bodied people, fail to represent or meaningfully include disabled persons’ voices, and are grounded in a network of ableist beliefs and practices that maintain and reproduce unequal outcomes for disabled people and benefit able-bodied people (Keefe, 2022).

With the abnegation of an equity approach, K–12 schools continue to muster the fabric of professionalism enmeshed in pseudoscience for the purposes of maintaining the status quo. Only those deemed the most disabled, disruptive, or divergent receive top-tier services, with a reduction of provisions occurring in descending order. A disabled-to-able metric, focusing on early identification and intervention of students with specific learning disabilities, is used to streamline support services in schools (Wells-Dyck, 2023). This embodied, preferential dogmatism continues to provide a pretense for those in power that shelters them from a reckoning that must realign discriminatory discourses, structures, and processes. Nowhere is this better illustrated than through the application of mental age theory as a form of *knowing*. As Freeze (2023) stated:

> I have heard educators argue that a student has a mental age far below his or her chronological age. Why would they measure age using a test when a birth certificate is much more valid and reliable? Do they really think that the mind is separate from the body and gets a different age? This is pseudoscience at its worst. (p. 163)

As a K–12 educator and a person pursuant of higher education, I am critical and skeptical of such *school-based* diagnoses. As illustrated, the application of some official assessments, such as psychometric testing, is carried out for the purpose of identification, under the guise of service provision or access but for the ultimate purpose of evaluating a student's rightful *place*, set against a background of determined value. As Connor (2019) contended:

> Eighty-five percent of students identified as disabled, embodying learning disabilities, and language impairments, emotional and behavioural disorders, and intellectual disabilities can be seen as "soft" disabilities that rely upon subjective judgment, actual non-medical forms of human variation. (p. 14)

The notion of "soft" disabilities is built upon philosophies of normality; students are measured against fictional standards. This process of mold making is an ideal, a narrative told and retold with redoubled effort for the purpose of maintaining structural ableism (Davis, 2010). Told with ferocity and professionalism, these *soft* (Connor, 2019) diagnoses pass themselves off as scientific signs, as irrefutable truths. This has been more strongly stated by Terry Eagleton, as cited in Grue (2021):

> Signs which pass themselves off as natural, which offer themselves as the only conceivable way of viewing the world, are by that token authoritarian and ideological. It is one of the functions of ideology to “naturalize” social reality, to make it seem as innocent and unchangeable as Nature itself. (p. 102)

In this way, the diagnoses made by clinicians are often considered unchangeable. Do clinicians understand the lasting impact of their words, their assessments, and their recommendations? As a recipient of these unwanted and unwelcomed recommendations, I have come to understand the weight they carry and the impact they impose. The potential for inducing trauma and the restrictions, categorizations, control, and marginalization placed on children in the name of K–12 education is dizzying. In the course of a few days, clinical assessments are conducted, drafted, interpreted, signed, and presented as scientifically rigorous, irrefutable as a practice, and credible beyond doubt. The result is that human diversity is pathologized (Bartlett & Freeze, 2023), and future academic, social, and economic opportunities are limited. The personal impact can also lead to limited friendships and ostracization, sometimes lasting a lifetime. The constraints of this can result in transinstitutionalization. I define transinstitutionalization, following Keefe (2022), as a complex system of hierarchical and discriminatory processes, policies, and practices that privilege and value the able-bodied while demarcating the disabled community for systematic institutionalization without the bricks and mortar of traditional institutions. Caught in a cyclical systematic formation, students with disabilities enter a governmental institution as a child (hospital/school) and emerge into adulthood expected to be pseudo-dependent wards of the state (through, for example, day programs, nursing homes, psychiatric institutions) ad infinitum.

Garland-Thomson (2005) pointed out, “This fiction calls attention to the hidden and overt norm that lurks behind our understanding of disability, one that makes some bodies seem naturally deficient and others seem superior” (p. 1,559). Within this superior/inferior nexus, disability-based segregation and discrimination is reliant on educators’ complicity, which sees disabled students regularly sent through the grinder of societal apathy only to emerge on the other side in a state of flux sold as support. Whether people say it openly or behind closed doors, disability continues to be portrayed as an unwanted state of being—a fact Canadian K–12 education has been reluctant to refute.

Educator: Identity & Assessment

Being a passionate educator is an identity. Deciding to pursue education was complex but rooted in a drive to help and make changes in young people’s lives. In many ways, it was also a path I chose because of my own experiences as a student. My passion for education has only grown over the course of my life because of the shortcomings within the system I continue to encounter. Although endless, the work of improvement and the drive to help has only grown. Because of my lifelong connection to the disability community, I have found I am drawn to, and sensitive about, the complex and aversive ways ableism continues to inform Canadian K–12 education.

As an educator who works for and with students with disabilities, I come across assessments on a regular basis. Approaching them with a sense of distance and desensitization, dissonance and agitation, I read about what diagnosis a student *has* and their *capabilities*, canonized in documentation delineating an individualized portraiture. Constricted to assessed criteria, these assessments serve as a basis for granting certain programmatic customization. In the Manitoba K–12 system, this process of identifying what a student *has* is, in a sense, a means of carving out their identity. To the system, this identification is of essence, an isolation of personal composition. Their diagnosis is their clinical passport to my educational world as a student service/resource teacher. The value of this identification is both quantified monetarily through funding schema predicated on diagnosis and qualified through stories told about inclusivity. Socio-culturally and politically, K‒12 schools use identification as evidence enlisted for the purposes of garnering governmental financial support while controlling the narrative of social and cultural inclusivity. The duality of identification arises not in spite of disability but because of its presence and the systematic need of ameliorating it, controlling it, and employing it for the benefit of upholding the status quo as much as possible in this socio-cultural and political climate.

The world of Canadian K–12 inclusive education can be polarizing. Categorizing students based on the fiction of ability and the pursuit of *making normal* is maligning. What services will be granted? How will their K–12 programming be mapped out? Will they earn credits or be confined to a program that only grants them certificates of completion (or the like)? Students must fit into a box. Are they bound for university? College? The work force? Or transinstitutionalization?

Educational transinstitutionalization is the processes by which the education system (at both the K–12 and post-secondary levels) seclude, contain, monitor, categorize, sort, isolate, divert, marginalize, and control neurodivergent, nonconformist, and diverse bodyminds. Various institutions and practices provide *institutionalization* through a matrix of ill-coordinated professions and workers who are legally responsible for control and care of bodies determined deviant, excessive, or degenerative (Fabris, 2019). Given that institutionalization is thought about and experienced in many directions and contexts, I assert that its actuality is complex (Haley & Temple Jones, 2020). This complexity emerges contextually, taking different paths and presenting in different ways across systems and provinces.

For students with disabilities, the Canadian K–12 education system is designed for active transinstitutionalization. Failure to comply can result in federal and/or provincial governmental retaliatory measures that can involve a reduction or elimination of services including: a) medical care/assistance, b) therapeutic services/assistance/care (Snoddon & Weber, 2020), c) attendant care/assistance/services, d) financial assistance, e) transportation services/assistance, f) employment services/assistance, and g) programmatic services/care. The effects of K–12 transinstitutional noncompliance for people include: isolation, poverty, homelessness, incarceration, or death (Haley & Temple Jones, 2020).

Alternatively, compliance within this system looks like a willingness to accept clinical assessments and judgement regarding ability and value and to accept an imposed identification marker carved from subjugating discourses. For example, in later years, students categorized as having an intellectual disability in Manitoba who participate in individualized (I) or modified (M) programming stay in school until the age of 21 (Manitoba Education, 2023) or Grade 12+. Moreover, such compliance looks like an active participation in transitioning to government-run programs, such as day programs and sheltered workshops, and a willingness to seek and/or engage in employment without legal remuneration.

Students are streamed into (I) and (M) educational avenues that eliminate or effectively reduce participation in approved curriculum and accredited courses. Students are steered toward programming that is marketed as building skills for life, such as laundry and cooking, but that is only available for participation to students with disabilities. Students are actively monitored through case managers, educators, clinical services, and Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which primarily or solely include non-academic goals. The idea of students with disabilities as those who do "not benefit from participating in curricula" (Manitoba Education, 2023, p. 32) is perpetuated. Finally, students are disqualified upon graduation from receiving a Canadian high school diploma due to the aforementioned processes. Instead, a certificate of completion or accomplishment is awarded. These certificates lack officialdom and do not reflect the culmination of K–12 schooling in the same way as earning a high school diploma. (I) and (M) programming are official educative categorizations, streams, and/or programs set out by the Manitoba provincial K–12 education governing body. Such streaming begs the question of how this does not violate Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, namely Provision 15(1), which states:

> Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982).

Students streamed into (I) and (M) programming are systematically excluded from *equal protection* and *equal benefit* of the law in this context specifically because they have an (intellectual) *mental disability*. Participation in these programmatic avenues can be categorized as a spectrum of devaluation. Devaluation occurs along a variety of lines, including: a) curricular products, b) work experience/labour, c) socio-cultural contribution, d) engagement in sport, and e) engagement in school-based clubs. Leveraged against an arbitrary future of prospective earnings and capital accumulation, or lack thereof, students are actively stigmatized in a process of Otherization. As an educator, I struggle with my role in this ableist system. From reading resource files and assessments to working with governmental agencies that carry out residential transinstitutional confinement, I continue to question my practice. For this reason, I endeavor to enact resistance by integrating disability studies content into curriculum, promoting disability pride and culture amongst students, and accentuation disability visibility (Wong, 2022).

Conceptualizing resistance not as a cessation of participation but as a continual process of reshaping, I am resisting and confronting subjugating mechanisms such as psychometric testing and transinstitutionalization by writing this autoethnography. As an ally, my role in this process continues to shape my identity through activism. By speaking out and confronting ableism, I strive to change the system. I believe changing the way we see, feel, think, and act on/about disability (as a community and as a culture) in schools is an essential act of resistance. By retelling and analyzing my story, reclaiming personhood, promoting positive disability community and cultural affiliations, contesting conformity, and demonstrating the importance of disability leadership, acknowledgement, and representation, this autoethnography is a site of resistance. By naming those aspects of a system embroiled in degradation, I speak from a heartfelt desire and lived experience to change it absolutely.

In the proceeding sections I set out to describe an ethic of resistance, advocating for an inclusive realignment in practice and curriculum as an essential way forward. I demonstrated that a child who experienced ableism in K–12 education can become an educator in that very system, identifying discrimination and calling for a reclaiming of what it means to be a part of the disability community in Manitoba schools as an act of resistance. I have engaged in this struggle not by withdrawing but through the act of confrontation, seeking to demonstrate that action can lead to change.

Site of Ableist Resistance: An Ethic of Resistance

If there was a country called disabled,
I would be from there, to live disabled culture, eat disabled food,
make disabled love, cry disabled tears,
climb disabled mountains and tell disabled stories.

If there was a country called disabled,
Then I am one of its citizens. I came there at age 8. I tried to leave.

Was encouraged by doctors to leave. I tried to surgically remove myself from Disabled Country but
found myself, in the end,
staying and living there.

If there was a country called disabled,
I would always have to remind myself that I am from there. I often want to forget. I would have to
remember…to remember.
In my life's journey I am making myself
At home in my country. (Wong, 2022)

For me, it was age 7 when I entered Disabled Country. I did not want to go; to leave the land of pretense was to abandon an identity wrapped in normal. For my entire K–12 schooling, I employed an invisibility cloak, eluding the depreciated identity bestowed on me through assessment. In sport, I was able to avoid most of the stigmatizing effects and affects of being labelled *disabled* by my peers. Although being forced to attend special, segregated courses (such as Learning Strategies GLE10) served as a source of passing ridicule, it more or less confined the total effect of my assessment status to my resource teachers' files. Today, as student service educator, I feel the totalizing effects of student's assessments. Knowing these students are more than professionalized jargon, I approach each student's resource file tenuously, treading lightly, reserving any opinions until I have built a rapport with that student. Intake and transition meetings provide ample background and programmatic information necessary to begin their programmatic journey. Only once I have worked with a student for a considerable period of time might I return to assessments about them, should I find them pertinent. I do not endeavour to really know students through their assessment documentation; I get to know them as people, as valued individuals. This is an act of resistance I do not take lightly.

Today, I have a lifetime of experiences and learning that has taught me important lessons. I welcome, and am welcomed in, Disabled Country, knowing full well I inhabit an insider/outsider position. But times are changing. Hidden disabilities, such as learning disabilities, now account for 5.6% (up 1.6%) of Canada's disability rate (Rabinowitz & Wallace, 2023). Echoing my exact feelings, and the closest thing to a resonating ethic of resistance, Frazee (2023) has said:

> For me, Disabled Country offers a poetics of identity, an ethos of empathy, and a sanctuary from philosophies of greed and utility. Others will see it differently, and that is as it should be, for we folk of Disabled Country are a cacophonous lot, and there is nothing fixed or static in our discourse. But conflict in Disabled Country is premised on a shared embrace of disability identity, a respect for disability history, and a sense of place in disabled culture. (p. xvii)

The fortuitous embrace of this ethic as a site of resistance is one I want every K–12 student to internalize. This internalization understands that the disability community is a prideful nation. It is a diverse conglomeration of peoples that are celebrated and valuable. These notions of sweeping embrace obliterate the weight of stigmatizing educational judgments, returning identity and notions of value to a place of complex acceptance, "for we are everywhere, our boarders fully porous" (Frazee, 2023, p. xvii). As such. Psychometric assessments need only help to inform community affiliations, not arbitrary merit or desirability. Although I wholeheartedly recommended the discontinued use of weaponized pathology inherent in psychometric testing, I acknowledge the unlikeliness of such course of action. When one is faced with a system unwilling to change on its own, "action is the main thing" (Hansen, personal communication, 2023). What better action can disabled people take but to both confront and be proud of diagnosis? This heralds individuals into the disability community.

Paradoxically, diagnosis as an avenue of identity formation in K–12 education is currently corrupted by the stigma and marginalization it garners, both by professionals and society. Shifting the ethos of school psychology from confinement to allyship, while rallying for systematic change, such as abolishing transinstitutional practices and pathways, could begin to make important headway in supporting the application of culturally relevant pedagogy. Although this shift is paradoxical, Smilges (2023) explored the navigation between contesting diagnosis and celebrating it:

> If I'm being honest with myself and with you, I have some lingering doubts. These doubts emerge from my skepticism over the realities of building collective affinity in the context of disability, a category that cannot be easily emptied of its pathological origins or neatly disarticulated from its steady march toward liberal subjectification. As much as I like the premise of redefining disability in terms of affinity, I cannot help but to worry that the terms will always be haunted by the conflicting strands of disability's diagnostic past and increasingly liberal present. There is no disability without diagnosis, no diagnosis without symptomology, and no symptomology without able-normativity. (pp. 16–17)

Critical disability studies recognizes the limits of conceptualizing anew within the confines of a liminal space, such as K–12 inclusive education. Nevertheless, when faced with this particular reality of ableism in schools, educators must strive for avenues of transformation that better disabled students' lives today. In this way, we must embrace diagnosis as a means of community connection, celebratory and nurturing—a Bar or Bat Mitzvah-like event with cheers of "Mazal Tov" ringing out! Albeit paradoxical, this embracing ethic could lay the foundation for transformation, confronting on one front, while uniting on another. Today, clinicians, including psychologists, could lead this transformation by removing the negativity of assessment, advocating for what is best for the student over the current practices and procedures of the system, and working directly with students in classrooms to help actualize best practices (learning strategies, sensory considerations, language delivery).

Currently, disabled student wellbeing and success is formalistic in Canadian K–12 education. Bereft of autonomy, students are only lauded by educators and clinical staff if they conform to a formulaic mold that is prescriptive and apt to incarcerate (transinstitutionalization). Transformative clinical services, at the systems level, that might advocate for authentic student wellbeing would come into conflict with governmental services and funding schema set for disabled students' confinement. Nevertheless, a school-based/board emancipatory approach could lift the aura of disparagement surrounding disability and identity, creating new approaches and delivery models that celebrate diverse bodies and minds and that support student-lead goals and community objectives without the certitude of brokenness.

Reclaiming the disability identity as an ethic of resistance remains paramount. Ableist resistance should be the goal of all staff and students alike (Keefe, 2022). Moving beyond a simplistic, often binary understanding of disability would be a step in the right direction. Critical disability studies points to a transformative schooling experience, one of authentic community connection and partnership that nurtures community-led initiatives, priorities, and goals that extend beyond the preservation and benefit of the K–12 system. Authentically designing schooling pathways that holistically meet the needs of students without underlying systematic objectives and benefits would begin to create meaningful interdependence.

Genuine K–12 transformation begins with:

- the adoption of a human rights perspective on the purpose of education, reflecting an acceptance and celebration of diversity as normal and enriching and
- the adoption of the social model of disability, including the redesign of funding mechanisms, assessment practices, in-school support services, and clinical services. (Freeze, 2023, p. 155)

Moving forward, inclusive education must incorporate the knowledge of the disabled community. This autoethnography elucidates the specific need for schools to establish:

- disability communities, clubs, and adaptive sports to support student growth holistically,
- community connections that validate student identity, and
- flexible ways for students to demonstrate learning outcomes while accumulating credits in non-traditional ways and locales.

Calls for the implementation of more general tenets to necessitate meaningful transformation require but are not limited to:

- adoption of an intersectional understanding and acknowledgment of disability and its corresponding implications (Scuro, 2018),
- adoption of curricular reform to incorporate disability studies and its intersectional correlates in a nuanced approach to understanding the human experience (Linton, 2010),
- adoption of graduation reform to recognize the valued work disabled students, participating in (I) and (M) programs and the like, do with the granting of a recognized high school diploma,
- adoption of transition reform that rejects sheltered workshops and day programs as suitable institutions of confinement,

- adoption of transition reform that rejects the use of forced disabled labour under the guise of work experience or skill building, and
- adoption of transition reform that rejects participation in disabled work without legal remuneration.

Sites of ableist resistance can take multiple forms. Challenging ableism in K–12 education systems, structures, processes, and practices is a monumental task, but one worth the undertaking. Students and their support networks, families, advocates, and experts can no longer accept a K–12 system that upholds inequality for the disabled community as benevolence. An ethic of resistance in K–12 education begins with disability leadership, acknowledgement, and representation in Canadian schools.

Viewed through a critical disability studies lens, this autoethnographical study has interrogated embedded ableist practices and conceptualization in Canadian K–12 education. Using personal documents and artifacts thickly described, I have advocated for reforms that span a wide range of educational areas as agentic growth. Using my lived experience as the main area of study and analysis, I sought to rupture preconceived notions of power and authority as stabilizing factors, disrupting a narrative that purports rigidity as safety. Maintaining the system *as is* reinforces practices of exclusion and devaluation through uniformity and conformity, a reality people should no longer accept.

Conclusion

The intent of this research was to explore the following questions: In what ways have my lived experiences shaped my role as an educator, ally, and academic? In what ways do disability-related assessment practices shape identity? And, in what ways can resistance to ableism be enacted in Canadian K–12 education? Through the application of critical disability studies, I have sought to rupture, blur, and interrogate common assumptions about disability. Reframing the application, purpose, and spirit of disability-related assessments, such as psychometric testing, demonstrates how current practices are connected to processes of transinstitutionalization. Rupturing a system that employs assessments for the purpose of indefinite confinement and subjugation is, above all else, a moral imperative. As Erevelles (2005) reminded us:

> …the justification of separate classes for disabled students was based on the results of psychometric test like Alfred Binet's intelligence scales that supported a theory of IQ, and that drew relationships between mental illness, moral degeneracy, pauperism, and race, class, and gender. While these eugenic policies were no longer in vogue by the late 1960s, they continue to influence American Public Schools. (p. 77)

The continued application of psychometric testing for the purpose of maintaining the transinstitutionalization, poverty, confinement, and hierarchy of disabled K–12 students in Canada is a travesty. Instead, educators, administrators, and senior administrators can pave the way for a more inclusive system by celebrating disability as a distinct community and culture, hiring and promoting disabled educators, undergoing curricular reform that is representative of disability studies, employing experts in critical disability studies for the purpose of short- and long-term strategic planning, and engaging in intensive professional development. Unfortunately, as Meade and Serlin (2006) reminded their readers, there remains a "historical truism that is painfully familiar to anyone involved in political struggle for human rights: change happens slowly" (p. 1). Although critical disability studies acknowledges this, it remains imperative for educators as a pedagogical act to continue moving human rights in schools forward, including ableist confrontation. Despite the paradox of diagnosis as an avenue of both subjugation and community affinity, scholars and educators must navigate the struggle between what is beneficial for students and community, and what is ideal.

Voices of Canadian K–12 educators who have experienced ableist oppression as students remain pivotal in the continual process of remaking the Canadian education system. Reclaiming our voice and autonomy is imperative given the transformative implications. I believe that systems reflect the values and direction of those that comprise them. Collectively, as community leaders and innovators, we must begin the hard work of remaking anew. It’s time to get to work in reshaping K–12 Canadian education.

References

Adams, T., & Ellis, C., & Jones, S. H. (2017). Autoethnography. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 347–365). Oxford University Press.

Adams, T. E., & Manning, J. (2015). Autoethnography and family research. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *7*(4), 350–366. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12116

Akpan, J. (2023). This is sweet but uncomfortable. In P. Anteliz, D. L. Mulligan, & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of autoethnography in educational research* (pp. 169–179). Routledge.

Anteliz, E. A., Mulligan, D. L., & Danaher, P. A. (Eds.). (2023). *The Routledge international handbook of autoethnography in educational research*. Routledge.

Armstrong, F. (2019). Social constructivism and action research. In F. Armstrong & D. Tsokova (Eds.), *Action research for inclusive education* (pp. 5–16). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351048361-2

Baglieri, S., & Lalvani, P. (2020). *Undoing ableism: Teaching about disability in K–12 classrooms*. Routledge.

Barkley, R. A. (2009). Forward. In Goldstein, J.N. & Naglieri, J.A. (Ed.), *Assessing impairment: From theory to practice* (pp. ix–xi). Springer.

Barley, K. (2023). Illuminating the epiphany. In P. Anteliz, D. L. Mulligan, & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of autoethnography in educational research* (pp. 13–22). Routledge.

Bartlett, N. A., & Freeze, T. B. (2023). Assess, sort, classify: “Othering” of Indigenous students in Manitoba’s schools. In R. Freeze (Ed.), *Transformative inclusive education* (pp. 75–95). Canadian Scholars.

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(2), 219–234. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475

Berger, R. J., & Lorenz, L. S. (2017). *Disability and qualitative inquiry: Methods for rethinking an ableist world*. Routledge.

Bochner, A., & Ellis, C. (2005). Autoethnography, personal narrative, and personal reflexivity. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 733–768). Sage.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c 11.

Catapano, P., Garland-Thomson, R., & Fries, K. (2019). The Nazis' first victims were the disabled. In P. Catapano, R. Garland-Thomson, & K. Fries (Eds.), *About us: Essays from the disability series of the New York Times* (pp. 9–12). Liveright Publishing Corporation.

Césaire, A. (2000). *Discourse on colonialism* (J. Pinkham, Trans.). Monthly Review Press. (Original work published [1972]).

Connor, D. J., Gabel, S. L., Gallagher, D. J., & Morton, M. (2008). Disability studies and Inclusive Education — implications for theory, research, and Practice. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 12(5–6), 441–457. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802377482

Connor, D. (2019). Why is special education so afraid of disability studies? Analyzing attacks of disdain and distortion from leaders in the field. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 34*, 10–23.

Cooper, R., & Lilyea, B. (2022). I'm interested in autoethnography, but how do I do it? *The Qualitative Report*, *27*(1). https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5288

Creadick, A. G. (2010). *Perfectly average: The pursuit of normality in postwar America*. University of Massachusetts Press.

Davis, L. J. (Ed.). (2010). *The disability studies reader* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

DeLuca, C., & Miller, T. (2008). The evolving culture of large-scale assessments in Canadian education. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, *76*, 1–34. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251485277_The_evolving_culture_of_large-scale_assessments_in_Canadian_education

Denshire, S. (2014). On auto-ethnography. *Current Sociology Review*, *62*(6), 831–850. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392114533339

Dion, J. (2017). Falling through the cracks: Canadian Indigenous children with disabilities. *Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP) Working Paper Series*, *5*(12), 2–38. https://www.mcgill.ca/humanrights/files/humanrights/ihri_wps_v5_n12_dion.pdf

Dyson, M. (2007). My story in a profession of stories: Auto ethnography - an empowering methodology for educators. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 32(1). https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2007v32n1.3

Ellis, C., Adams, T.E., & Bochner, A. (2011). *Autoethnography: an overview.* Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung, 12(1). (pp. 1-9). https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 733–768). Sage.

Erevelles, N. (2005). Rewriting critical pedagogy from the periphery: Materiality, disability, and the politics of schooling. In S. L. Gabel (Ed.), *Disability studies in education: Readings in theory and method* (Vol. 3, pp. 66–83). Peter Lang.

Fa’avae, D. (2018). Giving voice to the unheard in higher education: Critical autoethnography, Tongan males and educational research. *MAI Journal: A New Zealand Journal of Indigenous Scholarship*, *7*(2), 126–138. https://doi.org/10.20507/maijournal.2018.7.2.2

Fabris, E. (2019). *Tranquil prisons: Chemical incarceration under community treatment orders*. University of Toronto Press.

Freeze, R. (Ed.). (2023). *Transformative inclusive education*. Canadian Scholars.

Foucault, M. (2003). *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975* (V. Marchetti, A. Salomoni, F. Ewald, & A. Fontana, Eds.). Picador.

Foucault, M. & Magritte, R. (1983). *This is not a pipe*. University of California Press.

Frazee, C. (2023). *Dispatches from disabled country* (C. Kelly & M. Orsini, Eds.). UBC Press.

Garland-Thomson, R. (2005). *Feminist disability studies*. University of Chicago Press, *30*, 1557–1587. https://doi.org/10.1086/423352

Goodley, D. & Lawthom, R. (2019). *Critical disability studies, brexit and trump: a time of neoliberal ableism.* The journal of theory and practice, 23(2). https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2019.1607476

Grue, J. (2021). *I live a life like yours: A memoir*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Hansen, N. (2022). DisAppearing disability: Disability MAiD invisible. In T. Titchkosky, E. Cagulada, M. DeWelles, & E. Gold (Eds.), *Disappearing: Encounters in disability studies* (pp. 212–223). Canadian Scholars.

Holman-Jones, S. (2005) *Auto Ethnography: Making the Personal Political*. In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S., Eds., Handbook of Qualitative Research, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 763-791.

Hosking, D. L. (2008). Presented at the 4th Biennial Disability Studies Conference at Lancaster University.

https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/events/disabilityconference_archive/2008/papers/hosking2008.pdf

Jordan, D. S. (1907). *The human harvest: A study of the decay of races through the survival of the unfit*. American Unitarian Association.

Keefe, E. S. (2022). From detractive to democratic: The duty of teacher education to disrupt structural ableism and reimagine disability. *Teachers College Record*, *124*(3), 115–147. https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221086994

Keller, R. (2013). Approaches in discourse research. In *Doing Discourse Research: An Introduction for Social Scientists* (pp. 5-68). SAGE Publications Ltd, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957640

Haley, T.L., & Temple Jones, C. (2020). Sites and shapes of transinstitutionalization. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, *9*(3), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v9i3.643

Linton, S. (2010). *Claiming disability: Knowledge and identity*. New York University Press.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2023). *Supporting inclusion*: *Modification and individualized programming in Manitoba schools.* https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/pdf/supporting_inclusion_m_i.pdf

Meade, T., & Serlin, D. (Eds.). (2006). *Radical history review: Disability and history*. Duke University Press.

Mulligan, D.L. (2023). *Conversations with my dog: anthropomorphizing self-narrative as a researcher's autoethnographic tool when writing her thesis conducting grief work.* In P. Anteliz, D. L. Mulligan, & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of autoethnography in educational research* (pp. 115-125). Routledge.

Ndopu, E. (2023). *Sipping Dom Pérignon through a straw: Reimagining success as a disabled achiever*. Legacy Lit.

Nourse, V. (2016). *When eugenics became law: Victoria Nourse reviews a study on a historic US misuse of biology, the case of Buck v. Bell*. Nature, *530*(7591), 418. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A444595373/HRCA?u=univmanitoba&sid=bookmark-HRCA&xid=197d1f9a

Peterson, M. (2019). *An autoethnographic exploration of disability and the cultural norms surrounding health and fitness* [Master's thesis, University of Manitoba]. University of Manitoba Libraries MSpace. https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/items/d807fb7d-70cc-458e-91ed-0663a5a2e890

Pitts, T. (2020). Review of *Foucault and feminist philosophy of disability* by Shelley L. Tremain. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies, 9*(3), 146–155.

Rabinowitz, T., & Wallace, S. (2023, December 1). *Highlights of the Canadian survey on disability, 2022*. Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023063-eng.htm

Rust, J. (Ed.). (2017). Forward. In J. Rust (Ed.), *Psychometric testing: Critical perspectives* (p. xvii). Wiley Blackwell.

Ryan, N., & Mulligan, D. L. (2023). *A comparative autoethnographic lens on the doctorate as told by a supervisor and doctoral candidate*. Qualitative Inquiry.

Saklofske, D. H., & Janzen, H. L. (1990). School-based assessment research in Canada. *McGill Journal of Education, 25*(1), 1–20.

Samuels, E. (2017). Six ways of looking at Crip Time. *Disability Studies Quarterly, 37*(3). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i3.5824

Schalk, S. (2017). Critical disability studies as methodology. *Lateral*, *6*(1). https://doi.org/10.25158/l6.1.13

Scuro, J. (2018). *Addressing ableism: Philosophical questions via disability studies*. Lexington Books.

Shields, C., Bishop, R., & Mizawi, A. (2005). Pathologizing practices: The impact of deficit thinking on education. (pp.1-183). University of Toronto Press. https://books.google.ca/books/about/Pathologizing_Practices.html?id=LIPuAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y

Slee, R. (2018). *Inclusive Education isn't dead, it just smells funny*. (pp.1-112). Routledge.

Sleeter, C. (2010). Why is there learning disabilities? A critical analysis of the birth of the field in its social context. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *30*(2). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v30i2.1261

Smilges, J. L. (2023). *Crip negativity*. University of Minnesota Press.

Snoddon, K., & Weber, J. (2022). Commentary: Shapes and sites of deaf people's transinstitutionalization. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, *9*(3), 16–26. https://doi.org/10.32920/21596154

Stanley, P. (2020). *Critical autoethnography and intercultural learning: Emerging voices*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Titchkosky, T. (2022). Disappearing promises: The university's unfortunate framing of disability. In E. Cagulada, M. DeWelles, & E. Gold (Eds.), *Disappearing: Encounters in disability studies* (pp. 19–31). Canadian Scholars.

Turner, V., Abraham, R., & Harris, A. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Routledge.

van der Ark, L. A., Emons, W. H. M., & Meijer, R. R. (2023). *Essays on contemporary psychometrics*. Springer.

Wells-Dyck, A. (2023). *Response to intervention: the scope and organization of school support services*. R. Freeze (Ed.), *Transformative inclusive education* (pp. 127–153). Canadian Scholars.

Wong, A. (2022a). *Disability visibility: First-person stories from the twenty-first century*. Vintage Books.

Wong, A. (2022b, February 1). *Reading storms, embracing life: A remembrance of Neil Marcus*. Disability Visibility Project. https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2022/01/09/reading-storms-embracing-life-a-remembrance-of-neil-marcus/#:~:text=Disabled%20Country%20(n.d.)&text=I%20live%20disabled%20culture%2C%20eat,am%20one%20of%20its%20citizens

Chapter 3

Systematic Ableism: A Critical Policy Analysis of Manitoba K–12 Provincial Inclusion Documents

Abstract

This policy analysis explores Manitoba's provincial Inclusive Education policy conveyed by Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. This study analyzes two documents: 1) Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning's *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024), and 2) *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023). This study explored one main research question: How/ in what ways does Manitoba's provincial Kindergarten–12 (K–12) Inclusive Education policy appear to reflect ableist discourse? This study employed Fairclough's (1995) three-dimension model of critical discourse analysis (CDA), using a critical disability studies theoretical lens of analysis. Fairclough's (1995) three dimensions of analysis are: 1) text; 2) discursive practices; and 3) social practices in a critical examination of communication and power. Employing CDA, this study explicates the relationship between inclusive conceptualizations in Manitoba K–12 education and embedded ableism. In this context, I conceptualize inclusion as the ideological and pedagogical practice of including all children in quality education in the same location and with the same respect, regardless of disability (Freer, 2021; Moran, 2007). I centre disability knowledge, understanding, and perspective within and throughout my analysis, revealing the extent to which ableism appears to be present within Manitoba's approach to K–12 Inclusive Education. The findings recognize the complicity of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning in supporting ableism in K–12 schools.

Keywords: inclusive education, critical disability studies, ableism, special education

Systematic Ableism: A Critical Policy Analysis of Manitoba K-12 Provincial Inclusion Documents

Canadian K–12 education promotes inclusion. This promotion is disseminated through provincial statements of inclusion, philosophies of inclusion, visions of inclusion, and the like. Inclusive education policies, statements, visions, and philosophies are the guiding provincial or territorial policies that influence K–12 educational pursuits and practices. These maxims effectively set the standard and direction for inclusive education best practices, leadership direction, initiatives/goals, and service provision for each K–12 school. How inclusion is ethically described dictates the scope, breadth, and depth of practice. Inclusive education throughout this study refers primarily, but not exclusively, to practices, policies, and discourses directly relating to the disability community and disability-based equity. As Towle (2015) contended:

> While every province and territory defines [disability]“special needs” differently, most Inclusive Education policies generally describe the philosophy of inclusion and the tools that assist in implementing that philosophy. (p. 14)

In Manitoba, a unitary inclusive ideal or understanding and application remain elusive. A lack of consensus surrounding the meaning and implementation of inclusive education continues to hinder the creation of a centralized understanding of what it means to be inclusive. The continued influence of traditional special education prevents the relinquishing of segregationist practices, policies, and language in K–12 education. Terms such as “special education,” “special needs,” or “exceptionality” continue to be used with consistency. The widespread usage and professional recognition of this terminology signifies a medicalized portrayal of the disabled community, bestowing notions of brokenness, deficit, and pity as integral associative features. I analyzed Manitoba’s provincial K–12 Inclusive Education *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) statement and the curricular document *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023) using Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA), applying a critical disability studies theoretical framework. This study explored one main research question:

> How/ in what ways does Manitoba's provincial Kindergarten12 (K–12) Inclusive Education policy appear to reflect ableist discourse?

Ableist discourse constructs people with disabilities as dependent and inferior. Ableist discourse continues to be used to segregate disabled students from accessing provincial curriculum and programs in Manitoba, a practice that is often presented as inclusive and appropriate education. Symeonidou (2023) contended:

> ableist language in education is linked with the use of the word 'special', in systems favouring integration, to characterize children, programs, processes, and materials. Children with 'special needs' are seen as a distinct group of learners: they are 'special' because they deviate from the norm, and they have 'needs' which require specialist support from specialist staff. The use of 'special' to describe segregating settings (e.g., special schools, special units, special classes) legitimates the high level of expertise provided in these settings, and silences the fact that children are segregated and excluded from mainstream classes and curricula on the basis of their impairment. (p. 837)

Ableist discourse is used as a precursor to a world of confinement in Manitoba K–12 schools. This confinement looks like segregated classrooms and curricula, as well as limited opportunities to participate in the culture and life of a school (after-school programs, sports, and clubs). This practice is then justified through discourse that employs terms such as "special needs" programming, support, or curriculum, whereas these "special needs" supports might otherwise be described as differentiated instruction, scaffolding, or universal design for learning (UDL). In many ways, ableist discourse is employed to deposit disabled students away from opportunities enjoyed by their able-bodied peers for reasons that I believe are multifaceted and complex.

Inscribed on individual bodies and minds, disability is constructed as a function of loss in K–12 schools. Despite the inappropriateness of this terminology (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015), Manitoba K–12 education continues to ignore the collective voice of the disability community in the Canadian and global context (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2019).

Special education, special needs, or exceptionality are long-established in Canadian curricular documents (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2024; Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, 2014; Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools, Government of New Brunswick, 2013; Inclusive Education Policy: Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2019) and philosophies of inclusion (Manitoba Education, 2021; Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Realizing the Promises of Diversity, 2014) and are integral to funding schemas (Manitoba Education, 2023). Towle (2015) contended:

> Unfortunately, the variation in Inclusive Education policies, their implementation, and the way that they are funded means that, currently, a student with a disability in one part of the country may receive a considerably different amount of support than a student with the same type of disability in another region. (p. 13)

This disjointed implementation of inclusive supports and services is illustrative of a significant level of systemic dysfunction. As a form of political correctness, inclusive education appears to function as a placeholder, maintaining policy and practice that fosters ableism and is detrimental to disabled students. Towle (2015) asserted, “When it comes to practical application [of inclusion], not all schools are properly equipped to have children with disabilities in their classroom" (p. 9). Despite the field of inclusive education's attempts to distance itself away from outmoded policies, practices, and language, it has not allowed for people with disabilities to reflect and lead meaningful change to or access a public education devoid of discrimination (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s 15, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982).

Inclusive education continues to uphold a functionally adroit system of special education, based on the medical-charity model of disability (Zaks, 2023), while claiming otherwise. This may be attributed to, as Freer (2021) asserted, negative attitudes among students as a symptom of general societal apathy toward disabled people. A largely performative approach may contribute to a reluctance to remove barriers, leaving progress slow. Bartlett et al. (2023) found in their policy analysis a Manitoba educational system continuing to support exclusion. They contended:

> The findings in this study are similar to findings of prior research conducted in Manitoba almost 20 years ago that explored the issue and opportunities for supporting broader participation in work, life, and community for persons with intellectual disabilities. The similarities in findings indicates that many longstanding issues, including the social devaluation of persons with disabilities, continue to persist. (p. 11)

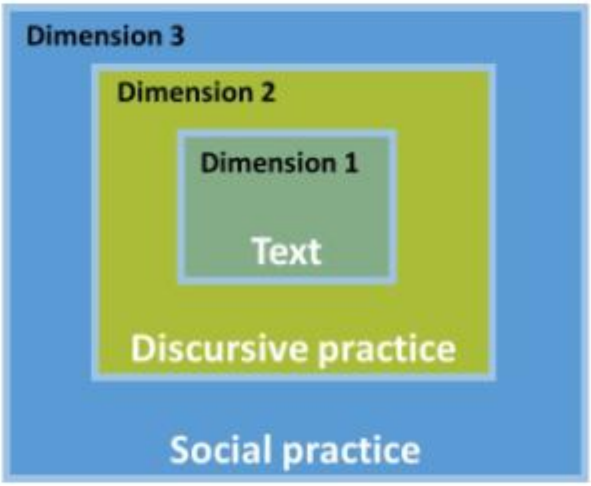
The maintenance of a K–12 traditional segregated educational system for disabled students points to the extent of systemic ableism (Bartlett et al., 2023, p. 17). General acceptance of social devaluation continues to find a foothold in Manitoba K–12 education and is instilled through curriculum and policy (Bartlett et al., 2023, p. 15). Throughout this study, I have used a CDA methodology coupled with a critical disability studies theoretical framework to draw out ableist discourse embedded in Manitoba's philosophy of inclusive education and curricular documentation relating to inclusion. Drawing connections between textual, discursive, and social discourse, I demonstrate that Manitoba continues to weave ableism throughout its inclusionary policy as a method of sustaining prejudicial power structures and avoiding deep-seated structural transformation.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

In this study, I analyze Manitoba's documents using Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA), applying a critical disability studies theoretical framework. As an interdisciplinary approach to CDA, Fairclough's three-dimensional model provides a framework for the analysis of any communicative event, including text, speech, and images. Fairclough's three dimensions are: 1) text, 2) discursive practices, and 3) social practices, as seen below.

Figure 1

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis



Note. From *Fairclough Critical Discourse Analysis*, by flixabout.com, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w_5riFCMGA

Fairclough (1995) understood any form of communication as an act (or consequence) that conveys values and principles. Fairclough (1995) asserted there are no communicative events or acts free from interpretation, values, and power. Communication always comprises a form, a constitution, and a social consequence. This communication of which can be understood as a tool of power that can shape and create emotions, practices, and social interactions. Language, or discourse, connotes positionality. In a foundational text, de Saussure (1966) stated:

> [Communication] has both an individual and social side, and we cannot conceive of one without the other. It always implies both an established system and an evolution. At every moment it is an existing institution and a product of the past. Language is the norm of all communicative manifestations. (p. 8–9)

The language we use directly relates to the way we view and treat others. Inclusive practices begin with the use of equitable language as an imperative to achieve curricular and programmatic change grounded in human rights and social justice. Understanding the connection between communication and power is the starting point of CDA. Fairclough's three dimensions can be summarized as follows:

> Dimension one, or text, is any form of text, speech, or image. This dimension can be understood as an analysis at the *word* level. The second dimension is Discursive Practice; this level involves the production or constitution of text. Here the analysis takes place at the *text* level. Dimension three is called Social Practice. Social Practice refers to social structures and is concerned with societal or organizational norms, standards, or expectations. These dimensions understand language as having the ability to create change, change behaviour, and as a tool of power. (Fairclough Critical Discourse Analysis, 2017)

In Fairclough's (1995) first dimension, text, discourse is described as the assemblage of words people choose when they write or speak. By choosing certain words, we show our attitude to the subject, thereby creating connotations and insinuations within our text. The writer or communicator imbues their beliefs and values into the text through its composition. Fairclough pointed out that the choice of vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures makes up the formal features of a text and that these features are determined by the contributors' values (Al Ghazali, 2017). Throughout my textual analysis, I looked for uses of phrases, groups of words, or singular words that connote themes of separation between disabled and non-disabled students. I asked, "Are there examples or justifications (discourses) for disability-based exclusion?" and, "Are opportunities equal?"

The second dimension, discursive practice, locates power in the way sentences are composed, the meaning they convey, and the implications involved. This dimension understands the text as a precursor to practice. Neutrality is nonexistent, and the text contains attitudes, values, and assessments that the sender will convey to the recipient (Fairclough Critical Discourse Analysis, 2017). This dimension is concerned with the relational value of the text, in which social relationships are enacted via the text in the discourse (Al Ghazali, 2017). Van Dijk (1996) contended that "discourse influences social power exercised by a dominant group over the actions and minds of another group. Such power limits their freedom, and influences their knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, and speech" (p. 86). This dimension is concerned with associative discursive practices that are recommended or urged by the textual holdings. In this stage of my analysis, I looked for sentences that convey power and authority. I asked, "Are these sentences conveying inclusion for the purposes of creating educational parity or tiered exclusion? Is discourse applied to limit freedoms for disabled students or empower them? How are values, as a precursor to practice, conveyed to the reader about disability?"

The third dimension, social practice, focuses on the social relationships and practices created by, or sustained through, discourse. As a tool of power, discourse shapes the values and standards by which social communities are formed and upheld. This dimension conveys "the expressive value in which the producer of a text evaluates an aspect of reality or social identities" (Al Ghazali, 2017, p. 111). In this dimension, community and identities form markers that delineate social boundaries, creating contextual dichotomy and hierarchy. Symeonidou (2023) referred to this as "how ableist discourses in education construct two groups of learners (e.g., dependent and independent) and justify separate systems of education provision" (p. 836). In this stage of my analysis, I looked for discourse that connotes a social separation of disabled from non-disabled students as a means of creating segregationist educational streams. I asked, "Does ableist discourse create segregation in educational programming, opportunities, and achievement (graduation/completion requirements and allocations)?" My analysis also considered the impact of what is not stated.

As Al Ghazali (2017) summarized, Fairclough's key insights are:

> Discourse is shaped primarily by power relations in society, and that discourse shapes social relations, as well as being shaped by them. He argues that language serves to construct particular political positions, which entail unequal relations of power. (p.112)

My analysis considered both the prescriptive discourse in text and also how practices and processes work in concert within the established order to reinforce power and social relations in Manitoba schools.

My analysis was focused on Manitoba's guiding provincial *Inclusion Philosophy* (2024) and its curricular document *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023). These documents form the backdrop for guiding and implementing programming for disabled students in Manitoba K–12 schools. Although this analysis is by no means exhaustive in identifying all of the apparent ways ableism is present in Manitoba curricular documents and schools, it provides a snapshot of Manitoba's K–12 Inclusive Education policy, critically analyzed for the purpose of unsettling ableist discourses, policies, and practices. Following Fairclough (1995), I strived:

> to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between, a) discursive practices, events, and texts, and b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes: to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power. (p. 132)

Adding to this, I considered a number of contextual points on CDA raised by Locke (2004). These points illustrate the social and discursive connectivity of established discourse and the ways in which systems maintain particular narratives, or versions of reality:

- A prevailing social order and social processes are constituted and sustained less by the will of individuals than by the pervasiveness of particular constructions or versions of reality—often referred to as discourses.
- Discourse is coloured by and productive of ideology.
- The systematic analysis and interpretation of texts is potentially revelatory of ways in which discourses consolidate and colonize human subjects through often covert position calls. (p. 1–2)

Through the application of Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, I explored ableist discourses embedded in Manitoba K–12 education, specifically in two of Manitoba Education's documents related to inclusive education. I connected these discourses to processes that contribute to a hierarchical stratification and the continued devaluation of disabled students. In the section that follows, I explore how a critical disability studies framework guided my process, providing foundational tenets for data analysis and contextual relevance.

Critical Disability Studies: Challenging Inclusion in Manitoba

A critical disability studies framework situates disability as a central node in knowledge production, locating meaning-making within a disability, or crip, worldview. I conceptualize a crip worldview as an intellectual location that surpasses baseline notions of inclusivity, celebrating the disability identity and community, in all its intersectional strength and creativity (Schalk, 2017). It is an ideological space to embrace, learn, and grow without reticence.

My analysis is informed by:

> the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical policy analysis takes an explicit position, and thus wants to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 466)

I contend that Manitoba's provincial *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) and policy, as aforementioned, appears to contain embedded ableist discourse that marginalizes disabled people, often resulting in transinstitutionalization. I define transinstitutionalization following Keefe (2022) as a "complex system of hierarchical and discriminatory processes, policies, and practices which privilege and value the able-bodied" (p. 1), while demarcating the disabled community for systematic institutionalization without the bricks and mortar of traditional institutions. By design, the Manitoba K–12 school system, entrenched in/through discourse, actively participates in the systematic transinstitutionalization of those students participating in individualized (I) and modified (M) programming systematically. (I) and (M) programs are defined in *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023) as an educational track/stream/pathway for those "students whose intellectual deficit/intellectual developmental disorder prevents them from accessing some or all of the provincial curriculum" (p. 1). Because of the problematic aspects of this definition, which will be elaborated on, students participating in these programs experience systematic and programmatic institutionalization.

As an analytical tool, a critical disability studies framework encompasses ever-shifting subjectivities, locating meaning-making within a temporal and contextual location open to shifting dynamic and understandings. In other words, education policy and discourse change over time and within a context reflective of, and influenced by, societal norms. Recognizing the dynamism of policy, I understand the importance of continual analysis of inclusive policy as an avenue of contesting power and inequity as research praxis, and as an act of creating a site of resistance. As Hickman and Serlin (2019) contended:

> Knowledge practices need to be experientially and contingently located … these perspectives need to reflect shifting worldviews that are shared and practiced by multiple subjects simultaneously. Within a Critical Disability framework, the terms of this shifting dynamic not only make such shifting worldviews visible, they also make visible the system that produces disability and compulsory able-bodiedness. (p. 133)

Through this framework, I contest ideas that posit disability as individually located. Instead, my focus on method includes asking who is served or empowered by such knowledge, and how such knowledge can help to constitute a proactive community of disability scholars and activists (Hickman & Serlin, 2019). In a crip-based approach, encompassed within a critical disability studies framework, disability is understood as located within a socio-political, economic, and environmental context, contesting marginalizing and stigmatizing power structures. As Kafer (2013) contended:

> The problem of disability no longer resides in the minds or bodies of individuals but in built environments and social patterns that exclude or stigmatize particular kinds of bodies, minds, and ways of being (pp. 5–6).

A critical disability studies framework is conducive for analyzing ableist discourses within Manitoba’s K–12 philosophy of inclusion and the like. Although ableism can be defined in several ways, I agree with Keefe (2022):

> Ableism is a complex system of hierarchical and discriminatory processes, policies, and institutions that privilege and prefer able-bodied people, fail to represent or meaningfully include disabled persons’ voices, and are grounded in a network of ableist beliefs and practices that maintain and reproduce unequal outcomes for disabled people and benefit able-bodied people. (Keefe, 2022, p. 115)

Integrating a crip worldview, an understanding of crip temporality, and crip subjectivities within this methodological process allowed me to centre disability knowledge, understanding, and perspective within and throughout my data analysis and knowledge production. These tools aided in isolating embedded ableist discourse. As Schalk (2017) contended:

> Critical Disability Studies is a methodological approach to studying power, privilege, and oppression of bodily and mental norms which is not dependent upon the presence of disabled people, yet is informed by social perspectives, practices, and concerns about disability (p.1).

Applying a critical disability studies lens can be seen as studying fragmented systems, broken attitudes, and broken perspectives (Price & Kerschbaum, 2016) highlighted by seemingly ableist discourse. In the section that follows, I explore my data analysis technique when analyzing the presence of ableist discourse in Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning’s

Philosophy of Inclusion (2024) and the curricular document *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023).

Data Analysis

I analyzed Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning's *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) and the curricular document *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023). These two documents represent Manitoba's K–12 *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) in theory and practice and are indicative of the inclusionary *spirit* or subtext of inclusion in the province. These documents form, and are representative of, the context of K–12 programming for students with disabilities. They outline programming eligibility, student-specific planning, implementation, assessment and reporting, high school completion requirements, and transition planning. I analyzed each document separately, with *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023) being analyzed both section by section and as a complete document.

Immersion in the data was undertaken by experiencing each policy document intimately and separately probing its depth of field. Reading with and against each policy created an immersive textual experience. I read and interacted with *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) many times over the last five years as a Manitoba educator and researcher. More recently, I read and analyzed the document six times for the purpose of this study. Moreover, I read and analyzed the curricular document *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023) six times, section by section and as a whole document, to establish prevalent themes, ask probing questions, and analyze its subtext.

During the initial reading, applying a critical disability studies framework, I underlined key phrases or groups of sentences that warranted further analysis. I underlined statements, phrases, and terminology that gave me pause or stood out as potentially segregationist or intimating an ableist trope. Initial themes were isolated in the creation of context and background. This initial reading created a pathway of analysis. In the margins, I actively made notes relating to first impressions, connecting a critical disability studies lens to the policy. These notes comprised initial questions, thoughts, or issues I pondered, such as "Why wouldn't the province (Manitoba) write curriculum so that students they have already identified as being left out of provincial curriculum could be included?" During the second reading, patterns and reoccurring terminology began to emerge such as *appropriate educational programming*. Using a highlighter, I isolated these recurring sets of data. I wondered what significance was being conveyed by the recurrence of terms such as the aforementioned one. Following immersion in the text, I isolated these emergent units as several words, a sentence, or a term (Kleinheksel et. al., 2020) that was representative of ableist discourse. These terms included: 1) appropriate educational programming, 1a) [related to] building independence, 2) functionally appropriate learning experiences, 3) learning experiences, 3a) functionally appropriate, and 4) learning environment to the extent appropriate. These terms seemingly indicated, in the context of the document, a rationale for disability-based segregation. During the remaining readings, I condensed these units of meaning, creating for each one a short label, term, and/or a probing follow-up question that remained unanswered by each policy. Each unit was then analyzed using a latent projective analytical approach, explicating meaningful connections between inclusive education and critical disability studies, as represented in Table 1. For Fairclough, this analytical step would be categorized as taking place at the word level, or as dimension one.

Latent projective analysis, as Kleinheksel et al. (2020) contended, leverages the researcher's own interpretations of the meaning of the text, acknowledging that the researcher is intimately involved in the analytical process and that their role is to actively use theories and lenses to interpret and understand the data (Kleinheksel et. al., 2020). Situating key themes within a critical disability studies framework revealed the linguistic dimension of social and cultural phenomena and questions of whether each practice reinforced or changed the established order precisely because it affected people's mental processes, social representation, and social practices (Mou & Albagmi, 2021). For Fairclough (1995), these units represent discourse, described as the assemblage of words people choose when they write or speak. By choosing these words, the authors of each document revealed an attitude to the subject of inclusion, thereby creating connotations and insinuations within the text about disabled students. Fairclough pointed out that the choice of vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures make up the formal features of a text and are determined by the contributors' values (Al Ghazali, 2017). These values were revealed in my study.

I then read and re-read my textual analysis to reveal the second dimension, discursive practice, which locates power in the way sentences are composed, the meaning they convey, and the implications involved (Fairclough Critical Discourse Analysis, 2017). As a K–12 educator in Manitoba who works primarily with disabled students, I have experienced insights into practices that relate to the discursive practices and implied meaning in these texts. For example, when the aforementioned curricular documents reference *learning environment to the extent appropriate*, they are providing schools *ipso facto* grounds for exclusion where school staff deem necessary. Linguistically, these subtle constructs provide space for exclusionary discursive practices to occur within a framework of inclusion, thus maintaining the *status quo*.

Finally, I analyzed these documents to reveal Fairclough's third dimension, social practices. This dimension conveys "the expressive value in which the producer of a text evaluates an aspect of reality or social identities” (Al Ghazali, 2017, p. 111). In this dimension, community and identities form markers that demarcate social boundaries, creating contextual dichotomy and hierarchy.

Like Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009), I am concerned about the ways inclusion can be used to subordinate one dimension of inequality to another and create further hierarchies and divisions, “reinforcing the place of disabled people as the lowest priority on the social justice agenda” (Wilde & Fish, 2024, p. 3). In the following section, my analysis and findings illustrate the continued use of apparent ableist discourse in Manitoba K–12 education through Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning’s *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) and the curricular document *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023). My analysis is grounded in critical disability studies to illustrate the continued use of ableist discourse. My findings explore the barriers that impede the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in Manitoba K–12 schools and the effects of this type of discourse on their societal opportunities in adulthood.

Findings

Philosophy of Inclusion (2024) is Manitoba’s provincial statement relating to the inclusion of historically marginalized and/or segregated groups. This statement primarily refers to the disabled community but can be understood to include any other minority or intersecting identity. This document conveys the inclusionary standard and extent to which each school must strive to implement it. It encompasses both practice and ideology, and it reinforces the importance of equity and diversity in Manitoba schools.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning defines their *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) in the following way:

The Public Schools Acts supports Manitoba's philosophy of inclusion, which states:

> Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship.
>
> In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us.

Using Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model for CDA, this statement was subdivided into each of the three categories highlighting emergent textual, discursive, and social practices. A critical disability studies lens of analysis highlighted ostensibly ableist discourse, divided within Fairclough's three dimensions as seen in Table 1. This analysis enabled me to extrapolate hierarchical ableist power structures embedded in ideology as discourse, the likes of which appear to continue to uphold unequal relations of power that may limit disabled students' freedom and autonomous influence.

Table 1

Ableist Discourse

Text	Discursive practice	Social practice
"The Public School Act Supports"	Legal initiation that sets a definitive tone to the discussion of programming for disabled students	Legal = right, irrefutable, unquestionable, authoritative

Text	Discursive practice	Social practice
"Inclusion is a way of thinking"	What exactly does one think about? By thinking does this mean to address attitudinal ableism?	Ambiguous, vague. Potentially allowing schools to "think" inclusion without a research grounding
"that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe"	Makes no mention of disability inclusion. In this case, if disabled students could be said to make others feel to the contrary of this statement, can they be excluded? How do schools make <u>every individual</u>….?	"feeling accepted, valued, and safe" can be used as a pretext for disability based exclusion
"equal access to the benefits of citizenship"	What are the benefits of citizenship? *Equal benefits*	This statement runs contrary to practice where disabled students in I programming do not graduate with a recognized Diploma (see transition analysis)
"we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community"	Connecting inclusion and well-being, despite the prospect of transinstitutionalization, segregation, and exclusion from a diploma	In this context, "well-being" of disabled students is government dependence and institutionalizing programs
"richer future for all of us"	Segregation and devalued educational streaming is idealized by providing each stream/program with their rightful outcome (see above)	Able-bodied society's future is secure, "richer" due to this inclusionary system by which disabled people are removed, contained

Manitoba's *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) is defined by its initial ambiguity and legal grounding. Upholding the seemingly ableist discourse that follows, this inclusionary philosophy sets an authoritative tone, imparting an unquestionable aura to inclusion. There appears to be little flexibility relating to the nature of inclusion and the associated legislation. Although the document's authority is grounded in governmental power, the discourse used in this space reinforces legal authority. While suggesting a conceptual inclusion framework, it does not indicate what one should consider when thinking about inclusion. Manitoba's policy lacks direction and specifics. Instead, it demands of the reader systematic trust. It would seem there is a hierarchical notion of professional authority over research or community expertise. Terminology such as "safe," "valued," "acceptance," "well-being," "equal," "citizenship," and "benefit" is left unexplored.

Often, policy interpretation is reliant on the singular analysis of professional or provincial priorities. This restrictive approach holds space for schools to justify limiting and potentially discriminatory practices as inclusion. Framing ambiguity as inclusion illustrates a special education leaning and allocates the burden of proof to the contrary elsewhere. Instead of outlining inclusion clearly, this document uses ambiguity to elicit an interpretive fluidity that has resulted in "variable degrees of inclusion in Manitoba K–12 education" (Bartlett et al., 2023, p. 17). Exclusion often remains the accepted practice with the potential for inclusive practices where schools feel they are applicable.

An abundance of idealized language, such as "richer future for all of us," leaves practices of inclusion to the whims of individual school divisions and schools. This approach is upheld through discourse in which the current systematic practice of exclusion is idealized as appropriate education. This discourse is also apparent in my analysis of *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023). A critical exploration of this discourse reveals inconsistent claims of equality and citizenship. Ableist discourses are used to uphold separate structures and practices identified as inclusion. Finally, the limited nature of Manitoba's

Philosophy of Inclusion (2024) leaves much to be desired. The lack of expansion, discussion, and research gives the reader the impression that the topic is not important enough to be extensive nor worthy of elaboration. This statement conveys more by what is not written than by what is.

In the following section I analyze *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023) section by section, as outlined in this document's table of contents, before turning my analysis to this document in its entirety. The analysis that follows improves on the aforementioned discussion and analysis to highlight the uses of seemingly ableist discourses in Manitoba.

Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools (2023)

This document outlines the individualized (I) and modified (M) educational track/stream/pathway, detailing eligibility, planning and documentation details, program implementation, assessment and reporting, high school completion requirements, and transition planning. Manitoba educators refer to this document as a blueprint for design and implementation purposes. Throughout this section, I analyze this document section by section, weaving and embedding Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model and a critical disability studies framework into my analysis to reveal pervasive ableist discourse that contributes to the marginalization, if not discrimination, of disabled students in Manitoba K–12 education.

Introduction

The document begins, "School boards are required to provide appropriate educational programming to all students within their school" (p. 1). Beginning this document by outlining and defining the meaning of *appropriate educational programming*, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning sets the legislation for educational programming that it deems appropriate.

When one considers the legal foundation it sets in the following sentence, it is clear that a formalistic structure of inclusion and exclusion is enacted. Appropriate educational programming is defined in the glossary as:

> A collaborative school-family-community process focused on creating learning environments and providing responsive resources and services that address the lifelong learning, social, and emotional needs of all students. (p. 31)

The subjective nature of appropriate educational programming serves the best interest of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning by creating a landscape of interpretation. Although the process is framed as collaborative, interpretation and ambiguity serve the best interest of the provincial authority by creating an environment where the burden of proof that any particular programming is inappropriate resides with an individual citizen (i.e., parent[s]). From the onset, this document suggests a collaborative approach that is best suited for all parties involved, creating a mutuality in process and goals that limits disagreement. Nevertheless, this section is grounded in legal terminology. The preceding sentence, which states, “policy and practice must comply with *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and *The Human Rights Code of Manitoba*” (p. 1), refers to the legal compliance and authority of these educational programs. The legalistic nature of these references set the relational and contextual tone of the document as authoritative. This approach is purposive, calculated, and set amidst legal precedent in the establishment of what it means to enact *appropriate educational programming*. Relationally, this unequal balance of power continues to favour the provincial authority when making final programmatic decisions, calling into question the scope of what is meant by the term *collaborative*.

Two Canadian legal cases that form the legal understanding of the term “appropriate educational programming” heard before the Supreme Court of Canada “depict the evolution and precedent of how children with disabilities are perceived: Eaton v. Brant County District School Board (1995) and Moore v. British Columbia (2012)" (Towle, 2015, p. 8). Emerging from these cases was the legal enactment and understanding of appropriate educational programming. Disabled students could be segregated into self-contained special education, classes provided school boards could provide empirical evidence of a child's experience in both a segregated classroom and a regular, inclusive classroom in order to override the parents' and child's wishes.

What emerged as appropriate educational programming and the best interest of a disabled student continued to be legally conceptualized as individual, contextual, and segregationist. By legitimating segregated educational programming, the Supreme Court of Canada has continued to uphold a deficit–medical model of disability, framing the disabled community as a community *lacking* and in need of gratuitous and charitable intervention. Under this legal pretext, the Manitoba educational authority can continue to provide devalued educational opportunities portrayed as being in the best interest of the disabled community. As Hansen and Turnbull (2013) contended:

> Traditional perceptions of disability and impairment as deficits remain largely intact, built on foundations of fear and ignorance, and reflecting historical myths and misconceptions about the "abnormality," "dysfunction," or "incapacity" of disability. Since they are not expected to be present or participating in society, and the assumed "global nature" of their disability prevents them from taking on any individual or social role, people with disabilities remain largely invisible and "out of place." In this way, [the] disabled … remain confined to the social margins, their invisibility and exclusion appearing (at least until very recently) somehow normal and natural. (p. 119)

Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools (2023) begins with legal formality, setting direction and intentionality and prepping the stage for situations in which segregation and devaluation, as aforementioned, may be legally instituted for disabled students. The document continues, “There must be reasonable accommodations of students’ special needs unless they demonstrably give rise to undue hardship due to cost, risk, safety, impact on others, or other factors” (p. 1). By introducing (I) and (M) programming in this manner, students with disabilities are portrayed as a sub-set of the student population that must strive to participate in education by *fitting in* and avoiding any behaviour that could be construed as demonstrating “undue hardship due to cost, risk, safety, impact on others, or other factors.” I wonder, is associative (undue) cost related to augmentative and alternative technology? Is risk conceptualized as speculative or realized? Does impact on others have more to do with *others* rather than a specific student? And, what is included in *other factors*?

With an underlying, seemingly ableist discourse, this document sets a narrative that associates disability with undue hardship, purporting euphemistic notions of special needs as exceeding a norm or being a hindrance, a negative positionality (Gernsbacher et al., 2016). Critical disability studies situates this type of apparent ableist narrative—an unwillingness to practice systemic equity while maintaining performative inclusion—as emblematic of systematic discrimination. In this context, Naraian and Gabel (2023) acknowledged that “there is no concept of difference without ableism” (p. 100). The continued use of the “special needs” (p.1, 5) dysphemism as a professional–official identifier speaks to the maintenance of disablism as a form of social and educational oppression (Goodley, 2013). A recent study by Rojas (2022) analyzed this kind of bias:

> Implicit bias can change, but so far, it has only changed for some groups. It changed for sexuality and race bias dramatically. Sexuality bias dropped sixty-four percent over fourteen years, whereas disability, age, and body weight bias only shifted three percent over the same

> period. Based on this data, it could take more than two hundred years to reach disability bias neutrality. (p. 2)

In this light, the perpetuation of ableist discourse in this document can be said to contribute to a continuing cycle of unequal power structures and oppressive acts that compromise inclusion. Ableist discourse shapes the contours of (I) and (M) programming in Manitoba schools. Entrenched in legal and educational formalism, ableism informs how educators design and implement K–12 programming in Manitoba. After analyzing the tone set for this document, I now turn in the following section to discuss the role of documentation.

Documentation

Professionalism and accountability are important aspects of the K–12 education system. Documentation ensures quality and process control within the organization, creating a cohesive and unifying outcome that is conducive to a certain level of uniformity across schools. In Manitoba, "(I) and (M) programming are instructional supports that involve changing or removing provincial expected learning outcomes" (p. 2). When this statement is analyzed at the word or text level (Fairclough, 1995), "removing provincial expected learning outcomes" seems to point to a limiting or cessation of learning outcomes for students participating in (I) and (M) programs. This remains consistent with (M) programming, as students in this steam continue to earn 30 credits and receive a modified diploma (p. 12) upon graduation, which I will discuss later on, but have a reduction of learning outcomes in most or all of their classes. By contrast, the aforementioned statement implies (I) programs are void of provincial learning outcomes. Although (I) programs are provincially regulated and evaluated, this statement seemingly implies that learning outcomes in these programs are without merit. Further, this raises questions about their presence at all. These assertions ostensibly contradict the definitions of Individual Education Plan (IEP), Individual Education

Planning – Report (Card) (IEP-R), and Student-Specific Outcome (SSO) given in the document, which state:

- IEP: A type of student-specific plan that documents student-specific outcomes (SSOs) that are in domains outside of the provincial curriculum (p. 32)
- IEP-R: A template for reporting on SSOs in domains that are outside Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning provincial curriculum and are detailed in an IEP (e.g., communication, cognitive/academic, social skills, and relationships) (p. 32)
- SSO: A concise description of what a student will know and be able to do by the end of the school year; SSOs are outcomes other than the learning expectations of the provincial curriculum (p. 33)

Despite the effort Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning has put into asserting (I) programs do not follow provincial curriculum, IEP, IEP-R, and SSO sound a lot like provincially mandated outcomes, guidelines, and expectations (i.e., provincial curriculum). These facets of learning are mapped out in an IEP (p. 32), are detailed and organized formally under learning areas (e.g., communication, cognitive/academic, social skills, and relationships; p. 32) guided by the province, and are “a concise description of what a student will know and be able to do by the end of the school year” (p. 33). In an evaluative process at a systems level, provincial officials regularly inspect that Manitoba schools are following and carrying out (I) programming to an acceptable degree, following all guidelines, and producing the necessary documentation to ensure programmatic cohesion and the maintenance of a provincially expected level of education. This documentation holds legal, procedural, and monetary (funding) ramifications and is accorded high priority and respect.

Manitoba continues to classify (I) programs as appropriate educational programming underpinned by professionalism and accountability and detailed in formal and legal documentation (IEPs) while steadfastly refusing to officially recognize disabled students' achievements, participation, and completion of this provincial program through the granting of a high school diploma. As a discursive practice, this formal informality legitimizes (I) programs as appropriate education one the one hand while discrediting any achievement or outcome. I wonder, how can a provincial program be both legitimate and illegitimate at the same time? And, if it is an appropriate program, why is it not recognized with a formal diploma?

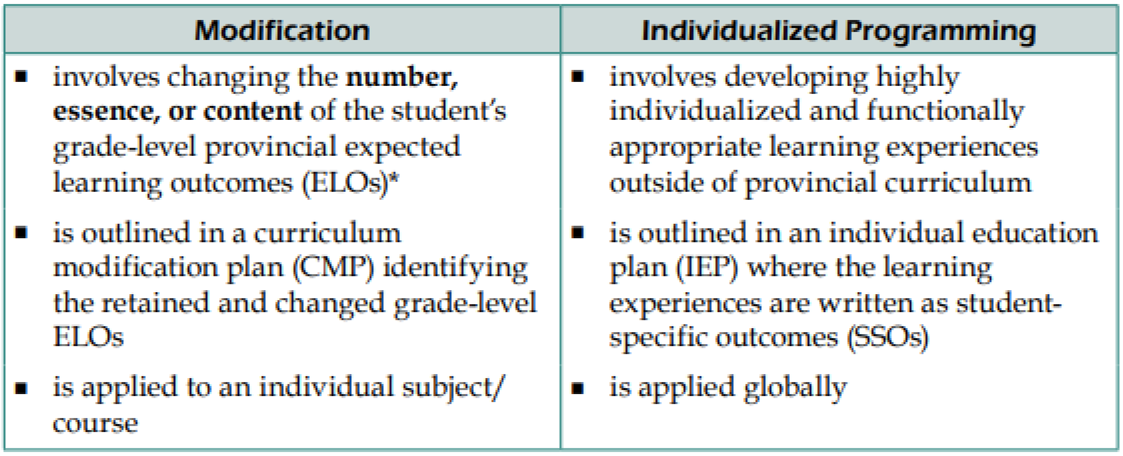
Critical disability studies points to this discourse as a devaluing and dehumanizing process of negation, forcing the disabled community to the margins of society (a phenomenon that can be analyzed through Fairclough's [1995] dimension of social practices). As Cockain (2023) pointed out, such a programmatic avenue "emphasizes how perplexity emerges through a lack of identity, or rupture, between words and the world. These troubling and perplexing narratives register the fragility of symbolic systems and the troubled subject positions these enable/disable" (p. 1). The disconnect between words (provincial documentation) and the world (recognized diploma, benefits of citizenship) situate disabled contributions and achievement amidst an ableist discourse of devaluation. Set against the weight of a provincial authority, disabled students are forced to participate in programs of exclusion, perpetuated as kindness but instituted for socio-economic and cultural constriction. As an avenue of confinement, (I) programming specifically can be categorized as residential or institutional care that forces disabled students into cycles of government dependency by limiting their societal options and agency. This is done by devaluating their high school participation and achievements, which results in their exclusion from formalized high school recognition, as demonstrated by the type of documentation produced and achieved.

Definitions

Defining terminology allows for clarity and conformity in the process and application of said terms. Figure 2 outlines (I) and (M) definitions as set out by Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning:

Figure 2

Definitions of (M) and (I) Programming



Modification	**Individualized Programming**
▪ involves changing the **number, essence, or content** of the student's grade-level provincial expected learning outcomes (ELOs)*	▪ involves developing highly individualized and functionally appropriate learning experiences outside of provincial curriculum
▪ is outlined in a curriculum modification plan (CMP) identifying the retained and changed grade-level ELOs	▪ is outlined in an individual education plan (IEP) where the learning experiences are written as student-specific outcomes (SSOs)
▪ is applied to an individual subject/ course	▪ is applied globally

Note. Reprinted from Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2023). *Supporting inclusion*: *Modification and individualized programming in Manitoba schools.* https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/pdf/supporting_inclusion_m_i.pdf (p. 3)

As aforementioned, (M) programs involve an alteration of provincial demonstrable learning outcomes but still result in official recognition, whereas (I) programs involve equal but different formal assessment and criteria but result in a stylized, unofficial certificate. As defined, (I) programming "involves developing highly individualized and functionally appropriate learning experiences." This raises an issue: If there is no curriculum, what does "appropriate learning experiences" mean, refer to, include, and look like? Also, for what purpose are these learning experiences "functionally appropriate"? Unfortunately, *appropriate learning experiences* and/or *functionally appropriate learning* are undefined in this document. Although the next statement in the (I) column attempts to point to the IEP as the document that contains student-specific outcomes, it nevertheless fails to define the terms previously set out. In this situation, how do educators create individualized programs when the existing terminology is obscure? Furthermore, what qualifies provincially licensed educators to construct such programming without provincial curriculum, operational terminology, or specific guidelines that include exemplars?

This approach appears to demonstrate provincial approval of segregated education. (I) programs convey provincial values that uphold unequal educational structures that may lead to discursive and unequal social practices and outcomes for disabled students. By design, (I) programming is a decentralized stream of education that conflates disability with valuelessness.

Eligibility

Eligibility for (I) and (M) programming is determined by the student's intellectual ability to access the provincial curriculum. Criteria for (I) and (M) eligibility is fraught with outdated and inaccurate conceptions of "intelligence" as a means of eligibility and of who is qualified to make these judgements. The Western University conducted a study that…

> …included more than 100,000 participants from around the globe, asking them to complete twelve cognitive tests looking at their memory, reasoning, and attention and planning abilities. It found a simple intelligence quotient (IQ) score is misleading when assessing one's intellectual capacity. Considered a standard gauge of intelligence, an (IQ) score doesn't actually provide an accurate measure of one's intellect. (Owen, 2015, p. 1)

The findings of this study should call into question the validity and reliability of these programs and their use of such tests as a basis for program eligibility. Considering the publication dates, either the authors of this provincial document grounded (I) and (M) program eligibility in obscure professionalized conjecture, ignoring empirical research, or they constructed program criteria to specifically target disabled students to ensure their enrapture in a process of transinstitutionalization. By ignoring the findings of Owen (2015), Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning appears to have disregarded ableist practices. Furthermore, the eligibility criteria for these streams must be determined by a "qualified mental health practitioner (psychologist)." In this document, a psychologist, school (clinician) is defined as:

> A specialist in psychology and education. School psychologists are qualified mental health professionals in the area of psycho-educational assessments, childhood development, behavioural management, individual/group counselling, and consultation. They are trained in the provision of support services within the school setting and certified under *The Education Administration Act: Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation* (Regulation 115/2015). (p. 33)

In the context of administering cognitive tests, Manitoba psychologists are required to hold a master's-level degree in school psychology. However, a master's-level degree, as a determinant of qualifications, disqualifies an individual from practicing as a psychologist in other provinces, including Ontario. As such, the determination of eligibility for (I) and (M) programming in Manitoba is significantly called into question due to the disproven notion of IQ as a measure of intelligence and due to Manitoba's insufficient standard of mental health professional qualifications in schools. Although beyond the scope of this analysis, the insufficient professional qualifications for psychologists in Manitoba schools could exacerbate marginalizing practices and assessments for disabled students, reinforcing a cycle of stigmatization and the upholding of unequal power structures within the current system.

Given the eligibility criteria and the fact that the qualifications of those who determine programmatic placement has been called into question, the validity and moral justification for (I) and (M) programs seems to be lacking. Nind (2004) asserted: “This is a recognition that inclusion is about the nature of the educational space. Space is socially produced, dynamic, performing the power relations and identities of those who occupy, appropriate, and construct it” (p. 57). As has become apparent in our context, programmatic and curricular space is a socially constructed and dynamic location that continues to be exclusionary. Set as a façade, education opportunities for disabled students continue to be carried out with ableist intentions and rationale in Manitoba. Eligibility standards create the setting by which students are herded toward a future of uncertainty and dependence. A level of provincial performativity continues to maintain a fictitious pretense by which confinement and containment of disabled students is justified.

The implication of eligibility requirements invokes questions such as: Whose space is this?, Who rightfully occupies this space?, and Why? These questions are important because of the ways in which space in schools interacts with social capital, as Mazumdar et al. (2018) and Allan and Jorgerson (2020) have argued. Justification for the continuation of this practice in the absence of empirical research remains wanting.

Student-Specific Planning

Once students have been determined to meet the (I) and (M) eligibility criteria, “input from school team members inform decision making about appropriate educational programming” (p. 6). Although it reiterates much of the same information from the previous sections, this section does include a subtle but nuanced addition to our understanding of (I) programmatic goals: “Subsequent planning involves identifying highly individualized functionally appropriate learning experiences related to building independence. The learning experiences are written as SSOs in the IEP” (p. 6). Although this statement seems to be a conglomeration of pervious terminology and definitions, it does add “related to building independence.” Despite the emergence of independence as a key aspect in (I) programming, it is left unexplained.

Critical disability studies understands the presence of *independence* as an ableist trope that seeks to add an exclusionary factor in relation to the disability community. In our educational context, the notion of *independence* linguistically connotes a performativity that connects any intervention, such as help or care, with deficit or weakness. Moreover, it enables programmatic avenues that might otherwise be considered inappropriate, such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, recycling and garbage collection, and obligatory work being framed as vocational training or skill building. Instead, critical disability studies promotes interdependence (Leipoldt, 2006) as a more sustainable, collaborative, and constructive goal to work toward as a defining factor of community.

As arbiters of culture and social connectivity, K–12 schools play a considerable role in shaping societal values and standards. By perpetuating ableism, schools reinforce discriminatory and bigoted ideals that continue to uphold cycles of residential incarceration of disabled Canadians. As a vehicle, (I) and (M) programs in Manitoba inlay ableist discourse into the provincial fabric of educational knowledge and understanding of disability. Kang (2009) asserted:

> While the meaning of disability is produced through the social interactions, our society is prevalently embedded with the medical perspective of disability, which assumes people labeled as disabled are those who have problems (Barnartt et al., 2001; Corker & Shakespeare, 2002; Reid & Valle, 2004; Thomson, 1997). In this social system, people labeled as disabled usually have unfavorable representation on themselves. Moreover, many people argue that the meaning of disability is scientific and that people labeled as disabled have problems and these people need to be remediated. (p. 1)

Student-specific planning for (I) and (M) programs should not seek to enact emediation of students but instead build their skills and acuity for an interdependent flourishing. Although some student-centred planning does results in interdependence, given the vagueness of these guidelines this may not be the outcome in most cases. As such, the prevalence of ableist discourse highlights the textual, discursive, and social implications of this approach, situating able-bodiedness as the ultimate outcome of this planning process.

Implementation

(I) and (M) programming is described as an “instructional support used to allow students with intellectual deficits/intellectual developmental disorder to access appropriate educational programming. School principals are accountable for the delivery and implementation of educational programming and services for students with special learning needs” (p. 8). Despite divergent programs, (I) and (M) programming implementation begins to converge. The straightforward delegation of responsibilities ensures a streamlined approach to implementation, resulting in a unified graduation to transition result. Where (M) programs require a student to earn 30 credits, and thus attend classes, (I) programs do not. The groundwork for exclusion was presented in the *Introduction* section and is now discussed in this section. As a pretext for exclusion, (I) programs are conceptualized as inherently segregationist. Although inclusion in credited courses is not discouraged outright, attendance and participation is voluntary and unreported on the provincial report card. This is reinforced in Figure 2 in the (I) column, final bullet, where it states: “Students will be part of the classroom learning environment to the extent appropriate in meeting their individual learning needs” (p. 8). In other words, if a student does not require a classroom learning environment to meet their individual learning needs, no such participation is required. As an ableist discourse, this reinforces the notion that disabled students’ learning is *less-than* and can be segregated from others. It also reinforces the notion that a classroom learning environment is optional for students engaged in (I) programming and a superfluity in their schooling experience.

Disability-based exclusion in K12 schools is not uncommon. The recent United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2018) report into disability and education "raised concerns that young people with disabilities are almost always worse off than their non-disabled peers when it comes to access to, exclusion from, and completion of mainstream school" (Johnston & Bradford, 2019, p. 1,549). As a product of systemic ableism, Manitoba schools continue to follow this global trend. Johnston and Bradford (2019) emphasized "the importance of education practices that develop reciprocity, trust, and cooperation in improving the often oppressive circumstances young disabled people face in post-school settings" (p. 1,549) as a result of unequal and often inadequate K–12 educational opportunities.

Assessment and Reporting

Reporting is defined as a method used to formally identify and communicate student progress to parent(s) (p. 10). Assessment and reporting are also a function of a credit system, whereby students accumulate credits by successfully earning 50% or higher in each class as they work toward the Manitoba diploma requirement of 30 credits. Once this is achieved, students are eligible for their high school diploma.

Through a discursive and social practice, disabled students are excluded and included through (I) and (M) programs in schools simultaneously, while they are included as an excludable type in our curriculum documents. Titchkosky et al. (2022) asserted:

> A deep provocation lies in the fact that the very ways that disability is included in everyday life are, also, part of that which structures the continued manifestation of disabled people as a non-viable type. It is, for example, provocative to think about how disability is both

> excluded and included simultaneously in the interstices of our lives, or included as an excludable type. (p. 177–178)

Included in theory, excluded in practice, disabled students are framed as a non-viable, excludable type of student in Manitoba K–12 schools. As the first bullet in Figure 2 informs shows, (I) programs are excluded from the full use of the provincially mandated report card. Instead, an IEP-R is used in its place to communicate assessment and demonstrate reporting to the parent(s). Disabled students are included in the reporting period generally but excluded from the provincial report card, as is intimated throughout the document (pp. 11, 29, 30, 36). Ableist discourses enforce disabled students' inhabiting of a different educational experience that systematically excludes them from receiving the same education as their nondisabled peers. This exclusion, as King (1991) pointed out, "leads to deficit assumptions positioning certain groups as subordinate creating the unequal outcomes that are inherent in our socially stratified society" (p. 133). In the absence of educational parity, disabled students continue to be provincially targeted by those that, as Kulkarni, Miller, Nusbaum, Pearson, and Brown (2023) contended, "remain complicit in a system that pathologizes, separates, and ranks students with disabilities" (p. 2).

The second bullet in Figure 2 introduces a new and important aspect to the expanding ableist discourse: the requirement to remain in K–12 education until the age of 21. As will be discussed later, students engaged in (I) and (M) programming must remain in high school until the age of 21 to continue receiving governmental support. Positioned as optional, fulsome government support and services for adults in Manitoba begin at the age of 21, with the school receiving funding to support those students until that age. This coercive discourse ensures disabled students remain separated from their nondisabled peers regardless of inclusionary measures. Students who endeavour to graduate and finish school with their peers at age 18 and or in Grade 12 in Manitoba become ineligible to receive full-time support until they reach the age of 21. This retaliatory enactment forces disabled students into a cycle of dependence, eroding their agency and autonomy. As a primary institution in this process of cyclical residential confinement (transinstitutionalization), Manitoba K–12 schools continue to participate in incarceratory measures targeting disabled students.

The final set of bullets in the (I) and (M) columns in Figure 2 discusses disabled students' exclusion from provincial tests and assessment. Although (I) programmatic exclusion from provincial tests and assessments remains consistent with the current ableist discourse thus far, (M) programmatic exclusion points to a mutual ableist conceptualization of students participating in both streams, despite the (M) program's cumulative requirement of 30 credits. In a recent study, Nieminen (2023) analyzed

> 139 disabled students' experiences [in Finland] of assessment and assessment accommodations as collected through an open-ended, institution-wide survey and found the profound role of assessment in excluding and marginalizing disabled students as unfit to take part in the testing cultures of academia. (p. 613)

This research is contextually important, as it points toward a widespread exclusion of disabled students in tests and assessments in educational institutions *en masse*. This begs the question, why haven't curriculum, assessment, and tests been developed specifically to identify student learning and skill acquirement for disabled students in educational institutions? Considering the length Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning has gone to ensure segregation, the same effort could be undertaken to create appropriate provincial assessment and tests. Although the persistence of discrepancies would be unavoidable, their presence would not disqualify the data gleaned from these endeavors. Nevertheless, disabled student's exclusion from provincial report cards, tests, and assessments, as well as the coercive requirement to remain in school until the age of 21, further demonstrate the presence of entrenched ableist discourses that produce discursive stratification.

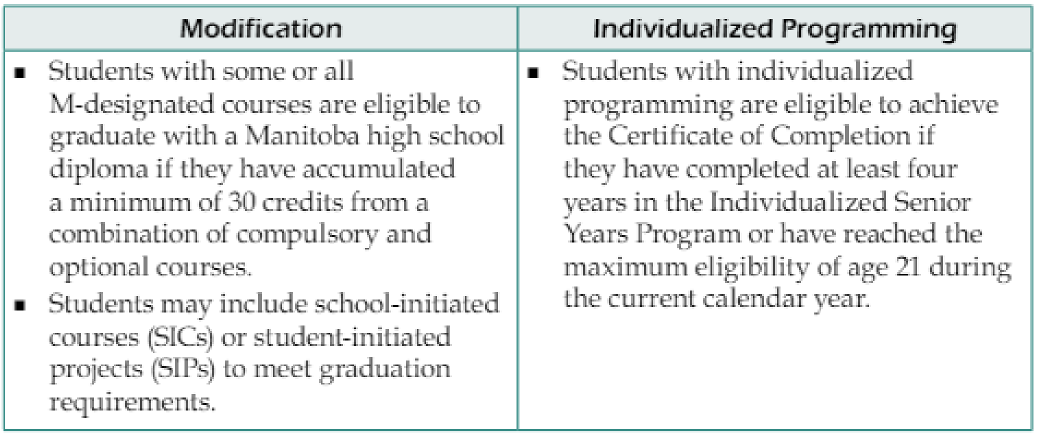
High School Completion and Transition Planning

The culmination of a student's K–12 journey in Manitoba is usually marked by a commencement (graduation) ceremony and, in most cases, the receiving of a high school diploma. Chronologically, students are scheduled to complete their Manitoba K–12 experience between the ages of 17–19 years, depending on a variety of factors that can include a customized credit accumulation schedule and course availability.

Disabled students engaged in (I) programing do not receive a high school diploma upon their completion of their program; rather, they receive a "Certificate of Completion" (p. 12), which lacks officialdom and systematically excludes them from attending any post-secondary education. Moreover, they only become eligible if "they have completed at least four years in the Individualized Senior Years Program or have reached the maximum age of 21 during the current calendar year" (p. 12). Unfortunately, most families cannot afford to leave the world of work and fully fund educational and experiential learning opportunities for their child between the ages of 18–21, leaving most students no option but to remain in high school until their 21st birthday. In no other program is age a graduation requirement, as demonstrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

High School Completion for (M) and (I) Programming



Modification	Individualized Programming
- Students with some or all M-designated courses are eligible to graduate with a Manitoba high school diploma if they have accumulated a minimum of 30 credits from a combination of compulsory and optional courses. - Students may include school-initiated courses (SICs) or student-initiated projects (SIPs) to meet graduation requirements.	- Students with individualized programming are eligible to achieve the Certificate of Completion if they have completed at least four years in the Individualized Senior Years Program or have reached the maximum eligibility of age 21 during the current calendar year.

Note. Reprinted from Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2023). *Supporting inclusion*: *Modification and individualized programming in Manitoba schools.* https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/pdf/supporting_inclusion_m_i.pdf (p. 13)

The ramifications of engaging in (I) and (M) programs in Manitoba are immense. As Moore and Slee (2020) pointed out, education "is instrumental in the determination of social futures" (p. 236). Transition refers to "coordinated transition from school to life in the community" (p. 13). Both programmatic outcomes are designed for transition to day programming, sheltered workshops, or vocations without legal remuneration following high school completion. Although a full analysis of transition is beyond the scope of this study, the implications of transition planning remains firmly grounded in ableist discrimination and indefinite institutional confinement (Baker & Elwood, in press). The concomitant practices of segregation and confinement that defined Canada's institutionalization policy (Burghardt, 2018; Dyck & Deighton, 2017; Malacrida, 2015; McKercher, 2019) remains entrenched as ableist discourse in Manitoba K–12 education today.

Discussion

Throughout this study, I analyzed Manitoba's provincial K–12 inclusive education *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) statement and the curricular document *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023) using Fairclough's

(1995) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA), applying a critical disability studies theoretical framework. This study reveals the extent to which ableist discourse remains entrenched in Manitoba's inclusive philosophical and curricular documentation.

As has become apparent, (I) and (M) programs are constitutive of pervasive ableism in Manitoba. Representative of educational streams of tiered exclusion, they confine disabled students in cyclical panoptical transinstitutional systems of governmental confinement and control. Established as a legal avenue of *appropriate education* for disabled students, (I) and (M) programs are indicative of segregation in educational opportunities and achievement. Justification for disability-based exclusion is enumerated meticulously in discourse, presented as factual and conceptualized as inclusive but grounded in myth. These mythologies imply disabled students learn differently than other students and therefore require alternative, unregulated curriculum. They insinuate disabled students may cause undue hardship for schools and school divisions and therefore should be segregated from other students. They imply disabled students are more disruptive than their nondisabled peers and therefore should be secluded for the betterment of themselves and the majority. The myth that disabled students require functional programming that exceeds the provincial mandate and are therefore required to engage in unpaid and often forced labour schemes marketed as vocational training continues. The myth that disabled students require extensive resources to achieve success and are therefore indentured until age 21 and are in need of transition options that limit their societal participation for their own safekeeping continues today.

These assumptive myths present disabled students in stereotypical ways that imply latent ableism. Each foundational myth constructs a pretense that seeks to justify separate, segregated, and unequal educational opportunities. This mythology continues to maintain broken systems that extend beyond K–12 education and do little for the disabled community's socio-cultural and economic mobility.

The rationale for not awarding a diploma for (I) program completion, awarding a modified and therefore lesser diploma for (M) program completion, and promoting residential, institutional, indefinite confinement as community transition is paternalistic bigotry, designed as an architecture of exclusion. Disability discrimination in Manitoba K–12 schools is systematic and pervasive. With a corralling function, these programmatic streams are enacted as a societal sterilization technique, aimed at confining and controlling the disabled community. Poverty and coercive dependence restrict societal and educational options indefinitely, relegating disabled graduates of Manitoba K–12 schools to a compromised future. Notions of building independence, vocational skills, and functional training are readily used as justification for (I) and (M) programs but remain overt relics of the past. Today, the school environment has improved, although stories of forced confinement and restraint continue to surface (Franklin, 2023), but the actionable intent and outcome remains distressingly similar.

Through engagement in (I) and (M) programming, disabled students in Manitoba are situated within a nexus of devaluation, segregation, and discriminatory arrangements conceptualized as skill building that can only be adequately described as indentured servitude. The personification of educational programming through pseudo-forced labour based on erroneous notions of intelligence, inscribed in IEPs and IEP-Rs, supported by SSOs, and enacted through separate streams, classes, graduation, and transition requirements is ableist. It is crucial to disrupt ableist discourses that are carried out though discursive conceptualizations, philosophies, and pedagogy but that are presented as equity—what Garland-Thomson (2020) called the beguiling glove of velvet eugenics.

By exploring the overwhelming presence and prevalence of ableist discourse, I seek to connect disability-related inclusivity within the nexus of diversity initiatives in Manitoba schools. Aligning with Kewanian et al. (2023), my main target is…

> …to disturb this hegemony. I am deliberately disrupting and purposefully challenging our common understandings through interrogating and investigating the effects of classifying a person according to their ableness. I invite the reader to consider that the position of a continued subscription to such dominant views have on the life of individuals and families. (p. 2)

Recognizing that disabled students are not yet considered full citizens must spur a reexamination of Manitoba K–12 inclusivity and a move away from a common, deficit-medicalized understanding toward a social model that values and supports social justice and human rights for the disability community. Despite this study's limitations, it should be considered an indicator of what could be classified as an extensive network of ableism in Manitoba K–12 education. The findings of this study support Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning's complicity in supporting ableism in K–12 schools.

Conclusion

The continued perpetuation of ableist discourse in Manitoba K–12 education is untenable. Left uncontested, (I) programming continues to be the justification through which disabled students can be made to do the school's laundry, cook the school's food (breakfast program), collect the school's recycling and garbage, and clean the school's halls as functionally appropriate vocational learning experiences. In many respects, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning continues to sanction the forced, unpaid labour of disabled students, a practice that is upheld and maintained by ambiguous operational definitions and a lack of curricular guidelines. Moving forward, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning must include the disability community and their allies at the decision-making table when designing and implementing inclusion philosophy and policy. Despite its individual character, the meaning of inclusion is built on social context and nurtured by social values, beliefs, and practices around disability (Tanure Alves et al., 2022). Moving away from unequal power structures, inclusive education must employ a critical disability studies framework, situating disability as a central node in knowledge production and locating meaning-making within a disability, or crip, worldview. By deeming some bodies and minds as deficient and deserving of separation, schools enact hierarchical programming and alternative standards and rules, carrying out the socio-cultural dislocation of disabled students. Campbell (2009) asserted:

> Perhaps the maintenance of a non-disabled identity ... is a more useful problem with which to be concerned, rather than interrogating the other, let us deconstruct the ‘normality-which-is-to-be-assumed’. Hughes captures this project forcefully by calling for a study of ‘the pathologies of non-disablement’. An Abled imaginary relies upon the existence of a hitherto unacknowledged imagined shared community of able-bodied/minded people held together by a common ableist homosocial world view that asserts the preferability and compulsoriness of the norms of ableism. (p. 4)

Moving away from ableist understanding and practices, schools should promote disability pride, accentuate disabled role models, hire disabled staff, and recognize the disability community within the nexus of diversity. Perhaps most of all, schools must inculcate the message that there is nothing wrong or unusual with being a member of this burgeoning community. As Dwyer (2023) contended:

> Movements such as disability pride, the neurodiversity approach, and cultural models of disability could work to counter pathologizing assumptions and disability stigma. Both disabled and nondisabled students could learn about the history of disability communities and their advocacy struggles, just as they might learn about the history of any other community in society. Disabled children could be introduced to positive role models with their own disabilities, while neurodivergent children could be deliberately encouraged to take pride in their unique minds and brains. (p. 173)

This study has addressed the way ableist systematic power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted and reproduced in text and practice in Manitoba’s K–12 education context. (I) and (M) programs continue to function as transinstitutional regulators, primarily enacted through the Manitoba K–12 schooling system. By design, schools formalize this totalizing process of programmatic confinement, acting as a functionary of larger feeder systems that ensure disabled people remain disempowered. Justification for these educational streams is entrenched in discourse and maintained by practice. Critical disability studies explicitly seeks to resist social inequality through exposition, contributing to new ways of understanding. Future research should continue to explore and map ableism in Manitoba and Canada K–12 education, illuminating the tangible policies and practices that persist and recommending or theorizing a better way forward.

References

Al Ghazali, F. (2017). Awareness of critical discourse analysis underpins learners' sociolinguistic competence and language use. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *3*(2), 349–366. https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.461043

Allan, J., & Jørgensen, C. (2020). Inclusive school development: The first years of an English free school. In A. Köpfer, J. Powell, & R. Zahnd (Eds.), *Handbook inclusion international: Global, national and local perspectives on inclusion education* (pp. 109–126). Verlag Barbara Budrich.

Andrews, E. E., Forber-Pratt, A. J., Mona, L. R., Lund, E. M., Pilarski, C. R., & Balter, R. (2019). #SaytheWord: A disability culture commentary on the erasure of "disability." *Rehabilitation Psychology*, *64*(2), 111–118. https://doi.org/10.1037/rep0000258

Armstrong, F. (2019). Social constructivism and action research: Transforming teaching and learning through collaborative practice. In F. Armstrong & D. Tsokova (Eds.), *Action research for inclusive education* (pp. 5–16). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351048361-2

Baker, M., & Elwood, E. (in press). *Transinstitutionalization in Canadian K–12 schools is the rule, not the exception*. Canadian Association of Teacher Education.

Bartlett, N., Kresta, A., Khan, E., & Heringer, R. (2023). *The transition to adulthood for young adults with disabilities in Manitoba: A "winding up-hill road."* Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. https://doi.org/978-1-77125-640-7

Bélanger, N., & Gougeon, N. A. (2009). Inclusion on the agenda in four different school contexts in Canada (Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Québec). *Research in Comparative and International Education*, *4*(3), 289–304. https://doi.org/10.2304/rcie.2009.4.3.289

Burghardt, M. C. (2018). *Broken: Institutions, families, and the construction of intellectual disability*. McGill-Queens University Press.

Campbell, F. K. (2009). *Contours of ableism: The production of disability and abledness*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s 15, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c11.

Cockain, A. (2023). Troubling narratives about dis/ability and the social encounter through conversations between narrative inquiry, critical disability studies, and geographies of disability. *Disability & Society*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2023.2275523

Colebatch, H. K. (2006, November). *Thinking about policy: Finding the best way*. In *GovNet International Conference*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228470362

Connor, D. J., Gabel, S. L., Gallagher, D. J., & Morton, M. (2008). Disability studies and inclusive education: Implications for theory, research, and practice. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *12*(5–6), 441–457. https://doi:10.1080/13603110802377482

de Saussure, F. (1966). *Course in general linguistics*. McGraw-Hill.

Dwyer, P. (2023). Disability in schools: Segregation, full inclusion, or free inclusion? In S. Halder & G. Squires (Eds.), *Inclusion and diversity: Communities and practices across the world* (1st ed., pp. 168–187). Routledge.

Dyck, E., & Deighton, A. (2017). *Managing madness: Weyburn Mental Hospital and the transformation of psychiatric care in Canada*. University of Manitoba Press.

Fairclough, N. (2017). *Critical discourse analysis*. by flixabout.com, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w_5riFCMGA

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis*. Longman.

Franklin, M. (2023, November 8). *"Only a last resort": Inclusion Alberta calls on parents to help close seclusion rooms*. CTV News. https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/only-a-last-resort-inclusion-alberta-calls-on-parents-to-help-close-seclusion-rooms-1.6635765

Freer, J. R. (2021). Students' attitudes toward disability: A systematic literature review (2012–2019). *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1866688

Friedman, L., & Serlin, D. (2019). Towards a crip methodology for critical disability studies. In K. Ellis, R. Garland-Thomson, M. Kent, & R. Robinson (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary approaches to disability* (Vol. 2, pp. 131–141). Routledge.

Garland-Thomson, R. (2020, December 2). *Conserving disability and constructing a habitable world*. ABC Religion & Ethics. https://www.abc.net.au/religion/rosemarie-garland-thomson-conserving-disability-and-constructin/12408108

Gernsbacher, M. A., Raimond, A. R., Balinghasay, M. T., & Boston, J. S. (2016). "Special needs" is an ineffective euphemism. *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications, 1*(1), 29. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41235-016-0025-4

Goodley, D. (2013). DIS/Entangling Critical Disability Studies. *Disability & Society*, *28*(5), 631–644. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.717884

Government of Manitoba, E. (2021). *Belonging, learning and growing: Diversity education*. Manitoba Education. https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/diversity/educators/index.html

Government of New Brunswick. (2013). *Strengthening inclusion, strengthening schools*. https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/K12/Inclusion/Inclusion.pdf

Government of Ontario. (2014). *Equity and inclusive education in Ontario schools: Realizing the promise of diversity*. http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf

Hansen, N., & Turnbull, L. (2013). Disability and care: Still not “getting it.” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, *25*(1), 111–127. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.25.1.111

Hickman, L., & Serlin, D. (2019). Towards a crip methodology for critical disability studies. In Interdisciplinary approaches to disability : looking towards the future (pp. 131–141). essay, Routledge.

Inclusive Education Canada. (n.d.). *Right to education*. . https://inclusiveeducation.ca/learn/right-to-education/

Johnston, C., & Bradford, S. (2019). Alternative spaces of failure: Disabled “bad boys” in alternative further education provision. *Disability & Society*, *34*(9–10), 1548–1572. https://doi:10.1080/09687599.2019.1601070

Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist, queer, crip*. Indiana University Press.

Kang, J.-G. (2009). A teacher’s deconstruction of disability: A discourse analysis. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *29*(1). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v29i1.173

Keefe, E. S. (2022). From detractive to democratic: The duty of teacher education to disrupt structural ableism and reimagine disability. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, *124*(3), 115–147. https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221086994

Kewanian, A., Creely, E., & Southcott, J. (2023). Fierce parenting: An autoethnographic study of disability, inclusion, and “othering.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2203118

King, J. E. (1991). Dysconscious racism: Ideology, identity, and the miseducation of teachers. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *60*(2), 133–146. https://doi-org.uml.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/2295605

Kleinheksel, A. J., Rockich-Winston, N., Tawfik, H., & Wyatt, T. R. (2020). Demystifying content analysis. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 84*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7113

Kulkarni, S. S., Miller, A. L., Nusbaum, E. A., Pearson, H., & Brown, L. X. (2023). Toward disability-centered, culturally sustaining pedagogies in teacher education. *Critical Studies in Education*, *65*(2), 107–127. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2023.2234952

Leipoldt, E. (2006). Disability experience: a contribution from the margins towards a sustainable future. *Journal of Futures Studies, 10*(3), 15–32.

Locke, T. (2004). Critical discourse analysis. London, New York: Continuum.

Malacrida, C. (2015). A special hell: Institutional life in Alberta's eugenic years. University of Toronto Press.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2023). *Supporting inclusion*: *Modification and individualized programming in Manitoba schools.* https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/pdf/supporting_inclusion_m_i.pdf

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2024). *Philosophy of inclusion*. https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/inclusion.html

Mazumdar, S., Learnihan, V., Cochrane, T., & Davey, R. (2018). The built environment and social capital: A systematic review. *Environment and Behavior, 50*(2), 119–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916516687343

McKercher, C. (2019). *Shut away: When Down syndrome was a life sentence*. Goose Lane Editions.

Meekosha, H., & Shuttleworth, R. (2009). What's so "critical" about critical disability studies? *Australian Journal of Human Rights, 15*(1), 47–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/1323238X.2009.11910861

Mitchell, D. T., & Snyder, S. L. (2015). *The biopolitics of disability: Neoliberalism, ablenationalism, and peripheral embodiment*. University of Michigan Press.

Moore, M., & Slee, R. (2020). *Disability studies, inclusive education and exclusion*. In N. Watson, A. Roulstone, & C. Thomas (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203144114.ch17

Moran, A. (2007). Embracing inclusive teacher education. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 30*(2), 119–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760701275578

Mou, M., & Albagmi, F. M. (2021). Critical discourse analysis of federal and provincial government grants for post-secondary students with disabilities in Alberta and Ontario. *Disability & Society.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.1983418

Naraian, S., & Gabel, S. (2023). Teaching for inclusion: Complexifying practice with critical disability studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 36*(2), 99–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2021.2003902

Nieminen, J. H. (2023). Unveiling ableism and disablism in assessment: A critical analysis of disabled students' experiences of assessment and assessment accommodations. *Higher Education*, *85*(3), 613–636. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00857-1

Nind, M. (2024). Inclusive research, in-/exclusion, and ethics. In G. Rißler, A. Köpfer, & T. Buchner (Eds.), *Space, education, and inclusion: Interdisciplinary approaches* (pp. 57–70). Routledge.

Nova Scotia Department of Education. (2019). *Inclusive education policy*. https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/inclusiveeducationpolicyen.pdf

Ontario Psychological Association. (2024, March 28). *Professional comparison chart*. https://www.psych.on.ca/getmedia/a98a6e4d-3cba-49a3-8150-f458cd6c8052/Ont-Mental-Health-Professional-comparison-chart.pdf

Owen, A. (2015, March 31). *Debunking the IQ myth*. Western News. https://news.westernu.ca/2013/01/debunking-the-iq-myth/

Price, M., & Kerschbaum, S. L. (2016). Stories of methodology: Interviewing sideways, crooked and crip. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies, 5*(3), 18. https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v5i3.295

Rojas, N. (2022, January 21). Why disability bias is a particularly stubborn problem. *Harvard Gazette*. https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/01/why-disability-bias-is-a-particularly-stubborn-problem/

Schalk, S. (2017). Critical disability studies as methodology. *Lateral*, *6*(1). https://doi.org/10.25158/l6.1.13

Stienstra, D. (2020). *About Canada: Disability rights* (2nd ed.). Fernwood Publishing.

Symeonidou, S. (2023). Unpacking ableist discourses in Cypriot education policy during the pandemic. *European Educational Research Journal*, *22*(6), 834–851. https://doi.org/10.1177/14749041221117885

Tanure Alves, M. L., van Munster, M. A., Alves, I. dos, & Souza, J. V. (2022). The “normal” physical education classes: The ableism facing the inclusion of disabled students. *Disability & Society*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2022.2071679

Timmons, V., Breitenbach, M., & MacIsaac, M. (2005). *Educating children about autism in an inclusive classroom.* Government of Prince Edward Island.

https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/eelc_educating_children_about_autism.pdf

Titchkosky, T., Cagulada, E., DeWelles, M., & Gold, E. (Eds.). (2022). *Disappearing: encounters in disability studies*. Canadian Scholars.

UNESCO. (2018, March). *Education and disability: Analysis of data from 49 countries* (Information Paper No. 49).https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000262213

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, December 12, 2006, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities

Vanderbilt University. (2019, April 23*). Disability is not a dirty word; "Handi-capable" should be retired.* https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2019/04/23/disability-is-not-a-dirty-word-handi-capable-should-be-retired/

Van Dijk, T. A. (1996). Discourse, power and access. In C. R. Caldas-Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices: Readings in critical discourse analysis*. Routledge.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Critical discourse analysis. in t*he handbook of discourse analysis* (2015): 466-485. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118584194.ch22

Wilde, A., & Fish, R. (2024). Gender, feminism, and the project of critical disability studies (CDS). *Disability & Society*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2023.2298774

Zaks, Z. (2023). Changing the medical model of disability to the normalization model of disability: clarifying the past to create a new future direction. *Disability & Society*, 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2023.2255926

Chapter 4

Transformation and Resistance: A Case Study of a High School Disability Studies Course in Manitoba, Canada

Abstract

Inclusive education as a practice, movement, and philosophy in Canadian K–12 education continues to remain an area of immense national and international importance. Historically, K–12 education regarded students with disabilities through a medical-deficit model leaving little room for the enactment of meaningful inclusion. Nowadays, inclusive education is affirmed not merely as a desirable ideal in schools but as a requirement for all (Tanure Alves et al., 2022). Despite continued calls for the implementation of disability studies in K–12 curriculum to address attitudinal, social, and curricular barriers (Abdi et al., 2022; Graham, 2019; Heroux, 2017; Keefe, 2022), few studies have explored the implementation of a disability studies course in Canadian K–12 education, leaving this area largely unexplored in Canadian research. This case study explored a Grade 9–12 course entitled, *Introduction to Disability Studies (41G)*, considering its curricular relevance, breadth, depth, and attitudinal influence on participants in Manitoba, Canada. This study explored one primary research question: What are students' perceived effects of participating in a Grade 9–12 disability studies course? A qualitative research design was used, employing semi-structured interviews with five participants: four students and one teacher. The findings of this study suggest participants who taught and took an *Introduction to Disability Studies* course at the high school level experienced significant impact on their understanding and conceptualization of disability, disability-specific consciousness-raising, an alteration in disability-related speech, an attuned sense when encountering disability slurs/hate speech in their school and community, and a broadened understanding of inclusion.

Keywords: critical disability studies, inclusive education, ableism, intersectionality

Transformation and Resistance: A Case Study of a High School Disability Studies Course in Manitoba, Canada

Inclusive education is a foundational narrative in the 21st century Canadian K–12 education system. In many respects, inclusive education and *education for all* have become the mantra of educational policies at many levels in Canada today, a country where education falls under provincial jurisdiction. School boards and associations, as well as parent and other groups, have made inclusive education a top priority. Accordingly, educational practitioners incorporate inclusive policies into their discourses and practices and use them to put forward contextualized meanings of their notions of inclusion (Bélanger & Gougeon, 2009). Despite inclusive education's enshrinement in multiple Canadian and international laws, frameworks, and protocols (UNCRPD, 2006), people with disabilities continue to face pervasive ableism, segregation, and stigma as a form of social devaluation (Bartlett et al., 2023) and educational oppression (Goodley, 2013).

Inclusive education remains an elusive ideal. Benjamin et al. (2003) positioned inclusion as a continuum, an on-going process. As such,

> Inclusion is not a target to be hit or a goal to be reached, nor is it the final destination of a road of continuous linear improvement. Rather, inclusion is an ongoing process marked out by struggle and negotiation and worked out through interpersonal actions and relations in a wider social and political context. (p. 556)

Conceptually, this inclusive rendering is congruent as an equity approach, moving away from the medical-deficit model of special education, common in Canada to date. In practice, Mueller (2021) and Ware (2001) found, despite being 20 years apart, that students with disabilities continued to be segregated, stigmatized, marginalized, and under-represented or altogether absent in curriculum and school staff and as role models in K–12 schools.

K–12 Canadian education in many respects continues to operate under a model of special education as inclusive education. Although there remains a spectrum of practice within this model, Canadian K–12 educational programming continues to rely heavily on IQ scores and psychological assessments, medical assessments, and physiotherapy for the purposes of normalization and on alternative educational streams for those "students whose diagnosed intellectual disability is so severe or profound that they do not benefit from participating in curricula developed or approved by Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning" (Manitoba Education & Early Childhood Learning, 2023). Titchkosky et al. (2022) contested these practices and notions, reminding their readers that the reality of bodily existence is meditated by culture. Of embodiment, Shildrick (2020) suggested that the Western assumption of a stable and autonomous singular subject with a body whose integrity is so unquestioned that it may be forgotten is a myth when one considers that embodiment is never gender-neutral, ageless, nor universal. Centring the experience of how embodiment appears and is made to disappear, especially in educational settings, exemplifies the importance of theorizing non-normative morphology not as a failure of form, but as another way of being (Titchkosky et al., 2022).

Wexler (2016) problematized the current dichotomy in inclusive education between ideology and pedagogy. She contended that inclusion is usually defined as a student with an identified disability spending more than 80% of their school day in a general education classroom in proximity to nondisabled peers (p. 32). Although what Wexler (2016) described is integration, the process by which inclusive education is enacted is laboured, often reverting to practices of segregation. Integrating Foucault (1977) into her work, Wexler (2016) subsumed special education as applied inclusive education:

> [By] organizing students in classrooms according to their assigned labels invites procedures of surveillance and record taking, which invariably sets up an unequal power relationship based on naming, classifying, and determining futures. Rather than solutions to the problem, self-contained Special Education classrooms are one of the barriers for the future integration of students with disabilities into society. At these early and critical stages of life, social future of disabled children has been compromised, not by well-intentioned teachers, but by the system of Special Education, unexamined communication, and the social and built environment. (p. 36)

Subsuming special education within the larger practice of inclusive education, Wexler (2016) posited the culpability in its lack of applied criticality. Allowing for the continuation of disability oppression and segregation, known as dysconsciousness (Wexler, 2016), aligns inclusive education with the special education movement. Reconceptualizing inclusive education would therefore mean the confrontation of teachers' and school leaders' own dysconsciousness, which would not only include ableism, but also racism, classism, heterosexism, and other discriminatory ideological systems that deeply inform our culture and therefore our schooling practices (Lalvani et al., 2015).

Freer (2021) conducted a systematic literature review (2012–2019) looking at 37 peer-reviewed journal articles in inclusive education that related to students' attitudes toward disability. He sought to explore one main question: How do we help students feel more of a part of their class? The review contained 21 determinant studies and 16 intervention studies in K–12 education. Freer (2021) pointed out that scholars in inclusive education have suggested that attitudinal barriers may be at the very heart of K–12 disability-based exclusion and ableism. He contended:

> Negative attitudes toward disability threaten the very nature of inclusive education. Inclusion used to refer to the practice of educating students with Special Education needs in

> the same class as their peers. Inclusive education can now be understood as a philosophy wherein all students should be made to feel welcome and a part of their class. (p. 1)

This shifting position in inclusive education away from special education toward a disability studies context is promising. Freer (2020) asserted that, in general, students' attitudes toward disability require greater attention in research and practice. Students' attitudes can influence peer acceptance or rejection, which ultimately affects whether students feel included or not. Negative attitudes toward disability pose a barrier to equitable social experiences for students with disabilities, which works in opposition to inclusivity initiatives. Action needs to be taken to reduce negative attitudes toward disability, so students with disabilities can have more fulfilling social experiences in school. Addressing ableism in schools may prove to be one of the most challenging barriers to successful implementation of inclusive education strategies (Freer, 2020).

This study sought to expand on the findings of Freer (2020) by implementing disability studies in K–12 education as an avenue of addressing ableism and attitudes. Through design, this course sought to challenge subjugating systems, structures, and attitudes through critical consciousness building while engaging in human rights and social justice education. I studied participants' (four students and one teacher) experiences of the course in hopes of illuminating potential ways resistance to ableism can be enacted in Canadian K–12 education. A qualitative research design was used, employing semi-structured interviews with five participants. Of these five participants, four were students who had taken the course and one was a teacher who taught the course. All participants engaged in the course between 2021 and 2023. Each of the four student participants engaged in one semi-structured interview that was approximately 50 minutes in duration. The teacher of the course engaged in two semi-structured interviews, differing in scope and questions from the student participant interviews.

Course Overview

Introduction to Disability Studies was borne from a strong sense of need, professional autonomy, and support. As a teacher–researcher, I created this School Initiated Course (SIC) in Manitoba, Canada in 2018 as an educative and curricular site of resistance to pervasive and systematic ableism, marginalization, and erasure of disabled students' autonomy, voice, freedom, and inclusion in K–12 schools. This course was formally adopted and approved by Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, the education provincial regulatory authority, that same year. The course is now subsequently taught by other school(s) in Manitoba. The development of inclusive education and disability studies in a Canadian K–12 education context involves critical examination of values, practices, and ways of seeing in the wider context of school and society. This examination requires understanding the means and pathways through which children and young adults learn and the many ways in which they experience exclusion and marginalization in education (Armstrong, 2019). Through this course, I sought to insert disability into K–12 Manitoba school curriculum and community, in order, as Simi Linton (2005) related, "to weave disabled people back into the fabric of society, thread-by-thread, theory-by-theory" (p. 518). Although an extensive overview of this course is beyond the scope of this paper, the course description reads:

> Students will explore disability through a variety of lenses (Medical Model, Social Model, and Critical Disability Studies). By exploring disability, students will gain a broad awareness of Canadian society and those that comprise it. Allowing for meaningful engagement, students will seek to bridge gaps and foster further understanding on this subject through a variety of experiences, such as; conversations, guest speakers, and inquiry. A strong emphasis is placed on conversations/discussions (round-tables) in a safe and secure environment. Students will demonstrate their learning largely through, but not limited to:

> journaling, discussions, research, presentation and or a verbal or written component. There is no final exam for this course. (Course Registration Guide, 2023)

Topics explored throughout the course include, but are not limited to: a) ableism, b) crip poetry, c) disability and film, d) masking and code switching, e) accessibility, f) statistics and law, g) disability history, h) intersectionality, and i) the disability rights movement. Students complete a variety of formative and summative assessments in the demonstration of skill acquirement and proficiency that reflects a credit-bearing course. Topics and themes are engaged through a variety of mediums, reflective of a diverse learning community.

Introduction to Disability Studies falls under the *elective* category in Manitoba. This means the course credit counts toward a student's high school graduation requirements of the accumulation of 30 credits between Grades 9–12 but not toward post-secondary entrance requirements, despite being a provincially approved course. The course is geared toward Grade 11 and 12 students, often being advertised in those grades' sections in the course registration guide, leaving the entrance of a student in a lower grade to the discretion of the school.

Theoretical Framework

A critical disability studies lens was used as a theoretical framework throughout this study. For Shildrick (2009), critical disability studies rethinks conventions, assumptions, and aspirations of research, theory, and activism in an age of postmodernity (Shildrick, 2009). Critical disability studies scholars and researchers seek to rupture, blur, and interrogate common assumptions about disability. Informed by emerging cripistemologies, researchers must be cognizant of axiological affinities and transformative paradigms that inform and are in favour of a collective, interdependent flourishing (Goodley, 2013).

Moving beyond the medical model, critical disability studies explores the complexity that is the human experience, signifying a move from charity to a rights-based approach and from paternalism to empowerment (Dion, 2017). A critical disability studies lens has far-reaching application. Sherry et al. (2021) explored pervasive ableism in their influential book *Disability Hate Speech: Social, Cultural, and Political Context* as a means of confronting the biopolitics of degradation embedded within 21st century neoliberalism. Highlighted throughout their work are the many ways ableist rhetoric and diagnosis is weaponized for the purpose of perpetuating devaluation, and in some instances dehumanization, as forms of exclusion or extreme marginalization. They stated:

> Disability hate speech is manifested in many types of hateful, harassing, predatory, or otherwise hostile forms of utterances. Disablist hate speech, from this perspective, represents the discursive and symbolic dehumanization of disabled people as a marked-out group. Such a perspective allows for a reconsidering of the broader and more ambiguous concept of hate and the diverse ways that this can be discursively expressed towards disabled people. (p. 42)

Variants of disability hatred may combine both disablist and racial or anti-Semitic hate, using intersecting identities as mutual processes of exclusion (Sherry et al., 2021). Critical disability studies recognizes the importance of intersectional thinking that works through mutual processes of exclusion associated with multiple identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, sex/sexuality, age, class, nation and, of course, disability (Goodley et al., 2019).

Critical disability studies builds upon the insights highlighted by Sherry et. al. (2021), acknowledging that we are living in a time of complex identity politics, of expansive debates around the ethics of care, and of political and theoretical appeals to the significance of the body that are leading yet again to reformulations of what counts as disabled (Goodley, 2013). Steeped in resistance, critical disability studies captures some of the sophisticated ways in which bodies, knowledge, and technology merge. The application of a critical approach has allowed for highlighting the gaps inherent in the education system as well as suggesting ways of improving access to education (Abdi et al., 2022).

Critical disability studies informed this case study by providing a framework and criteria through which an analysis of existing systems and practices could be made. This approach evoked crip criticality when interview data was scrutinized, often unearthing probing questions that brought forth a contextualized perception of the way things really are. crip criticality can be understood as "attending to the complex workings of power and normalization in contemporary cultures, particularly to how institutions of modernity have materialized and sedimented a distinction between *normal* and *abnormal* and to how subjects deemed *abnormal* have contested such ideas" (McRuer & Cassabaum, 2021, p. 1). By applying this lens, I rested the weight of disability studies research and theory against Canadian K–12 education claims of disability inclusion. Albeit limited to participant perceptions, this study theorizes what should be, levied against what is experienced.

Methodology: Case Study

In this study, I employed a qualitative case study design. Qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding. Within this approach, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. This is consistent with an inductive investigative strategy and has a richly descriptive product (Merriam & Tisdall, 2016). A qualitative case study was the best method for this study as it employs in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. According to Meriam and Tisdell (2016), the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study: a case. This qualitative case study research involved the intensive study of a single unit (i.e., perceptions of the course) for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units observed at a single point over some delimited period of time (p. 37). The unit of analysis in this case study was the perceived effect of participating in an introductory disability studies course. This case study, data, analysis, and findings can be used to understand the attitudinal effect of a disability studies course in K–12 schools.

By focusing on students' and teachers' perceived effects of participating in a Grade 9–12 disability studies course, this case study sought to shed in-depth insight through thick descriptions and semi-structured interviews. Case study shares a central characteristic with critical disability theorization in that both are proponents of a social constructivist worldview. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) contended:

> Meaning is not discovered, but constructed. Meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it. Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Thus qualitative researchers conducting a Qualitative Case Study would be interested in 1) how people interpret their experiences, 2) how they construct their worlds, and 3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences. (p. 24)

The implications of this worldview elicit insights into how societies are constructed and how values, meaning, roles, and identities are shaped and formed. This worldview also speaks to systematic oppression and marginalization functionally, locating and challenging power dynamics as a means of advancement. In this case study, social constructivism shaped how meaning was interpreted and created, to whose benefit, and why. As a facet of critical disability studies, social constructivism helped to draws out meaning and insights.

Research Approval, Participant Recruitment, and Data Collection

This study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Manitoba (Appendix D). It was subsequently approved by the participating school division's senior administration (Assistant Superintendent) before being approved by the participating schools' principal. Once the aforementioned approvals were received, participant recruitment commenced. I was successful in recruiting five participants (four students and one teacher of the course). Participants engaged in *Introduction to Disability Studies* between 2021–2023 and interviews were approximately 50 minutes in length, occurring at a location conducive to the participant. Each of the four student participants engaged in one semi-structured interview, and the teacher participant who had taught the course engaged in two semi-structured interviews, of which a snapshot of questions can be referenced in Appendix A.

Participants were recruited at their school, and the study was advertised by a circulated poster (Appendix E). A project information letter (Appendix B) was made available for those students who expressed interest and requested further information. The teacher of the course also made students aware of this research opportunity by sharing it in class and with students that met the eligible criteria. The criterion for participation in this study was whether the student had taken (in the past 8 years) or was currently enrolled in *Introduction to Disability Studies*. Consent/assent (Appendix C) was obtained by the participant and their legal guardian prior to the commencement of this study. Students were provided no inducement for participation. Pseudonyms have been employed throughout to maintain confidentiality. The four student participants were Irene, Anthony, Iris, and Italo.

Semi-structured interviews, grounded in empirical research, were the best methods for capturing authentic attitudinal exploration and analysis of participant meaning making and understanding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) in this case study. Interviews provided an opportunity for participants to engage in an intimate setting with the primary researcher, conversing in a manner conducive to their comfort and discretion. This format provided participants with an opportunity to voice authentic opinions and feelings, conveyed and maintained through participant anonymity and the application of pseudonyms throughout the research process. As such, these methods provided the best avenue for exploring invaluable insights into the importance of teaching disability studies in Canadian K–12 schools.

Student Participant Profile

Irene, Anthony, Iris, and Italo attended *Introduction to Disability Studies* in their Grade 11 or 12 year. Although the course came to the attention of some participants in their Grade 9 or 10 year, they postponed their participation until their final years in high school. Italo said:

> I first learnt about the course when I was in Grade 9. We were given a guide of classes we can take in high school. At the time I wasn’t really thinking about taking it. I thought it was just something like students who live with intellectual disabilities, but then like in Grade 10 I started to realize that ok, I know a little about mental illness and physical disabilities, but kids with intellectual disabilities are so segregated from everybody else and I didn’t like that about education so I thought to myself this is a great opportunity to take the course.

Italo identified segregationist practices as motivation for pursuing greater insights in this area. Although he misunderstood the course’s target audience and curriculum at first glance, he later identified the course as a source of interest and an area he wanted to learn more about.

Research points to the importance of strengthening student interests, autonomy, and voice in the improvement of student learning and outcomes. Patall and Zambrano (2019) contended:

> Normative classroom instructional practices in middle and high schools are largely ill-suited to adolescents' increased demand for autonomy and interpersonal connections, with secondary school teachers providing fewer opportunities for decision-making and fostering fewer personal connections. In contrast, teachers' motivationally supportive instruction promoting students' autonomy, competence, and connectedness may particularly matter for the engagement and success of students. (p. 119)

Fostering student interest as a pedagogical tool can have multi-layered benefits. Although further examination of the effects of student interest, connection to disability, and outcomes are needed, this research does indicate the worthwhile endeavour of nurturing student autonomy and connectedness, particularly in disability studies. Iris commented, "I was like, this is a 40s course—I can take it next year, so I planned out the courses I was going to take in Grade 11 and Grade 12, so I was like this is something I'm going to take in Grade 12." The data suggests students were interested in learning more about disabilities from an early age, citing interest in exploring disability when they became eligible for course participation. This trend lends credibility to the potential for this course being an area of interest to K–12 students more broadly.

The student participant demographics suggested they were all a part of various communities that included neurotypical and neurodiverse bodyminds and marginalized identities. All participants identified as being a part of, or allied with, the disabled community or LGBTQ community, or as being interested in social justice and human rights. Anthony said, "That's why I really like being an advocate, because I am part of the LGBTQ community, so I know a lot of people have prejudices because they mostly just don't know."

Some participants were also drawn to the course because of family or community connections to the disabled community. Irene shared, “My mom has worked as an Educational Assistant (EA) in elementary school, and it was always like people with disabilities are working with their EAs and I never really got to interact with them as much, so I didn’t learn much about them or get to know them as people.” Participants all shared purposeful reasons for taking this course, including the identification that meaningful change starts with education. Italo recounted:

> I think disability studies is the only class we talk about it [disabilities]. After the course, I started bringing it up in other courses, and people didn’t even think about it. We were talking in Global Issues about things that people face, and I was waiting for disability to come up, but it never did until I said something, and they were like, oh ya, of course.

With a connection to identity, students sought out curriculum that reflected and represented themselves. Decidedly, their participation in this course was reflective of the scarcity of disability studies-related content in Manitoba K–12 curriculum. As the data suggest, a lack of disability representation in schools was a drawing factor to course participation.

Overall, the student participants were all interested in the topic or had some connection to disability studies, which motivated them to take the course and likely influenced their decision to participate in the research study. These factors suggest favourable expectations and evaluations of the course, and therefore, were taken into consideration during the process of data analysis.

Teacher Participant Profile

The teacher participant in this research study was one of the teachers in the province of Manitoba who teaches or has taught *Introduction to Disability Studies*. The teacher had been practitioner in a Manitoba K–12 public school for over 10 years and had taught this course a number of times. Their pseudonym for this study was Rosemary. Rosemary had extensive experience working with the disabled community and became interested in teaching *Introduction to Disability Studies* after reading an article about it in the *Manitoba Teacher* magazine in 2018 (McFee, 2018). Rosemary was known to me as a provincial colleague.

Rosemary was included in this study for the purpose of identifying the perceived attitudinal effect of this course on their students. Although subjective, insights from all participants remain of high value for contextual purposes. Furthermore, they provided insights into the course effects on themselves, reasons for teaching and engaging this curricular area, perceived systematic effect or need, and insights for future application and development. Exploring an educator's perspective helped to shed light on student participant data and illuminate an insider perspective as it pertains to ableism and resistance in K–12 schools.

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed by the principal researcher, me, and underwent analysis using four distinctive steps. Each step served a specific purpose in content analysis to interpret depth of meaning and in the establishment of emergent thematic codes. (See Table 2.)

Table 2

Steps of Data Analysis

Terms	Definitions
Immersion in the Data	The process of becoming intimately familiar with the content being analyzed, through repeated reading, and/or several iterations of coding.
Unit of Meaning	Several words, a sentence, or a statement that represents a single idea or concept.
Condensation	The process of shortening a unit of meaning while retaining the original meaning.
Code	A short (typically 1-3 words) label that describes a unit of meaning/condensed unit of meaning.

Note. Adapted from Kleinheksel et al. (2020)

Interview transcripts were read and reread, and key terms and potential reoccurring themes were highlighted into units (first impression). Using a critical disability studies theoretical lens meant analyzing data for several words or groupings that were reflective of descriptors or perceptions. Burgeoning word groupings that arose in the transcriptions and represented a single idea included: segregation, separate but equal sentiment, medical and social model understandings of disability, and the like. Anonymized interview notes were used for the purpose of analyzing the aforementioned information, paying close attention to context and meaning from the interview process. The application of this approach was used to illuminate data demonstrating a crip worldview, reflective of disabled knowledge and leadership, critical of disablism, and embracing of neurodivergent and nonconformist bodyminds. Were schools saying one thing while implementing another? Was inclusion a buzz word or lived experience? How was disability understood? And was there a perceived difference before and after course participation? This information was used to discern data that were reflective of theory, practice, and experience and that corresponded to the research question.

Following this, I began a close reading of each interview, locating reoccurring themes and key words, once again synthesizing and condensing the data. Reoccurring themes began to emerge as distinctive, representative of unique topics. From this, key themes were isolated, organized, and numbered one through 11 (second impression). Once these emergent codes were isolated within each interview, I began reading for and against each transcript, analyzing the data for consistency, context, and the retention of original meaning to ensure validity. Once established, emergent codes were then cross-referenced across all interviews. Confirming consistency across participant experiences aided in the establishment of validity. (See Table 3.)

Table 3. Data Analysis

Unit of Meaning	Condensation	Code
"It gave me more information about disabilities and gender" "..disability representation in movies and shows" "We would go from talking about CRISPR (Biology) to disability studies class and we would be talking about eugenics."	Application of course content in other courses, areas of study	Cross-Curricular Proficiency
"we also leant about indigenous people and disabilities, like they were sent to residential schools and then some were institutionalized"	Intersectional analysis, drawing connection between governmental programs of extermination/Otherization	Consciousness Raising
"I really wanted to see life from the perspective of someone with a disability. I have some disorders myself so I understand those, but I also wanted to learn about the history, I didn't know anything about it."	Disability voice and autonomy as a means of inclusionary knowledge Search for first person knowledge as a means of furthering inclusion	Inclusion Enhancement
"There is like an unspoken rule that like you're not supposed to go in there [learning centre] unless your disabled type of thing."	Exclusionary and segregationist practices	School as Socially and/or Physically Segregationist
"People throw around the R word a lot. I have also heard people make jokes and stuff a lot…I hear people say cripple and like oh, are you autistic?"	Ableist hate speech, disablist slurs regularly occurring Disability based discrimination	Disability Slurs/Hate Speech as Commonplace in School
"When it comes to other classes or celebrations in the school, I think people usually forget about people with disabilities."	Left out, afterthought, disability-based exclusion, belonging	Absence of School Wide Positive Disability Identity and Pride Promotion

Critical Disability Studies informed my analysis by illuminating trends in the identification of ableist discourse, practices, and experiences. This approach drew connections between discriminatory processes that are destructive, unethical, and intolerable, linking ableism to the negative connotations often connected to political, social, and rhetorical power (Cherney, 2019). As a critical approach, this framework emphasizes empowerment, challenging subjugating discourses that are so often the precursor to marginalizing practices. As a filter, this framework aided in the identification of ableism and the perceived effect of the course on participants in my data set.

Following this, I reorganized all the data sets into headings specific to the interview questions, labeled one through 21. This reorganization technique isolated the data into a question-and-answer-specific context. This approach created data clusters, organized under interview-specific questions, as an avenue of accentuating emergent thematic codes. This process gathered important data under each interview question for the purposes of cross-referencing and directly speaking to this study's research question. After isolating the data in this manner, emergent thematic codes were established and findings recorded, as outlined below.

Emergent thematic codes that arose amongst student participants were subdivided into two dominant themes, positive effects and adverse effects. These two broad themes were consistent amongst all four student participant interview transcripts. From there, the participants discussed specific experiences, perceptions, and application of their learning. Positive or adverse effects became the focal point on which participants expounded and extrapolated.

Findings

Student Participants: Expanding Worlds

The student participants identified three important outcomes of participating in *Introduction to Disability Studies* that positively shaped their attitudinal experiences and perceptions. These positive outcomes included: a) cross-curricular application, b) consciousness raising, and c) inclusion advancement. They also identified three phenomena they became attuned to following their participation in *Introduction to Disability Studies*. These included: a) school as socially and/or physically segregationist, b) absence of school-wide positive disability identity and pride promotion, and c) disability slurs/hate speech as commonplace in school. “Disentangling disability from a medical model perspective, students located the defining feature of disability as residing in the social environment, reframing disability as a matter of social difference existing along a continuum of humanly possible ways of being embodied in the world” (Berger & Wilbers, 2021, p. 19). From this vantage, students’ perspectives expanded, encompassing a broader, more inclusive understanding of disability, personified in individual growth. Student participants identified and reflected on these outcomes throughout the interview process, acknowledging the important impact this course had had on their understanding and perception of disability.

Process of Development

Cross-Curricular Proficiency

All of the participants reported that *Introduction to Disability Studies* had increased their knowledge and understanding of disability, allowing them to apply course content, themes, and concepts outside of the course. Application of the course took place in social interactions, other course assignments, and the workplace. Italo explained, “I definitely think taking this course has expanded my knowledge I kind of had and made it more in depth, like I’m able to actually uphold a conversation with someone and teach them something.” Participants expressed pride in their opportunity to participate in this unique course, discussing perceived impact and real-world application. Irene recounted:

> I was proud of what I was learning and proud that I was taking the time to broaden my perspectives and think it was one of those courses that just changed my mindset every single day. I shared it with friends too, like I would finish a lesson and go and tell them, we learnt about this today and I would explain it because I want other people to know and I want people around me to know that I am learning about this and to inspire other people. I think because it was having such a positive impact on me that I wanted to tell other people about it and keep the knowledge fresh in my mind.

The data suggest participants found *Introduction to Disability Studies* a uniquely enriching course with meaningful cross-curricular application. Cross-curricular application is understood as placing knowledge, genuine motivation, engagement, and participation at the core of its approach for the meaningful learning of all children. With a focus on personal reflection and discussion, cross-curricular application challenges the notion of isolated standardized curriculum (Barnes, 2018). All participants discussed their ability to infuse the course content into their conversations with family and friends, while activating other classes, assignments, and contexts with a disability-centred lens. Iris said:

> I remember coming home a lot and telling them [family] I learnt something new today, or like I would tell my mom something because she worked for disability rights in California, or maybe I would teach her something new. I remember teaching them about the institutions that was still open. I definitely think taking this course has expanded my knowledge I kind of had and made it more in-depth.

Applying disability-related concepts in this way became a source of pride. When prompted, Anthony said, “Every single day I walked into class and learnt at least 10 new things and I knew those things would sit with me and change the way I went forward into the world.” The sentiment expressed by Anthony brings forth the importance for K–12 students to be exposed to disability studies. As an anti-oppressive primer, the course exposes students to new learning, concepts, and topics that go beyond an equity approach, spotlighting proactivity in the area of inclusion and intersectionality embedded in an anti-oppressive framework. Although a cross-curricular framework can be understood as a standalone theory, its defining factors of identifying colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, and ableism as a means of confrontation and dismantlement (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2021) are likewise embedded in critical disability studies. As such, *Introduction to Disability Studies* can be seen as encompassing a plethora of emancipatory approaches that infuse and support transformative ideas.

Participants explored the role disability-related content in their school curriculum and its seeming absence, bringing to mind the provocation from Douglas Baynton, "Disability is everywhere, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories that we write" (Monks, 2022, p. 91). The data suggest this excerpt continues to ring true. Iris said:

> It's [disability] thrown into topics of inclusion just because we need to acknowledge this alongside everything else but we never dive deeper into it, like that's why I feel like everyone's knowledge is just so limited because they stop at a certain point on the topic of disability and how much it gets explained. So everyone just sticks to this general knowledge, like we need to be more inclusive of people of colour, of people with disabilities, but that is all you hear, it never goes beyond that, that's it. Before this course, I don't think I ever read too much into it in school assignments. I don't think there has ever been a full question—like in health class, in gym, we have a whole day where we watch videos on racism, healthy relationships, police brutality, addiction, and other forms of

> discrimination like gender, but there wasn't a single video on disabilities. So I think that says something.

Participants found *Introduction to Disability Studies* provided a perspective largely unexplored in their K–12 schooling experience, leaving a chasm of cross-curricular application at their disposal. In the wake of this curricular exclusion, participants like Iris found meaning in absence. Critical disability studies highlights the way oppression often begets absence—in this case, disability perspectives across curriculum—as a point of erasure. Challenging this oppression through personal participation in *Introduction to Disability Studies* demonstrates that resistance to "those attitudes, situations, events, and behaviours which continually threaten to undermine the rights of disabled people are pertinent as individuals" (Beazley, Moore, & Benzie, 1997, p. 142). Albeit limited in scope, each participant exercised autonomy in the cross-curricular application of course content, essential for student learning and meaning making.

Consciousness Raising

Consciousness raising in this study takes its lead from feminist and critical disability studies in that this process is cultural work with a sharp critical punch. Consciousness raising unsettles tired stereotypes about people with disabilities. It seeks to challenge dominant assumptions about living with a disability, situating disability experience in the context of rights and exclusions. It aspires to retrieve dismissed and marginalized voices and misrepresented experiences. For the purposes of this study, consciousness raising is the process of reimagining and relearning disability (Garland-Thomson, 2005). Contextually, student participants in this study demonstrated individual awareness of oppressive forces in their school, a sense of efficacy to work against ableism, and engagement in individual action against oppression (Heberle et al., 2020) through learning.

Upon reflection, participants actively questioned the medical-deficit model understanding of disability perpetuated in their K–12 schooling experience. Anthony opined at the state of perceived exclusion in their schooling experience, stating: “Like, I don’t know why people can’t understand it, like you can’t be a person of colour and disabled? You can’t be gay and disabled? People intersect quite a bit.” Infusing their reimagining and relearning of disability was an exploratory process that encompassed notions of identity and community. Italo said, “Like, people that have disabilities can experience life in many beautiful ways, the same as able-bodied people or neurotypical people can, but it’s just different, and it’s something that should be cherished and seen as its own individual thing, like definitely not something people should be ashamed of.” Central to this process was the application of intersectionality as a means of molding new insights and ways of being in the world, creating an openness and understanding central to the human experience. Iris shared, “We learnt about Indigenous people with disabilities, like how they were first sent to residential schools and then some were institutionalized, and how they face a lot of abuse. And like how in Indigenous culture there isn’t a word for disability.” The reimagining process included an intersectional awareness discussed by participants that demonstrated a reflexive nuance, one that did not shy away from struggle and confrontation with past prejudicial understand of disability. Engaging reflection, Irene said:

> I definitely think it [the course] has opened my eyes. It’s definitely changed my view that disabled people are not weak, or not intelligent, anything like that, like they are….like I said before, people are people. They are human beings and want to be seen as human beings. They can be just as intelligent or even more than another person, or just as strong as other people, things like that. It’s definitely made me see we don’t need to infantilize, like the term “inspiration porn.”

Confronting inspiration porn, dehumanization, and systematic ableism takes considerable courage and consciousness raising, particularly by high school students. Grue (2016) described inspiration porn as “the representation of disability as a form of disadvantage that can be overcome for the titillation of other people/observers” (p. 838). Coined by Young (2014), inspiration porn contains an overture of power and dominance coinciding with an observer, eliciting an unwanted interaction to the benefit of the dominant (usually nondisabled) participant. The usage of such a term by a high school student points to deeper understanding and application of a critical disability perspective. Although Irene did not expound on the term, her usage does indicate a process of consciousness raising.

Student participants grappled with their stereotypical, at times detrimental, past understanding of disability. Italo recalled, “I think the course helped with learning more about disabilities, destigmatization, and like what we used to do to people with disabilities, and now I know that is still sort of happening.” Irene said, “I think it gives people awareness of stigma, like how different every person’s experience is. We were very focused on the lived experience of people with disabilities.” The data suggest their participation in this course helped to lay the groundwork for a new understanding of disability, one grounded in critical disability studies and transformative social justice, that resulted in considerable consciousness raising.

Inclusion Enhancement

Meaningful disability inclusion refers to, but is not limited to, respecting the voices of the disability community by honouring first-person accounts, extensive empirical research, and leadership. Unfortunately, the application of the aforementioned practices continues to be scarce in K–12 schooling (Mueller, 2021). Italo reflected, “I really wanted to see life from the perspective of someone with a disability. I have some disorders myself, so I understand those, but I also wanted to learn about the history. I didn’t know anything about it.” Etched in this participant’s experience was the active erasure of disability throughout their K–12 schooling years, what Van Aswegen (2019) called “conditional citizenship” (p. 436). This term refers to community members who are devalued, conditionally rendering them “citizens” insofar as they do not disrupt the status quo. This conditionality has become a site of precarity, leaving disabled students existing between worlds. This participant identified the need for inclusive content and enhancement practices, illuminated through course participation.

The disability rights movement and disability history continue to remain elusive in Manitoba K–12 curriculum. Searching for disability community and culture, this participant wanted to find pieces of a shared experience. Integral to inclusion is acknowledging the absence of disability in K–12 school curriculum and taking steps toward reconcilement. Iris said, “We are just a part of diversity. Like, people are diverse, and we should recognize everybody as equal.” Implicit in this reflection is the insinuation that disability is perpetuated in unequal terms, apportioning devaluing tropes to the disability community. Student participants demonstrated an increased understanding of inclusion advancement, locating gaps in the tapestry of current practices.

Naming and Attitudinal Resistance

Adverse emergent thematic effects were defined as a participant’s acknowledgment of adverse practices, situations, language, resources, policy, or structure they became attuned to following their participation in *Introduction to Disability Studies*. The following data suggest that participants began to identify and name adverse practices, situations, language, resources, policy, or structures while acknowledging them as erring. Anthony reflected, “We should acknowledge that most of people’s struggles are because…of the environment in which they find themselves in.” Titchkosky et al. (2022) recalled that terminology, the power of naming as resistance, is powerful:

"Considerations of disability language are part of the struggle to not only avoid but also examine the objectification and/or degradation of disability and people who experience impairment" (p. 7). The act of identifying deficit-based practices while citing the social model of disability is an act of naming and attitudinal resistance. Disabled people and their allies resist oppression and ableism through activism, confronting these moral fissures through various means that include, but are not limited to, communication, education, protest, governmental lobbying, and personal/professional interplay. In this study, identifying and discussing corrosive practices, processes, attitudes, and systems is an act of resistance: resistance to invalidation, pity, invisibility, and erasure, and resistance that embodies individual and collective struggles for recognition and value against the multiple tyrannies that constitute the ableist imaginary in order to deconstruct the exclusionary and demeaning aspects of ableism (Loja et al., 2012). The location of ableist obstacles by students speaks to the pervasive nature of discrimination in their K–12 experience that included social, curricular, and physical segregation, hate speech, and the absence of school-wide positive disability identity and pride promotion.

School as Socially and/or Physically Segregationist

Participants discussed the continued presence of social and/or physical segregation of disabled students in their K–12 schooling experience, the continued presence of which became accentuated following their participation in *Introduction to Disability Studies*. Irene reflected: "Obviously, we have learning centres at school, and I have grown up with people with disabilities, but it's always like they're….I don't want to say segregated, but they are in a part of the school where I don't see them as much." This participant outlined segregation as a current operational approach to K–12 schooling for disabled students. Albeit seemingly discreet, the current practice of segregating disabled students in this fashion only continues to perpetuate pervasive ableism and "may aggravate the effect of perceived stigma for those living with a mental illness, resulting in negative impacts on health" (Bahm & Forchuk, 2008, p. 63). Iris reflected, "There is like an unspoken rule that, like, you're not supposed to go in there [the learning centre] unless you're disabled type of thing. I don't know how to explain it, but like you can't go in there unless you're severely disabled…um and obviously it's wrong, and it shouldn't be that way." Iris's acknowledgment of these types of harmful, stigmatizing practices served as an indicator of the many ways K–12 schools can continue to enact aversive ableism (Freidman, 2018).

With an increased fluency in disability studies through course participation, students were actively able to identify and name ableist practices—in this case, manifested through disability-based segregation. Critical disability theories highlight the toxicity of these practices, including the maintenance of status-quo exclusion through inclusion performativity, the veneer of which is but paper thin.

Disability Slurs/Hate Speech as Commonplace in School

Participants cited the commonness of disability slurs and hate speech in their K–12 schooling experience. Anthony stated, "I think part of the problem is there is such an extreme us-and-them divide. A lot of it [the course] was uplifting voices and including voices, and I think it created a space for people to share and experience. It helped break some of it [barriers] down." As Sherry et al. (2021) contended:

> Disability hate speech (which is often a precursor to more serious attacks on disabled people) is an area that is still largely neglected, even though low-level hate speech is far more common than the often-violent hate crimes which have captured the imagination of the public. In the case of disablist hate speech, either the broad term "disability" or any specific diagnosis can be used to create a devalued subjectivity. (p. 1)

Participants expressed that the course expanded their knowledge and awareness in this area and elicited a visceral response in them when hate speech/slurs were encounter. Italo recounted the lack of accessibility at their school, pointing out that a lift was primarily used for the custodial staff, rather than for disabled students: “There is a lift in the cafeteria, but I don’t think it holds much weight because the only one who really uses it are the janitors to bring stuff down. I have never seen a wheelchair user or someone with a mobility aid using it to go down the stairs.” Although the school may not have officially limited access to the lift, its use as a supply lift demonstrated the devaluation of the lift itself, drawing a perceived correlation between its publicized usage (i.e. for garbage and cleaning supplies) and those who might utilize it to navigate the school space. There was an apparent connection between the devaluation of disabled students and the use of ableist hate speech. If school staff found it acceptable to co-opt assistive technology for their own usage, in this case for refuse, perhaps a message of devaluation was being modelled?

There is a connection – albeit indirect – between diagnostic utterances and disablist hate speech; the terms used in medical encounters are often circulated more broadly to convey messages of devaluation (Sherry et al., 2021). Iris recounted, “People throw around the R word a lot. I have also heard people make jokes and stuff a lot…I hear people say ‘cripple’ and, like, ‘Oh, are you autistic?’” The fact that a diagnosis may be sufficient to be weaponized in hate speech draws attention to the broader relationship between disability and medical power. Evidence suggests disability hate speech continued to be present in this Manitoba school.

The use of diagnosis to create social devaluation and segregation continues to perpetuate ableism, hate, and marginalization. Anthony said: “I hear it in the halls, or people having conversations around me. Slurs happen, just kind of yelled around.” Evidence of ableist slurs used as vernacular in this K–12 school points to a concerning trend in the perpetuation of ableism. The data suggest a perceived general acceptance of disability-specific hate speech at this school, corroborating the findings of Nario-Redmond (2020) and Frazee (2023).

Throughout all interviews, participants reflected on the presence of disablist slurs and hate speech as part of their schooling experience, the prevalence of which continues to hinder inclusionary progress. The data suggest participation in *Introduction to Disability Studies* built participant recognition and attention to ableism, and in this context, hate speech. Iris stated:

> …now I can better advocate for things. Like, I have a very strong sense of social justice and stuff like…I knew this was an area of weakness for me in terms of knowledge. Like, I know a little more about racism, homophobia, transphobia as opposed to ableism and things that disabled people face, so I wanted to learn more about that because I was meeting new people that were struggling with those types of things, and I knew I had some of my own prejudices that I needed to, like, unpack.

Feeling safe and valued in a school context is of the utmost importance for child development. Belonging is something everyone needs. Nario-Redmond (2020) contended:

> … stigmatizing some identities divide those who are ‘in’, from those who are not. In this way, stigmatized identity terms are used to regulate others’ behaviours, to shame them into conforming or risk being targeted. For example, a national [US] sample of students ages 8 to 18, found that most considered the R word acceptable, as long as it was not directed toward a disabled person. Furthermore, students were 5 times more likely to join in and laugh when hearing the R word if directed toward someone without a disability, and 10 times more likely to join in and laugh when a friend said the word compared to when a stranger did so. Finally, while 40% of elementary school students were actively opposed to using the R word, this declined to 26% by high school. (p. 101)

In this study, the data suggest some commonality with these findings. From school staff misappropriating the school lift for refuse removal to the blatant use of ableist slurs, disability marginalization continues to be pervasive.

Conceptualized as amicable, ableism continues to be present at a variety of educative levels, in both practice and word, as aforementioned. Combating ableism at all levels remains a central theme throughout *Introduction to Disability Studies*. As Irene recounted, “I remember that I used to think saying the word ‘disabled’ was a bad word. I would think, like, oh, you are pointing out something someone has a challenge with, and then after I learnt about the social model, I’m like, ya, and many of those challenges come from society anyway.” Direct instruction in disability studies illuminated participants’ past linguistic errors. Educating participants in and through disablist hate speech altered their language choice, demarcating acceptable and non-acceptable linguistic choices. Critical disability studies locates these past linguistic misgivings in structural and systematic ableism, the application of which sets a conformist standardization of inclusion grounded in medical-model ostracism. The course, as Irene recounted, provided knowledge and skills in the development of students’ use of language and worldview, working through and above embedded and encountered ableist tropes and experiences.

Absence of School Wide Positive Disability Identity and Pride Promotion

Common to Canadian K–12 schooling are community-building activities. These activities take different forms, including clubs, pep rallies, grade spirit/colour days, cultural celebrations, and the like. Central to inclusion is the feeling of belonging, interpersonal connection, and safety, celebrated through positive school community association. Carroll et al. (2018) contended:

> Community participation, engagement in the social and cultural life of a community, is crucial for the health and wellbeing of young people. It promotes physical and mental

> wellbeing through pathways such as sense belonging, opportunities for physical activities, and networks of social support. (p. 1)

Pivotal to building strong, inclusive schools is community. Participants were asked what their school did to foster positive disability identity, community, culture, and pride. Italo recounted, “When it comes to other classes or celebrations in the school, I think people usually forget about people with disabilities.” Anthony said, “Ya, it’s a no. I definitely don’t think there is much.” Irene added, “When I think about it, really not, it’s just the class [*Introduction to Disability Studies*]. I think it would be nice to have more people learning about it and exposed to it.” The interviews revealed the complete absence of disability pride, community, and culture in the participants’ schooling experience. The data suggest disabled students may have been forgotten throughout the entire process of community building. Common to all participants’ responses was the pronounced silence before answering these interview questions: How did/does your school help to develop disability culture, pride, community, and identity? What type of events, special days, or guest speakers/mentors did your school do/bring in to develop disability culture, pride, community, and identity? This encountered silence communicated reticence, perhaps even shame.

Critical disability studies continues to refer to a lack of disability representation, culture, and pride as a means of marginalization. When disabled students do not see themselves represented in curriculum, sport, groups/clubs, and staffing, when they are entirely squeezed out of all school celebratory functions, it calls into question how this schooling experience could even be associated with inclusion. Carrol et al. (2018) drew a connection between inequality in community participation and health and wellbeing outcomes for disabled young people. Evidence indicates disabled young people have lower rates of participation in sport and recreation, post-secondary education, training, and employment (p.1). If schools are experienced as spaces of oppression, it serves to stand logically they would be avoided categorically. This supports the findings of Carrol et al. (2018). Critical disability studies points to the abnegation of disability representation as a means of perpetuating devaluation, spawning justification for the use of segregation and “separate but equal” practices. The realization that disabled students are subjected to processes of constriction points to a dire need for amelioration.

Teacher Participant: Mask of Inclusion

Emergent thematic codes that arose from the participant who was an *Introduction to Disability Studies* teacher could be organized under one dominant stream, responsive effect. A responsive effect is defined as an action taken in response to a perceived need, gap, area of improvement, and/or the perceived need for transformative praxis, human rights, and social justice engagement in K–12 education. Thematic codes derived from the interviews included: a) insufficient social and/or academic inclusion; b) insufficient disability studies content in school curriculum and staff professional knowledge; and c) insufficient school-wide positive disability identity, community, and pride promotion. These thematic codes, or gaps in this teacher’s context, directly led to this leadership initiative (Dickerson et al., 2021) in the form of professional learning and development and the teaching of *Introduction to Disability Studies*. Critical disability studies contributed to my analysis by unsettling hegemonic ideas that included the dominance of inclusion myths in K–12 schooling and pedagogical whitewashing around issues germane to social justice and inclusion (McGregor & Bedi, 2024). As discussed, perceived exclusionary tendencies related to disability continue to be pervasive in Manitoba K–12 education, the likes of which continue to contribute to marginalizing processes and practices. The teacher participant’s account shed light on the scope of these practices, identifying areas in need of improvement and those that could serve as a gateway for resistance to systematic ableism. The data that follow support the findings and experiences of the student participants, contributing to the consistency and validity of this study.

Insufficient Social and/or Academic Inclusion

Insufficient social and/or academic inclusion can be understood in this context as a gap or an area in need of improvement. The data suggest Rosemary undertook proactive engagement for the betterment of student learning, achievement, belonging, and community that resulted in the enhancement of inclusion by offering this course. Reflecting on the reasons they engaged in this course, Rosemary said:

> I thought we had some huge gaps, and I was new at the school, and I saw that we were in a place where physically, generally, we were practicing inclusion, but there was a social disconnect, a social piece that was missing. All of the students I work with, with disabilities, had no social connections other than other students with disabilities, and those relationships were managed and monitored by staff in the building—they weren't always natural—and so I thought, we are so close, and we talk this talk of inclusion, but it isn't really happening, and maybe if students in the building understood disability better, maybe we could break down some of those barriers and build some authentic social connections between those with disabilities and those without.

As a professional, this teacher engaged in a leadership initiative for the betterment of their school as a means of confronting significant social, operational, and pedagogical gaps present in their context (Dickerson et al., 2021). Evidence suggests that the continued presence of over-managed and monitored student relationships, based on a student's disability diagnosis, directly resulted in student marginalization and stigma.

Despite this educator's perception of the presence of physical inclusion, her experience conveyed that the stigma created by over-involvement of staff contributed to disabled students' overall isolation and segregation. Reflecting on this experience, Rosemary said:

> In early and middle years, I have seen students with disabilities included in the physical, academic, and social fabrics of the majority of classrooms. As students move to high school, inclusion in academic classes becomes more difficult, and students with disabilities are more frequently only included in the physical space (rather than the social and academic realms). The complexity of some high school course content, the push for university readiness, and large class sizes are barriers for full inclusion in high schools. There are some particular courses that many students with a variety of disabilities take, and others where it would be rare to have a student with a disability—particularly an intellectual developmental disability.

The data suggest segregation of disabled students seemed to be a default in this high school setting. Finding ways to display the perception of inclusion and finding the right classes and spaces for disabled students were described as sources of complexity. Perceived barriers like university readiness and large class sizes arbitrarily resulted in the exclusion of disabled students, as if university readiness and disabled students were mutually exclusive. This approach perpetuated the myth that disabled students are always more disruptive and ill-suited for the academically inclined classroom. As an ableist device, this discourse places the disabled community on the margin, fighting for their right to be included. As a means of disrupting these ableist practices, students and staff must "personally see themselves as educative beings, able to disrupt narrow ideas about disability that stem from a lack of knowledge" (Sherry et al., 2021, p. 77). Unfortunately, the data suggest this school might have engaged in “fair weather” inclusionary practices at the expense of all students.

Critical disability studies points to this process of social and academic exclusion as a means of maintaining a differentiated stratum of students, grounded in binary distinctions. This hierarchy finds its roots in institutionalization and formalized segregation. Finding the correct placement for the disabled is a trope that hearkens to eugenics, a time that concerned itself with facilitating a “good human harvest” (Jordan, 1906).

Rosemary posited that the course helped to address perceived gaps in curriculum, school culture, representation, and negative sentiment. After a difficultly in the way disabled students were woven into the school fabric was identified, the course seemingly aided in expunging some social aversion directed at disabled students, although it was “not an inoculation against ableism” (Ndopu, 2023, p. 5).

Insufficient Disability Studies Content in School Curriculum and Staff Professional Knowledge

An underlying theme consistent among all participants was the insufficiency, or complete absence, of disability studies-related content in school curriculum. The extent of this is beyond the scope of this study; nevertheless its prevalence was consistent amongst all participants. Insufficient professional acuity continues to exacerbate disability-related bias (Rojas, 2022). Reflecting on this, Rosemary said: “We need to improve general education for staff and students about disability through the lens of the social model and inclusive curriculums with multiple access points to accommodate students at different levels.” Teacher proficiency and familiarity in this area, or lack thereof, continues to remain a barrier for the inclusion movement in Canadian K–12 schools. They continued, “This make me feel as though we as educators are missing a fundamental piece of teaching and learning for students and staff. Simply gaining more knowledge of disability through the lens of the social model would increase comfort levels and ultimately inclusion." Identifying gaps in their context, this participant reflected on the incomplete proficiency in staff knowledge, resulting in limited learning opportunities and experiences for students. This process ultimately contributed to limited implementation, development, and innovation of inclusive initiatives and had a broad effect on student learning opportunities.

Insufficient School-Wide Positive Disability Identity, Community, and Pride Promotion

This theme arose among all participants. Nevertheless, the related insights provided by the teacher are of the utmost importance. Reflecting on the insufficient school-wide positive disability identity, community, and pride promotion, Rosemary said:

> We have worked hard over the past several years to increase the presence of students with disabilities in more areas of the school. While this is an important step toward inclusion, it does make some students and teachers uncomfortable when they don't understand disability. Because there is such a long history of the segregation of disabled people, many able-bodied people are surprised or unsure when they encounter disability.

The data suggest inclusion remains an elusive ideal, perhaps foreign to educators unfamiliar with disability studies. As suggested, some staff may even feel uncomfortable around disabled students, a reality not easily brought to the fore. Rosemary corroborated the findings of the student participants that this particular school context did little to promote positive disability identity, community, and pride. The implications of this are multifaceted, speaking to the potential for adverse situations disabled students may face in K–12 schools and the reason many are forced to mask and code switch for some semblance of belonging (Renke, 2023). Rosemary continued:

> I frequently hear staff using inappropriate language around disability or not saying the word at all. This comes from a place of not knowing better. The disability studies class spends

> some time working on a campaign to educate staff and students about proper language use around disability, and I had very positive feedback from teachers about this. Many teachers were looking for direction around language use.

Using accurate language about disability matters in schools. The connection between language and meaning is well established. The language people use is directly related to the way they view and treat others. Inclusive language is imperative to achieve equitable change grounded in human rights and social justice (Baker, 2023). To address this the data supported the potential benefit of implementing disability studies in teacher professional development, principal qualification courses, and pre-service teacher programs as a means of proactively addressing systemic ableism.

Breaking down barriers is a common mantra of critical disability studies. *Introduction to Disability Studies* as a course seeks to embolden participants (students and teachers) to engage in inclusive approaches through educative means, whether through discussion and collaboration with colleagues, family, co-workers, friends, or through formalized academics. Participants cited social justice and the vision of a better future as reasons for engaging in the course. As the data suggested, participation assisted in developing qualities and perspectives that work toward that goal. The participants also became aware of other areas where changes were needed to combat ableism, for example, providing professional development for teacher to incorporate disability perspectives into curricula and facilitating school-wide strategies/events to celebrate students with disabilities. Ableism is endemic; remaining on a path that moves forward under the pretense that all is well with inclusive education in Canadian K–12 schools is dishonest. Teaching *Introduction to Disability Studies* in schools, if nothing else, is a step in the right direction.

Discussion

Championing inclusive education requires acts of leadership, persuasion, and innovation in every sector. School boards, civil society organizations, and, ultimately, ministries of education need to develop innovative policies and secure appropriate resources to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. Addressing attitudinal barriers continues to be at the forefront of creating truly inclusive spaces in schools. “Research shows that only 33% of the Canadian public is fully supportive of inclusive education of children with intellectual disabilities” (Frazee, 2023, p. 184). At the same time:

> for many people coming to terms with the consequences of impairment in a society that consistently and systematically devalues disabled people and disabled lifestyles is often a personal tragedy. But the tragedy is that our society continues to discriminate, exclude, and oppress people viewed and labeled disabled. (Oliver, 2004, p. 6)

Through this case study, I explored how students perceived and located their learning following participation in a Grade 9–12 course entitled *Introduction to Disability Studies* within a wider context, and whether their attitudinal experiences and attributions shifted through course engagement.

Viewed through a critical disability studies lens, the data that emerged in this study support active participation in taking and teaching disability studies in K–12 education. Participants were passionate about taking *Introduction to Disability Studies*, as expressed through their drive to share their experiences and learning, address prejudice, and build an understanding and application of social justice initiatives. Emerging from this is the need for disabled students and leaders to be engaged with administrators and politicians to ensure equitable input and engagement in the policy and curricular decision-making process. Participants universally found the course enriching, as it broadened their perspective and understanding of disability-related content. All participants found the course had significant impact on their understanding and conceptualization of disability, specifically in their identification and understanding of the medical and social model theories, intersectionality, and ableism. Participants discussed the social model of disability while juxtaposing it with a medical or deficit-based model, both in applied and theoretical terms. All participants expressed the various ways they applied course content, both inside and outside of the course, which included interactions with their family, community, social groups, academics (posters/presentations), and work and as a lens for analyzing current encountered issues (e.g., snowplowing sidewalks). The data indicate that participation in a disability studies course at the high school level can contribute to a greater understanding of ableism and the identification of discriminatory practices and attitudes. Further exploration is needed to determine how this increased understanding manifests in actions and advocating for school-wide or society-wide changes.

Participants expressed an alteration in disability-related speech and an attuned sense when encountering disability slurs/hate speech (Sherry et al., 2021) in their school and community. Recognizing the interdependence of all community members, participants were able to use a critical approach to build a more equitable understanding of disability and inclusion moving forward. All participants actively recognized that their school did not promote positive disability identity, community, and pride as a school-wide initiative in the same manner as other marginalized identities, and that social, academic, and physical segregation were still prevalent for disabled students. Participants expressed a greater level of understanding of disability and inclusion following the course, citing a lack of disability-related content in Manitoba’s Grade 9–12 curriculum, with one participant specifically citing their Grade 12 biology teacher as pandering to ableist discourse, specifically when exploring genetics and Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR). Italo recounted:

> I took Grade 12 bio [biology]. It was the coolest experience going to bio and then disability studies right after because the topics we were discussing were kind of along the same wave length but in such different viewpoints. Like, I went from looking strictly at the scientific medical model to the social model…We would go from talking about CRISPR to disability studies class, and we would be talking about eugenics, and its like, if you're only hearing it from the perspective of biology, then you are not getting the full awareness of how harmful these topics are or like how discriminated people with disabilities are. In biology, it's almost like we are viewing people as experiments and things, and in disability studies we were viewing people as people, with feelings and lives and different needs and uniqueness.

Although a lack of disability content in curriculum can be contextualized as aversive (Friedman, 2018), it further speaks to a wider systematic ableism prevalent in the Canadian K–12 education system.

The data suggest teaching and participating in *Introduction to Disability Studies* does have a perceived positive attitudinal effect on participants. Participants' prior interest and connection to the disability community played a role in their positive attitudinal outcome; therefore it needs to be explored whether similar attitudinal changes would occur with participants less predisposed to this particular goal. As Irene stated, "I think there a lot of prejudices that could be avoided if people took a course like this. I think courses like this build equity…" As a forum for critical consciousness and praxis (West-Burns, 2020), disability studies resists the hegemony of normativity said to be inscribed in some bodyminds (University of Minnesota, 2022). Historically, disability has been the exclusive domain of the biological, social, and cognitive sciences, and this history has shaped contentious practices in education, rehabilitative medicine, and social work. Due to limited inclusion of disabled people and their allies, they are generally stereotyped (Ware, 2001), excluded, and stigmatized in these fields. Despite claims to the contrary, the fields of inclusive education and K–12 Canadian public education are culpable of ignoring the complexity of disability (Ware, 2001), leaving out the voices of this community. As such, people with disabilities continue to experience pervasive and entrenched ableism in Canadian K–12 education.

Conclusion

Despite continued calls for the implementation of disability studies in K–12 curriculum (Abdi et al., 2022; Graham, 2019; Heroux, 2017; Keefe, 2022), few studies have explored the implementation of a disability studies course in Canadian K–12 education, leaving this area largely unexplored in Canadian research. This study sought to begin to fill this gap by exploring some students' and their teacher's perceived effects of participating in a Grade 9-12 disability studies course in a Manitoba (Canada) school. Evidence supports that teaching and participating in *Introduction to Disability Studies* did have a perceived positive attitudinal effect on participants. Engagement in this course should be considered a site of resistance to the many ways ableism continues to marginalize students and a form of participating in transformative praxis. The importance of this process includes, but is not limited to: a) addressing ableism within curriculum, attitudes, pedagogy, and structures in K–12 education, b) confronting disableism, and c) provide an intersectional and dismodernist lens (Slovang, 2012) with which to expand understanding and knowledge across curricular subjects. In turn, these areas invariably intersect with, a) the immutability of the K–12 system, b) the role of K–12 education in marginalizing people with disabilities, and c) the idea that disability is the category of otherness against which normality or ability is defined (Ray & Sibara, 2018).

This study demonstrates the importance of participating in disability studies in K–12 schooling as an avenue of capacity building. Furthermore, it demonstrates the need for Canadian K–12 schools to consider engaging in research, policy, and action that: a) contextualize disability within political and social spheres, b) privilege the interest, agenda, and voices of the disabled community, c) promote social justice, equity, and inclusive education opportunities for all students, d) provide full and meaningful access to all aspects of schooling for disabled people, and e) assume competence and reject deficit models of disability (Connor, 2019). As an ally and teacher–researcher, I believe education will bring about socio-economic and political betterment for people with disabilities as manifest in lived experience. As Kafai (2021) contended:

> Education is how we, as disabled queer of colour bodyminds, move ourselves toward collective, communal awakenings. It is how we, in defiance, learn to reclaim our bodymind autonomies and histories. Education has and will always be the constant love-action moving us closer and closer toward a practice of justice and freedom. This liberatory framing positions education as the platform that can give our bodyminds the language to learn, understand, and challenge the dehumanization that has so forcefully been placed on our disabled, chronically ill, queer, trans, gender nonconforming bodyminds of colour. Education can help us find ourselves outside of oppressive frameworks, and it can guide us toward the creation and maintenance of crip-centric liberated zones. (p. 105)

By engaging in transformative focused research and practice grounded in critical disability studies and inclusive education, all Canadian K–12 education systems can demonstrate a more robust repertoire of understanding and the implementation of meaningful and lasting equity, diversity, and inclusion. Creating spaces where students feel safe, valued, and free to be as they are is essential to learning and community building. This practice seems far more common for certain types of students, perhaps relegating, as Kafai (2021) put it, “disabled, chronically ill, queer, trans, gender nonconforming bodyminds of colour” (p. 105) to the periphery of schools. Zinn recalled:

> Revolutionary change does not come as one cataclysmic moment but as an endless succession of surprises, moving zigzag toward a more decent society. We don’t have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world. Even when we don’t “win”, there is fun and fulfillment in the fact that we have been involved, with other good people, in something worthwhile. We need hope. (Zinn, 2010, p. 1)

Introduction to Disability Studies is that hope for me. It signifies a localized act of resistance and a chance to explore topics and subjects that are left off the docket. Although this course constitutes a small act today, I hope it multiplies. Perhaps the dream of creating and maintaining crip-centric space in K–12 schools is on the horizon. For now, we maintain sites of resistance.

References

Abdi, A. A., Misiaszek, G. W., & Opini, B. (2022). Students with disabilities in British Columbia's (Canada) K to 12 education system: A critical disability and intersectional perspective. In A. P. Bagelman & N. G. Wright (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook on critical theories of education* (pp. 113–127). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77336-5_7

Armstrong, F. (2019). Social constructivism and action research. In F. Armstrong & D. Tsokova (Eds.), *Action research for inclusive education* (pp. 5–16). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351048361-2

Bahm, A., & Forchuk, C. (2008). Interlocking oppressions: The effect of a comorbid physical disability on perceived stigma and discrimination among mental health consumers in Canada. *Health & Social Care in the Community, 17*(1), 63–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2524.2008.00799.x

Baker, M. (2023, January). *What exactly is "neurodiversity?" using accurate language about disability matters in schools*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/what-exactly-is-neurodiversity-using-accurate-language-about-disability-matters-in-schools-193195

Bartlett, N., Kresta, A., Khan, E., & Heringer, R. (2023*). The transition to adulthood for young adults with disabilities in Manitoba: A "winding up-hill road."* Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. https://doi.org/978-1-77125-640-7

Barnes, J. (2018). *Applying cross-curricular approaches creatively* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315513614

Bélanger, N., & Gougeon, N. A. (2009). Inclusion on the agenda in four different school contexts in Canada (Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Québec). *Research in Comparative and International Education*, *4*(3), 289–304. https://doi.org/10.2304/rcie.2009.4.3.289

Benjamin, S., Nind, M., Hall, K., Collins, J., & Sheehy, K. (2003). Moments of inclusion and exclusion: Pupils negotiating classroom contexts. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *24*(1), 25–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569032000127125

Berger, R. J., & Wilbers, L. E. (2021). *Introducing disability studies* (2nd ed.). Lynne Rienner.

Beazley, S. M., Moore, M., & Benzie, D. (1997). Involving disabled people in research: a study of inclusion in environmental activities. In C. Barnes, & G. Mercer (Eds.), *Doing Disability Research* (pp. 142-157). The Disability Press.

Carroll, P., Witten, K., Calder-Dawe, O., Smith, M., Kearns, R., Asiasiga, L., Lin, J., Kayes, N., & Mavoa, S. (2018). Enabling participation for disabled young people: Study protocol. *BMC Public Health*, *18*(1), Article 1404. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5652-x

Cherney, J. L. (2019). *Ableist rhetoric: How we know, value, and see disability*. The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Connor, D. J. (2019). Why is special education so afraid of disability studies? Analyzing attacks of disdain and distortion from leaders in the field. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 34*, 36–57.

Dickerson, C., White, E., Levy, R., & Mackintosh, J. (2021). Teacher leaders as teacher educators: Recognizing the “educator” dimension of some teacher leaders’ practice. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *47*(3), 395–410. https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2021.1880250

Dion, J. (2017). Falling through the cracks: Canadian Indigenous children with disabilities. *Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP) Working Paper Series*, *5*(12), 2–38. https://www.mcgill.ca/humanrights/files/humanrights/ihri_wps_v5_n12_dion.pdf

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. (2021, March). *Anti-oppressive framework: A primer*. https://www.etfo.ca/news-publications/publications/anti-oppressive-framework-a-primer

Foucault, M. (1977). *Language, counter-memory, practice: Selected essays and interviews* (D. F. Bouchard, Trans.). Cornell University Press.

Frazee, C. (2023). *Dispatches from disabled country*. C. Kelly & M. Orsini (Eds.). UBC Press.

Freer, J. R. (2020). Students' attitudes toward disability: A systematic literature review (2012–2019). *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1866688

Friedman, C. (2018). Aversive ableism: Modern prejudice towards disabled people. *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal*, *14*(4).

Garland-Thomson, R. (2005). Feminist disability studies. *Signs*, *30*(2), 1557–1587. https://doi.org/10.1086/423352

Goodley, D. (2013). Dis/entangling critical disability studies. *Disability & Society*, *28*(5), 631–644. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.717884

Goodley, D., Lawthom, R., Liddiard, K., & Runswick-Cole, K. (2019). Provocations for critical disability studies. *Disability & Society*, *34*(6), 972–997. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1566889

Graham, L. J. (Ed.). (2019). *Inclusive education for the 21st century: Theory, policy and practice*. Routledge.

Grue, J. (2016). The problem with inspiration porn: A tentative definition and a provisional critique. *Disability & Society*, *31*(6), 838–849. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2016.1205473

Heberle, A. E., Rapa, L. J., & Farago, F. (2020). Critical consciousness in children and adolescents: A systematic review, critical assessment, and recommendations for future research. *Psychological Bulletin*, *146*(6), 525–551. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000230

Heroux, J. R. (2017). Best practices infusing disability studies within special education: A personal story. *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal*, *13*(1), 1–11.

Jordan, D. S. (1906). *The human harvest. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, *45*(182), 54–69. http://www.jstor.org/stable/983679

Kafai, S. (2021). *Crip kinship*. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Keefe, E. S. (2022). From detractive to democratic: The duty of teacher education to disrupt structural ableism and reimagine disability. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, *124*(3), 115–147. https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221086994

Kleinheksel, A. J., Rockich-Winston, N., Tawfik, H., & Wyatt, T. R. (2020). Demystifying content analysis. American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 84(1), 127–137. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7113

Lalvani, P., Broderick, A. A., Fine, M., Jacobowitz, T., & Michelli, N. (2015). Teacher education, in/exclusion, and the implicit ideology of separate but equal: An invitation to a dialogue. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, *10*(2), 168–183. https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197915583935

Linton, S. (2005). What is disability studies? *PMLA*, *120*(2), 518–522. https://doi.org/10.1632/014256905200200З

Loja, E., Costa, M. E., Hughes, B., & Menezes, I. (2012). Disability, embodiment and ableism: Stories of resistance. *Disability & Society*, *28*(2), 190–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.705057

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2023). *Program and student services*. https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/programming/programming.html

McFee, J. (2018, December). Breaking barriers. *The Manitoba Teacher*, *97*(3), 10–11.

McGregor, C., & Bedi, S. (Eds.). (2024). *Diversity leadership in education: Embedding practices of social justice*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Mcruer, R., & Cassabaum, E. (2021, May 26). *Crip theory*. Oxford Bibliographies. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/abstract/document/obo-9780190221911/obo-9780190221911-0109.xml

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.

Monks, G. (2022). *Introduction.* Family & Community History, *25*(2), 91–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/14631180.2022.2135831

Mueller, C. O. (2021*).* "I didn't know people with disabilities could grow up to be adults": Disability history, curriculum, and identity in special education. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, *44*(3), 189–205. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406421996069

Nario-Redmond, M. R. (2020). *Ableism: The causes and consequences of disability prejudice*. Wiley Blackwell.

Ndopu, E. (2023). *Sipping Dom Pérignon through a straw*. Two Roads.

Oliver, M. (2004). The social model in action: if I had a hammer. In *Implementing the social model of disability*: Theory and Research (pp. 18–31). essay.

Patall, E. A., & Zambrano, J. (2019). Facilitating student outcomes by supporting autonomy: Implications for practice and policy. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *6*(2), 115–122. https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732219862572

Ray, S. J., & Sibara, J. (2018). *Disability studies and the environmental humanities: toward an eco-crip theory*. University of Nebraska Press.

Renke, S. (2023, April 20). *As a disabled person, every day I find myself masking and code switching.* Metro. https://metro.co.uk/2023/04/20/as-a-disabled-person-every-day-i-find-myself-masking-and-code-switching-18636528/

Rojas, N. (2022, January 21). *Why disability bias is a particularly stubborn problem*. Harvard Gazette. https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/01/why-disability-bias-is-a-particularly-stubborn-problem/

Sherry, M., Olsen, T., Vedeler, J. S., & Eriksen, J. (2021). *Disability hate speech: Social, cultural and political contexts*. Routledge.

Shildrick, M. (2009). *Dangerous discourses of disability, subjectivity and sexuality*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Shildrick, M. (2020). The self's clean and proper body. In J. A. Weinstock (Ed.), *The monster theory reader* (pp. 303–329). University of Minnesota Press. https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctvtv937f.20

Solvang, P. K. (2012). From identity politics to dismodernism? Changes in the social meaning of disability art. *Alter*, *6*(3), 178–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alter.2012.05.002

Tanure Alves, M. L., van Munster, M. A., Alves, I. dos, & Souza, J. V. (2022). The “normal” physical education classes: The ableism facing the inclusion of disabled students. *Disability & Society*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2022.2071679

Titchkosky, T. (2014). *Reading and writing disability differently: The textured life of embodiment*. University of Toronto Press.

Titchkosky, T., Cagulada, E., DeWelles, M., & Gold, E. (Eds.). (2022). *Disappearing: Encounters in disability studies*. Canadian Scholars.

Towle, H. (2015). *Disability and inclusion in Canada: policy, procedure, and practice.* Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (pp. 1-68). https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/disability-and-inclusion-canadian-education

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, December 12, 2006, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities

University of Minnesota. (2022). *Critical disability studies collective: Terminology*. Critical Disability Studies Collective. https://cdsc.umn.edu/cds/terms

Van Aswegen, J. (2019). Disabling discourses and charitable model of disability: Labour market activation for people with disabilities, Ireland: A critical policy analysis. *Disability & Society*, *35*(3), 435–459. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1634519

Ware, L. (2001). Writing, identity, and the other. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *52*(2), 107–123. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487101052002003

West-Burns, N. (2020, February 12). *Building critical consciousness for educational equity* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/evndCfQ92s4?si=luGqBq5gnUasYwqh

Wexler, A. J. (2016). Re-imagining inclusion/exclusion: Unpacking assumptions and contradictions in arts and special education from a critical disability studies perspective. *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, *36*.

Young, S. (2014). *I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much* [Video]. TED Conferences. https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much/transcript

Zinn, H. (2010, January 29). *Quote for the day*. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/daily-dish/archive/2010/01/quote-for-the-day/191063/

Chapter 5

Conclusion: More a Door Than a Window

This chapter discusses how the entirety of this dissertation, with its findings, provides a distinct contribution to knowledge in the field of education. My overarching research study questions are: In what ways is Canadian K–12 education ableist? How is this implemented structurally, systematically, and within curriculum? And, as a process of resistance and praxis, what actions can be taken in the enhancement of equitable and inclusive practices, philosophies, structures, and systems in inclusive education and Canadian K–12 education? As an educator, advocate, and researcher, I have sought to problematize and confront ableist practices, systems, and philosophy in Manitoba K-12 education specifically, and Canadian K–12 education generally. As Janzen (2011) pointed out, “It is not the smooth lessons, the compliant children, or the tidy research narratives that matter or induce difference; rather, it is the moments of rupture” (p. 135). As my title attests, this dissertation is both a site of resistance to entrenched ableism in K–12 education and a call to action. Although current pedagogical and ontological ideals about disability, disabled people, and the disability community are tenacious in the field of education, my research strives to unsettle them. Improving teaching, administrating, and learning means being open to new ways moving forward.

Each study illuminates distinct, yet connected, content that explores ableism in different facets, weaving together a tapestry of experience, policy analysis, and case study and demonstrating ableism can be, and is, contested through educative avenues. Concurrent themes that flow through these three studies include the importance of voice, equitable representation, empowerment, knowledge, and identity, as well as calls for transformation. Conceptually, these three studies comprise individual parts that make a whole.

In the following section I will explore each concurrent theme, weaving together my studies' findings to demonstrate the cohesive nature of my research. Following this, I will discuss the unique contribution these studies make to my field and provide areas for future research and recommendations.

Thematic Tapestry

Importance of Voice

As a child, I experienced ableist segregation and stigma that greatly impacted my K–12 schooling experience. Although I was a good athlete, I experienced learning difficulties within the confines of the education system. These challenges were experienced across different schools and cities due to the standardization of Canadian K–12 education. I found it very hard to fit in, as I inhabited multiple worlds: athlete versus poor student, able versus disabled (ableist slurs were prevalent in my schooling experiences), Jew versus non-Jew (revealed in holidays, customs, practices, identity). As an Other, I was constantly in the process of becoming (human, citizen, community member, nondisabled, accepted). Critical disability studies refers to this process as being in a constant state of navigational flux. Writing my autoethnographical study was a way to navigate and explain, both to myself and to the reader, my connection to the disability community. It was also a way to explore ableism in K–12 education from a variety of perspectives, angles, time periods, contexts, and identities. The process was not easy, but it does bring the reader on a journey that spans 30 years, demonstrating pervasive and systematic ableism that crosses city and provincial boundaries.

The findings of my autoethnography advocate for various reforms that place disability identity, community, learning, representation, and support without stigmatization at the fore. Students with disabilities should not be subjected to diagnostic testing that has been called into question as part of a larger system of transinstitutional confinement. Being disabled is not justification for segregation, harassment, or ridicule. Due to my unique positionality as an educator who experienced ableism as part of my K–12 journey, my autoethnography demonstrates an insider (educator)/outsider (student) vantage that specifically highlights the importance of student and community voice in schools, as it pertains to social justice and human rights concerns.

In corroboration with this theme, the findings of my case study highlight the importance of weaving disability knowledge, culture, and history into Manitoba K–12 curriculum. This would recognize the voice of the disability community as a source of value. The findings of this study suggest participants who were teaching and taking an *Introduction to Disability Studies* course at the high school level experienced significant impact on their understanding and conceptualization of disability. This course led to participant's disability-specific consciousness-raising, an alteration in disability-related speech, an attuned sense when encountering disability slurs/hate speech in their school and community, and a broadening of their understanding of inclusion. In many respects, the educational experiences of disabled students can be polarizing. This study brings to the fore the importance of weaving the voice of the disability community into the fabric of K–12 learning, both for disabled and able-bodied students.

Finally, the findings of my critical policy analysis highlight the importance of voice through the recognition of its absence and of the ableism that follows. The maintenance of a K–12 traditional segregated educational system for disabled students points to the extent of systemic ableism and the lack of consideration for their voices while constructing and implementing policy. General acceptance of social devaluation continues to find a foothold in Manitoba K–12 education and is instilled through curriculum and policy. Throughout this study, I used CDA coupled with a critical disability studies lens to draw out ableist discourse embedded in Manitoba's philosophy of inclusive education and curricular documentation. Drawing connections between textual, discursive, and social discourse, I demonstrate that Manitoba continues to infuse ableist discourse throughout its inclusionary policy as a method of sustaining prejudicial power structures and avoiding deep-seated structural transformation. Understanding the needs, hopes, and dreams of the disabled community can help society move beyond cyclical marginalization and trauma.

Equitable Representation & Empowerment

Equitable representation and empowerment are integral to inclusive education and critical disability studies. With my critical discourse analysis (CDA), I sought to represent the dire need for disability community leaders, allies, and experts to be at the decision-making table when policy is constructed, particularly when the potential implications are vast. My work also highlights the importance of research, consultation, and collaboration as means of improving our current system.

In my critical discourse analysis, I analyzed two documents: 1) Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning’s *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024), and 2) *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023). These two provincial documents play a crucial role in educators’, parents’, students’, and community members’ perception of disabled students in Manitoba. They also set the parameters for individualized (I) and modified (M) programs. Understanding these two documents is crucial for navigating provincial programming and resources, as well as for understanding rights and responsibilities. Both documents guide the provision of services and supports for students with disabilities under the guise of inclusion/differentiation and yet continue to enact segregation. This duplicity upholds a discourse of inclusion while seemingly instilling the opposite in practice. As an educator who works in this system, I understand that these two documents impart crucial knowledge and information about disabled students, their rights, and my role in their education journey.

I explored the role of policy in maintaining ableism in Manitoba K–12 education. This study demonstrated the importance of including a disability studies perspective in K–12 schooling as an avenue of capacity building. Furthermore, it demonstrated the need for Canadian K–12 schools to consider engaging in research, policies, and actions that: a) contextualize disability within political and social spheres; b) privilege the interests, agendas, and voices of the disabled community; c) promote social justice, equity, and inclusion for all students; d) provide full and meaningful access to all aspects of schooling for disabled people; and e) assume competence and reject deficit models of disability (Connor, 2019). The findings recognized Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning policies as supporting ableism in K–12 schools and the importance of ameliorating this through a transparent and thorough course of action.

My case study further highlighted the importance of equitable representation and empowerment through the participants' recognition that these were lacking for students with disabilities in their schools. The data from this study suggested inclusion remains an elusive ideal, perhaps foreign to those educators unfamiliar with disability studies. One participant identified that their school context did little to promote positive disability identity, community, and pride by drawing a connection between a lack of equitable representation and the devaluation of the disabled students. Similar observations from this study suggested that value-empowerment is connected to representation in K–12 schools, implicitly and explicitly.

Knowledge and Identity

Knowledge and identity are grounded in an intersectional, human rights, and social justice pedagogy and are central to critical disability studies and inclusive education. Today, inclusive education is affirmed not merely as a desirable ideal in schools but as a requirement for all (Tanure Alves et al., 2022). Despite continued calls for the implementation of disability studies in K–12 curriculum to address attitudinal, social, and curricular barriers (Abdi et al., 2022; Graham, 2019; Heroux, 2017; Keefe, 2022), few studies have explored the implementation of a disability studies course in Canadian K–12 education, leaving this area largely unexplored in Canadian research. My case study explored a Grade 9–12 course entitled *Introduction to Disability Studies (41G)*, considering its curricular relevance, breadth, depth, and attitudinal influence on participants in Manitoba, Canada. Subtextually, this study sought to expose gaps in both research and practice, as it related to disability knowledge and identity in Manitoba schools.

The findings of this case study suggested that participants who were teaching and taking an *Introduction to Disability Studies* course at the high school level experienced a significant impact on their understanding and conceptualization of both disability and inclusion. In addition, participation in the course resulted in disability-specific consciousness-raising, an alteration in disability-related speech, and an attuned sensitivity to disability slurs/hate speech in their school and community.

Bringing the discussion back to my dissertation title and main theme, I wanted to explore curricular engagement that inevitably ties itself back to different ways of knowing, being, and celebrating disability as an act of resistance within an ableist system. Frequently asking myself probing questions such as: How can I resist ableism within my context? and Why isn't disability content present in Manitoba curriculum?, I authored and had the opportunity to study the perceived effects of this course as a researcher. In many ways, this course can be seen as an action research project that sought to challenge entrenched and aversive ableism. Building on my previous studies, this research brought the findings back full circle through student interviews that expressed distressingly similar findings to those of my autoethnography and policy analysis.

My autoethnography highlighted how knowledge, when focused on diagnosing deficits, can also be used to create negative identities (portraiture). I believe the field of psychology (especially educational or school psychology) needs to be infused with an understanding of disability studies to shift from deficit-centred perspectives and approaches of assessment to understanding disability as a positive and community identity. If my own identity as a student had been shaped by knowledge of my strengths and provided me with strategies for learning, it would have made a significant difference to my school and life experience. Now, my knowledge and identity are tightly interwoven in a disability studies mindset, framework, and lens. When I move through space, be it in my community, business, travels, or place of work, I interact within and see the world from this perspective. Disability studies has had a direct and substantial impact on my research interests and the way I see inclusive education in Canada today. It has also influenced my employment/volunteer choices and my professional practice as an educator. Without gaining the knowledge and perspective of disability studies, I am not sure I would have pursued a PhD.

As a woven tapestry, all three studies speak to the need for voice, equitable representation, empowerment, knowledge, and identity to be present in K–12 schools. Finding ways to value the communities we teach is integral to building equitable schools. We can no longer capitulate to upholding and enacting ableist generational trauma and degradation through educational policy, structures, and curriculum.

A Call for Transformation

This dissertation adds to the research and literature in the fields of inclusive education, curriculum studies, administration, psychology, and critical disability studies through the exploration of ableism in Canadian K–12 education. This research explores three contexts as three separate studies (see Figure 4: Research Question Flow Chart) in which ableism continues to marginalize and stigmatize students.

My autoethnography presents foundational knowledge that identifies ableism in the way psychometric testing shapes student identity as portraiture, programmatically and socially segregates, and prepares the stage for transinstitutionalization. The findings further accentuate the importance of supporting disability identity and community in K–12 schools. This study adds to the literature through presenting the story of a Canadian educator who experienced ableist oppression as a student. The importance of this research lies in the way it can help to guide and inform educational reform, including changing the way psychometric testing and labelling is carried out in schools, how its findings are presented and enacted, and how they can positively aid in the creation of a strong disability community and identity. In relation to my overarching research questions, this study contributes to exploring how and in what ways Canadian K–12 education is ableist and provides practical solutions to current challenges.

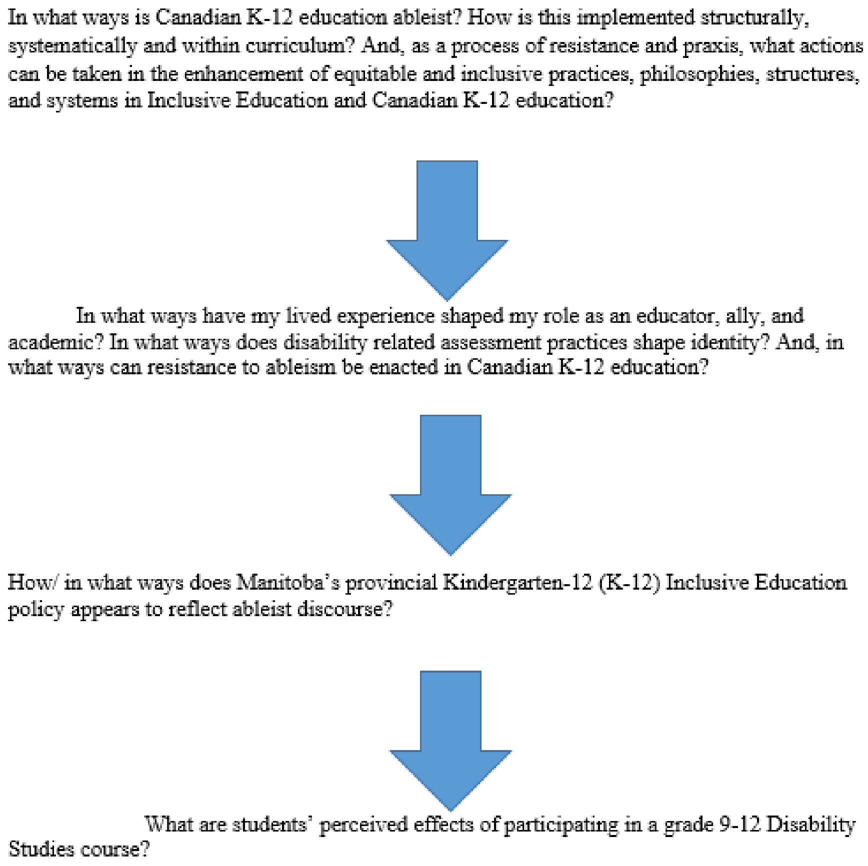
My second study presents a critical policy analysis of Manitoba's provincial Inclusive Education policy. This study identifies the ways ableism is seemingly perpetuated by Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning through individualized (I) and modified (M) programming. This research study uniquely applies the concept of transinstitutionalization to the field of education, identifying the way in which systems enact ableism through concomitant avenues, entrenched in discourse and carried out primarily through K–12 schools. This study analyzes two curricular documents through textual analysis, drawing interconnection between Manitoba's *Philosophy of Inclusion* (2024) and *Supporting Inclusion: Modification and Individualized Programming in Manitoba Schools* (2023) to highlight ableist discourse and the practical application of the transinstitutionalization of disabled students. This study further explores the possibility that (I) and (M) programs constitute educational streams of exclusion and confinement.

This policy study explores the ways in which ableist power, dominance, and inequality are enacted and reproduced by text and practice in Manitoba's K–12 context. The unique contribution provided by this study resides in the poignant analysis of these two curricular documents through a disability studies lens and of their connection, both in practical and theoretical terms, to the presence of transinstitutionalization—meaning the ways in which schools may formalize a process of programmatic confinement of the disability community in Manitoba. Drawing connections to my overarching research questions, this study begins to map, as a means of identification for the purpose of amelioration, how and in what ways Manitoba curricular documents reflect ableist discourse.

Finally, my third study employed a case study to explore the perceived impacts on students of engaging in a disability studies course at the high school level. The findings of this study are impactful and potentially far reaching. Where my previous two studies identified, mapped, and wrestled with the presence and application of ableism in K–12 education, this study presented a means of confronting and combatting ableism through education. This study demonstrates that, through engagement in a course, students' understanding, feelings, and opinions can change. When applied to ableist oppression, the findings remain vital to moving forward inclusive education and social justice in schools. In relation to my overarching research questions, this study speaks to the enhancement of inclusive practices and philosophies as an applicable avenue of resistance and praxis.

Figure 4

Research Question Flow Chart



In what ways is Canadian K-12 education ableist? How is this implemented structurally, systematically and within curriculum? And, as a process of resistance and praxis, what actions can be taken in the enhancement of equitable and inclusive practices, philosophies, structures, and systems in Inclusive Education and Canadian K-12 education?

In what ways have my lived experience shaped my role as an educator, ally, and academic? In what ways does disability related assessment practices shape identity? And, in what ways can resistance to ableism be enacted in Canadian K-12 education?

How/ in what ways does Manitoba's provincial Kindergarten-12 (K-12) Inclusive Education policy appears to reflect ableist discourse?

What are students' perceived effects of participating in a grade 9-12 Disability Studies course?

Overall, these three research studies contribute to the continued rupture of ableism and disability marginalization in Canadian K–12 schools. Specifically, they begin to explore ableism in a Manitoba context, prodding the many ways it is enacted and perpetuated in schools structurally, systematically, and within curriculum. Most importantly, this dissertation contributes to a growing opinion and understanding that there is nothing wrong with being part of the disability community or with being disabled, and that discriminatory systems and structures that can harm children and young adults are not acceptable and will be confronted.

Recommendations and Areas for Future Research

Throughout my three studies, areas for future research and recommendations were presented and are now summarized here. These recommendations are divided into Manitoba-specific recommendations and Canada-wide recommendations and are based on the foundation that K–12 inclusive education can benefit from a disability studies perspective and the work, knowledge, and insights of critical disability studies scholars.

Canadian K–12 recommendations include:

1. Adopt a social model of disability, including the redesign of funding mechanisms, assessment practices, in-school supports, and clinical services.
2. Reform transitions, moving away from transinstitutional confinement as a standard of service.
3. Promote disability pride and community, accentuate disabled role models, hire disabled staff, and formally recognize the disability community within the nexus of diversity.
4. Teach disability studies as a course as a means of educating staff and students out of, and away from, ableism.
5. Include the disability community, their allies, and experts at all decision-making forums, highlighting their leadership status and undertaking to combat ableism in education through research, policy, funding, and action.

Manitoba K–12 recommendations include:

1. Recognize the valued work of disabled students participating in (I) and (M) programs, and the like, by granting them a high school diploma upon graduation.

2. Develop vocational and life experiences for disabled students in K–12 schools that provide them with valued roles and activities, rather than a form of forced labour without remuneration.
3. Conduct psychometric testing that emphasizes strength-based assessment and positive identity development and does not stigmatize disabled students.
4. Re-evaluate all curricular and provincial documents to remove or adjust ableist discourse.

Future research should focus on mapping ableist mechanisms for the purpose of actionable advancement. At the heart of this research is the drive to create K–12 schools that are authentically inclusive, putting student needs and learning ahead of the convenience of the school system. Finding ways to validate and support community building without purposeful stratification, such as transinstitutionalization, remains a central motivation of this dissertation. Having dedicated my professional life, and a great deal of my personal life, to inclusivity and equity, my most earnest recommendation is to keep innovatively pushing forward and to continue critiquing for the purpose of becoming better.

References

Abdi, A. A., Misiaszek, G. W., & Opini, B. (2022). Students with disabilities in British Columbia's (Canada) K to 12 education system: A critical disability and intersectional perspective. In A. P. Bagelman & N. G. Wright (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook on critical theories of education* (pp. 113–127). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77336-5_7

Connor, D. (2019). Why is Special Education So Afraid of Disability Studies? Analyzing Attacks of Disdain and Distortion from Leaders in the Field. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* , *31*(1), 10–23. https://doi.org/https://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/763

Graham, L. (Ed.). (2019). Inclusive Education for the 21st Century: Theory, policy and practice (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003116073

Heroux, J. R. (2017). Infusing Disability Studies within Special Education: A Personal Story. Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal , 13(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/https://rdsjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/604/1762

Janzen, M. D. (2011). *Teaching subjects: Reading the phantasies and interruptions of becoming* [Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia]. UBC Library Open Collections. https://open.library.ubc.ca/media/stream/pdf/24/1.0055127/2

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2023). *Supporting inclusion*: *Modification and individualized programming in Manitoba schools.* https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/pdf/supporting_inclusion_m_i.pdf

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2024). *Philosophy of inclusion*. https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/inclusion.html

Tanure Alves, M. L., van Munster, M. A., Alves, I. dos, & Souza, J. V. (2022). The “normal” physical education classes: The ableism facing the inclusion of disabled students. *Disability & Society*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2022.2071679

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

University of Manitoba

Beginning: Baseline Attitudinal Values and Beliefs

What lead you to take this course?

What were your hopes for this course? (What did you want to get out of it?)

How would you explain this course to others?

What does disability mean (to you)?

What feelings/emotions are connected to the subject of disability? (How do you think about disability?)

How do you think disability (disabilities) is thought of in your family, friends, society?

What are your personal experiences with disabilities? (Are they your teachers, family, co-workers….)

Applied Practice

Were students with disabilities included in "mainstream" classes?

How do/did teachers help students feel more of a part of their class and what was the role of inclusion?

Was disability visible (students, teachers, staff, administration) in your school? Explain.

How does this make you feel?

Do you think students with disabilities have the same opportunities in school as those students without?

how did/does your school help to develop disability culture, pride, community, and identity?

What type of events, special days, or guest speakers/mentors did your school do to develop disability culture, pride, community, and identity?

What does your school do really well in terms of accessibility and inclusion? What areas need improvement?

Does your school have segregated programs for students with disabilities? What do you think those programs are?

> Are sports teams/intermural/clubs segregated in your school? (Do students with disabilities have their own sports teams or are they able to participate in any sports teams/intermural/clubs?)
>
> In your experience, did students with disabilities participate in clubs/intermurals/sports?

Have you heard discriminatory words/slurs, such as the R word, in school? What context? (How was this handled)(How does this look)

Have you ever heard staff say negative thing about disabilities?

Do you think ableism is taken as seriously as racism, sexism..etc?

How is/was critical thinking present in this course?

has this course changed how you understand disability? Explain.

has this course challenged your beliefs? Explain.

has this course affected the way you <u>see</u> people with disabilities? Explain.

has this course affected the way you <u>feel</u> about disability? Explain.

Have you encountered disability related content/course material in your other courses? If so, explain.

Course Scope

Have you discussed the content of this course outside of class? If so, with whom?

Has your understanding, feelings, and perceptions of disability changed?

What concepts have you explored in this course that can be applied elsewhere (course, socially, future).

In what way has intersectionality been explored?

What areas of schooling need to improve to become more inclusive? (how can we make school more inclusive?)

What impacts-takeaways have you acquired from this course?

After taking this course, do you think people with disabilities are discriminated against? In what areas?

What values has this course taught?

Would you say this course helped you understand inclusion, accessibility, and disability in different ways? Explain.

Appendix B: Project Information letter

University of Manitoba

Research Project Title: Sites of Resistance

Researcher: Mr. Michael Baker (PhD Candidate)

Advisor: Dr. Charlotte Enns

Inclusive education (IE) as a practice, movement, and philosophy in Canadian K-12 education continues to remain an area of immense importance. Historically, K-12 education regarded students with disabilities through a deficit, medical based model, leaving little room for meaningful inclusion. This case study will explore a grade 9-12 course entitled Introduction to Disability Studies (41G), considering its curricular relevance, breadth, depth, and attitudinal influence on participants in Canadian K-12 schools. With this in mind, this study will seek to explore (1) primary research question;

> **What are students' perceived effects of participating in a grade 9-12 Disability Studies course?**

A Qualitative research design will be used in my study that incorporates one semi-structured interview. Interviews will be approximately 50 minutes in length.

I am requesting this letter be disseminated amongst students currently registered in Introduction to Disability Studies at Springfield Collegiate or to students whom have taken this course but still attend Springfield Collegiate.

> **Please note**: Student anonymity will be maintained vigorously. All markers or identifiers will be erased and participants can withdraw from this research project at any time without penalty. All students and legal guardians will be required to sign a consent form for participation.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this project you may contact Mr. Michael Baker at bakerm38@myumanitoba.ca , Dr. Charlotte Enns at Charlotte.Enns@umanitoba.ca ,or the Human Ethics Coordinator at humanethics@umanitoba.ca

Sincerely

Michael Baker

Bakerm38@myumanitoba.ca

Appendix C: Letter of Consent for Participants

Research Project Title: Sites of Resistance

Researcher: Mr. Michael Baker (PhD Candidate)

Advisor: Dr. Charlotte Enns

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 a 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 the time to read this carefully.

I agree to take part in the study, Sites of Resistance.

I understand my participation will include:

➢ One semi-structured interview.

A copy of each interview will be provided to you transcribed for you (participant and legal guardian) to read and edit. I anticipate that this will take you about 15-30 minutes for each transcript.

I understand that names will not be identified in any report or presentation that may arise from the study.

- I understand no inducement will be given for participation.

- I understand that the findings of this study may be presented to academic audiences (including workshops and conference presentations, reports, to inform my Ph.D., referred/non-referred journal articles).

- I understand that there are no repercussions for (non-) participation.

- I understand that the University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

- I understand that interview transcripts will be available only to the researcher and advisor (Dr. Charlotte Enns). Pseudonyms will be used for participants in all written records generated by the research, and consent forms will be housed in a separate location from the data, from which all identifiers will be removed as soon as the interview is transcribed. Data will be stored in a office on a password-protected computer, and relevant project forms will be stored in a locked safety box accessible only to the researcher. All data from the project will be destroyed within 5 years of study completion (Jan 1, 2027).

The University of Manitoba may look at my research records to ensure that this study was conducted in a safe and proper way. 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 as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participants Signature: ______________________________

Legal Guardian Signature: _______________________________

Researcher Signature: ______________________________

Date: ________________________

If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact Mr. Michael Baker at bakerm38@myumanitoba.ca , Dr. Charlotte Enns at Charlotte.Enns@umanitoba.ca or the Human Ethics Coordinator at humanethics@umanitoba.ca .

Sincerely

Michael Baker (Bakerm38@myumanitoba.ca)

Appendix D: Ethics Board Approval

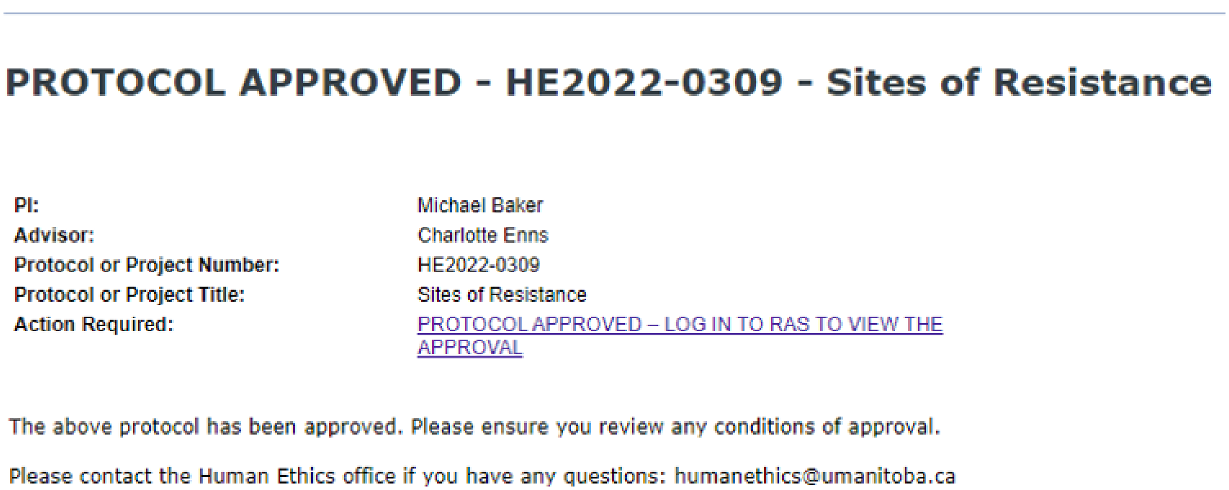
University of Manitoba

Appendix D: Ethics Board Case Study Approval

Research Project Title: Sites of Resistance

Researcher: Mr. Michael Baker (PhD Candidate)

Advisor: Dr. Charlotte Enns



PROTOCOL APPROVED - HE2022-0309 - Sites of Resistance

PI:	Michael Baker
Advisor:	Charlotte Enns
Protocol or Project Number:	HE2022-0309
Protocol or Project Title:	Sites of Resistance
Action Required:	PROTOCOL APPROVED – LOG IN TO RAS TO VIEW THE APPROVAL

The above protocol has been approved. Please ensure you review any conditions of approval.

Please contact the Human Ethics office if you have any questions: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

Appendix E

41G Introduction to Disability Studies (Grade 11/12 Optional Course)

Students will explore disability through a variety of lenses (Medical Model, Social Model, and Ableism). By exploring disability, students will gain a broad awareness of Canadian society and those that comprise it. Allowing for meaningful engagement, students will seek to bridge gaps and foster further understanding on this subject through a variety of experiences, such as; conversations, guest speakers, and inquiry. A strong emphasis is placed on conversations/discussions (round-tables) in a safe and secure environment. Students will demonstrate their learning largely through, but not limited to; Journaling, Discussions, Research, Presentation and or a Verbal or Written component. There is no final exam for this course.

Student Learning Outcome

General Learning Outcome

Students will….

1. Develop capacity in and apply inquiry, exploratory, and project based learning initiatives as they explore various avenues of disability.
2. Demonstrate critical thinking and its relevant application when addressing inclusivity, policy, treatment, social trends, and employment surrounding disability.
3. Demonstrate and develop research skills when engaged in exploring various subjects related to the field of disability studies.
4. Demonstrate and explore inclusive ideals through a variety of course interactions, material and mediums.

5. Demonstrate real-life application of course content/inclusion through active engagement in school and/or community initiatives.

<u>Specific Learning Outcomes</u>

Students will….

1. Familiarize themselves with the scope of what is considered disability.
2. Use research skills and an inquiry model to explore operational definitions and criteria for disability.
3. Use exploratory and project based learning to explore physical, economic, socio-political and cultural barriers for those living with a disability.
4. Demonstrate awareness of key policy/legislative documents that address inclusion and equity (Manitoba's Inclusion Policy, UNESCO). To Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Leading SDG 4 - education 2030. UNESCO, 2021).
5. Explore the role of values, attitudes and stigma play in Canada and globally.
6. Explore the role disability plays within a wider framework of diversity.
7. Become aware of vocational opportunities within the disability field.

Learning Approaches and Strategies

1. Lectures
2. Research
3. Inquiry learning
4. Exploratory Learning
5. Project based learning
6. Group presentations/collaboration

7. Discussions
8. Technological integration (flipped classroom, presentation etc..)
9. Readings and reports
10. Journal

Guidelines for Student Inquiry

- ✓ Cultivate an open, democratic learning environment where students are encouraged to be curious and independent.
- ✓ Use student-centred learning strategies such as brainstorming, discussion, concept maps, and graphic organizers, and observe student progress through classroom based assessment techniques. These strategies will provide ongoing opportunities for teachers to assess prior knowledge, to deal with student misconceptions and difficulties, and to assess progress.
- ✓ Help students' articulate good questions that move beyond simple, factual answers to those with diverse answers and perspectives.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for students to start their inquiry at the local community level and to engage in place-based site learning. Deep, experiential understanding of an issue at the local level will help them to connect with the larger, more abstract global issue.
- ✓ Determine whether an inquiry will involve the whole class, small groups, or individual students. If the inquiry process is new to students, begin by having all students collaborate on one topic. This approach will allow teachers to play a more active role in role-modelling and guiding the inquiry. As well, students will learn from each other as they share their research, discuss their findings and conclusions, and are exposed to healthy dissent and diverse perspectives.

- ✓ Encourage students to think critically and engage in reflection throughout the learning process, and to maintain a learning log to record their growth and learning.
- ✓ Use multiple resources, including primary source material and encourage academic rigour. Students should be exposed to multiple and contradictory viewpoints, and then encouraged to seek their own position based on reliable information. Sources include expert interviews, publications, media sources, Internet sources, government and non-government agencies and organizations, and others.
- ✓ Determine appropriate methods of presentation. Encourage creativity and rigour.
- ✓ Assessment needs to be ongoing and to take multiple forms. Student progress should be monitored and tracked through the use of ongoing observation and discussion, and with anecdotal records and checklists (Fronesca, 2011).

Assessment of Outcomes

Self-Assessment:

- ✓ Students will evaluate their knowledge and language acquirement and fluidity through discussion and collaborative engagement
- ✓ Students will conference with teacher to discuss progress, challenges and areas of interest
- ✓ Students will journal to reflect upon changing opinions, attitudes, challenges, interesting information, pressing questions, areas of interest

Teacher Assessment:

- ✓ Students will receive feedback through written and verbal reports (ongoing and frequent basis)

- ✓ Students will discuss their journaling endeavor and receive assessment as and for learning
- ✓ Students work, presentation, discussions, collaboration will be assessed through rubrics and pre-set assessment framework

Appendix F

Disability Studies and Inclusion - 2593 - EDUA 5730 - T06

Overview

A forum for the discussion of Disability Studies in Education, Inclusive Education and Special Education. Students will learn about a variety of topics and concepts in Disability Studies in Education as tools for engaging in robust discussion around Inclusive and Special Education.

Students will explore the Disability/Disability Studies in Education concept (what is disability? How is it defined?), Person First Vs. Identity First Language, Social Model vs. Medical Model, Intersectionality, Disability Activism, Normalcy (Normate), Statistics, Eugenics, Disability History, Accessibility and Barriers, Ableism and current topics today.

Students will apply critical thinking and inquiry to explore topics of interest. In this course, we will also focus on practical implications for teachers and clinicians in the area of inclusivity through the required textbooks.

Rationale

Disability Studies in Education offers an alternative conceptualization to a variety of educational practices, processes, procedures, and thoughts today. In this course, we will bring to the fore important dialogue on a variety of issues, topics and concepts in this area. We will seek to ultimately foster an increased level of inclusion in education and society by attacking the systemic marginalization, segregation, dehumanization, and devaluation (and more) of those with a disability (non-conformist minds and bodies).

Through the exploration of various terms, concepts, and narratives, we will ask educators to question their ideas on disability, practices, and systematic procedures in education. Students will engage in self-reflection, critiquing current educative practices, and develop more inclusive practices for all students.

> "Always remember, *you* possess the power as an individual teacher to initiate change-no matter how small or great-that can contribute to making public schools a better place for *all* children" (Connor, D. & Valle. 2011).

Learning Resources

Required Textbook

Connor, D. & Valle. (2011). *Rethinking Disability: A Disability Studies Approach to Inclusive Practices.* 2nd ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Office Hours – Instructor

Name: Michael Baker (He/Him) **Email:** Michael.Baker@umanitoba.ca

Course Dates: August 3rd-23rd, 2021

Course Time: Monday – Thursday 9am-12pm

Location: Zoom (invite will be sent to individual registered students)

Meeting Availability (by appointment): 12 – 1pm Monday – Thursday via Zoom

Email Availability: Anytime (will respond within 24hours Monday-Friday & Sunday)

Online Resources

Manitoba Education & Training: Philosophy of Inclusion

https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/inclusion.html

Towards Inclusion: Supporting Positive Behaviour in Manitoba Classrooms (2011)

https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/behaviour/behaviour_document.pdf

Community Living Manitoba

https://www.aclmb.ca/

Inclusion Winnipeg

https://inclusionwinnipeg.org/

Access to a Computer and the Internet

Access to a computer connected to the Internet is mandatory for this course. If you do not have your own computer or access to the Internet at home, please research the alternatives on-campus, as summer hours and facilities may be subject to unscheduled changes and interruptions

Course Requirements

Class Presence and Participation

Full attendance is mandatory. Marks may be deducted for non-attendance. Students are expected to participate in all daily class discussions, activities, group work, and cooperative learning assignments.

Please note: Any “Early Ending” of class will be considered a student-directed work period for readings/assignments.

Writing Style

Student papers must be typed and follow APA format. However, some assignments (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, diaries, journals, lesson plans, curricula, projects, etc.) that are not consistent APA style guidelines are excluded from this requirement.

Access and Accommodations

Students who require accommodations for full participation in the class should contact Student Accessibility Services (520 University Centre, 204-474-7423, student_accessibility@umanitoba.ca) prior to the beginning of the semester and contact the instructor prior to the course or meet with the instructor during the first class.

Recording Class Lectures: No audio or video recording of lectures or presentations is allowed in any format, openly or surreptitiously, in whole or in part without my permission. Course materials (both paper and digital) are for the participant’s private study and research.

Privacy Rights

Practical assignments that include information about colleagues or students or samples of their work must respect the privacy rights of the people involved. To do this, block out all identifying information (such as the names, addresses, and phone numbers of students, educators, parents, schools, school divisions, etc.) or use pseudonyms. In addition, do not leave student work samples or other identifying materials in public places (e.g., forgotten at the copier or fax machine, in an open file on a desk or counter, etc.). In submitting assignments from a remote location (i.e., by mail, fax, e-mail, or through an intermediary), it is your responsibility to exercise due diligence to ensure the security of the submitted materials. In general, treat student work samples, test results, observational records, and other personal information with a high degree of professional discretion and an absolute respect for privacy.

Academic and Personal Supports

The Academic Learning Centre (ALC) offers services that may be helpful to you throughout your academic program. Through the ALC, you can meet with a learning specialist to discuss concerns such as time management, learning strategies, and test-taking. You can also meet one-to-one with a writing tutor who can give you feedback at any stage of the writing process. These Academic Learning Centre services are free for U of M students. For more information, please visit the Academic Learning Centre (201 Tier Building, 204-480-1481, http://umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/).

Librarian help is available online, via the Ask-a-Librarian chat found on the Libraries’ homepage:www.umanitoba.ca/libraries.

For mental health support, contact the Mobile Crisis Service (24/7) at 204-940-1781.

Contact the Student Counselling Centre if you are concerned about any aspect of your mental health, including anxiety, stress, or depression, or for help with relationships or other life concerns (http://umanitoba.ca/student/counselling/index.html, 474 University Centre or S207 Medical Services, 204-474-8592

Contact the Student Support Case Management team if you are concerned about your safety or that of another student and don't know where to turn (520 University Centre, 204-474-7423, http://umanitoba.ca/student/case-manager/index.html

Contact the University Health Service for any medical concerns, including mental health problems (104 University Centre, 204-474-8411 - business hours and after hours/urgent calls, http://umanitoba.ca/student/health/)

Contact our Health and Wellness Educator with concerns about alcohol and substance use harms, and sexual assault (469 University Centre, 204-295-9032 http://umanitoba.ca/student/health-wellness/welcome.html Katie.Kutryk@umanitoba.ca

Live Well @ U of M site: http://umanitoba.ca/student/livewell/index.html

Academic Regulations

Contact an Academic Advisor within our faculty for questions about your academic program and regulations (Rm. 203 Education, 204-474-9004, education@umanitoba.ca, http://umanitoba.ca/academic-advisors/

Visit http://umanitoba.ca/copyright for more information on copyright.

The Academic Calendar (http://umanitoba.ca/student/records/academiccalendar.html) is one important source of information for university policies and procedures and general academic regulations. Attend, especially, to the following subsections of the section on General Academic Regulations: Personal Information (e.g., keep your mailing address, university email, and name up to date), Attendance and Withdrawal (e.g., miss a class only with permission, withdraw before voluntary withdrawal deadline, etc.), Academic Integrity (e.g., know how to avoid plagiarism and impersonation), grade appeals, and other issues.

The responsibilities of academic staff with regards to students can be found at: http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/students/278.html or http://umanitoba.ca/catl/roass.htm

Information about a respectful work and learning environment is available at: http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/230.html

The responsibilities of academic staff with regards to students can be found at:
http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/students/278.html or
http://umanitoba.ca/catl/roass.htm

Information about a respectful work and learning environment is available at:
http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/230.html

Information about student discipline is available at:
http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/students/student_discipline.html

Contact Student Advocacy if you want to know more about your rights and responsibilities as a student, have questions about policies and procedures, and/or want support in dealing with academic or discipline concerns (520 University Centre, 204-474-7423, http://umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy/student_advocacy@umanitoba.ca

Evaluation

Voluntary Withdrawal date with refund: last day ______________. Voluntary withdrawal date without refund: last day _____________.

Full attendance is mandatory. Marks may be deducted for non-attendance. The Faculty of Education also reserves the right to debar any student who misses more than three hours of class in a course without a legitimate excuse. All assignments must be completed to receive a grade in this course. Assignments with spelling or grammar errors will be returned for correction prior to being graded. Late assignments will be penalized unless an extension has been granted prior to the due date. There is no final exam. Evaluative feedback may not be given prior to the voluntary withdrawal date. It is your responsibility to retain a photo or electronic copy of ALL materials submitted to meet course requirements; in the event of loss or theft, a duplicate copy of materials is required. Students must complete all assigned work and attend all classes to receive a final grade. Assignments may be submitted late only with the prior approval of the professor.

Letter Grade Values*

A+ = 95-100%

A = 90-94%

B+ = 85-89%

B = 80-84%

C+ = 75-79%

C = 70-74%

D = 65-69%

F = below 65%

* Please note that “B” and “B+” grades mean that the student did a “good” or “very good” job of what they were asked to do. To be “excellent” or “exceptional”, which is what “A” and “A+” mean, a student’s work must be outstanding and show depth of thought, attention to relevant research and scholarship, insight, creativity, critical analysis, and the successful synthesis of disparate ideas or methods. “A” and “A+” work must be innovative, even surprising, and exceed what the professor expected – in other words, show excellence or be exceptional.

Unclaimed assignments will become the property of the Faculty of Education and will be subject to destruction by confidential shredding four months after the end of term.

Assessment

Discussion notes (x 6) -30% [students will be placed in small and large groups for discussions]

Critical Essay- 40%

Critique as a Pecha Kucha Presentation - 30%

Schedule

August 3rd: Introductions, Syllabus, and Assignment Discussion

Discussion - Valle & Connor – *Preface* +**Podcast:** https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/curb-cuts/ (Curb Cuts)

August 4th: **Lecture:** What is a disability/Disability Studies in Education? How do we define it? (Deaf Culture, Sue Austin). Person First vs. Identity First Language.

Discussion: Valle & Connor Chapter 1 *Making Sense of Public School Culture and Context* (pg. 4-18) + The Dignity of Disabled Lives https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/02/opinion/disabled-human-rights.html

Discussion notes: 1

August 5th: **Lecture:** Social Model vs. Medical Model of Disability & Intersectionality

Discussion: Valle & Connor Chapter 2 *Contemplating the (In)visibility of Disability* (pg. 21-44) + I Use a Wheelchair. And Yes, I’m Your Doctor https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/06/opinion/doctor-wheelchair-disability.html +

Discussion notes: 2

August 9th: **Lecture:** Normalcy (Normate), Statistics – Canada & Global.

Discussion: Valle & Connor Chapter 3 *Examining Beliefs and Notions of Normalcy* (pg. 51-71) *&* Chapter 4 *Practicing Educational Equity in a Democracy* (pg.74-96) **Discussion notes: 3**

August 10th: **Lecture:** Disability Activism- Nothing About Us, Without Us.

Research Essay Topic Choice + Critique as a Pecha Kucha Presentation Topic **Discussion notes: 4**

August 11th: **Lecture:** Eugenics and Disability History

Discussion: Valle & Connor Chapter 9 *Actively Challenging Normalcy* (pg. 228-244) &

Podcast: https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/g-unfit (Radiolab: Unfit)

Optional: The Nazis' First Victims Were The Disabled https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/opinion/nazis-holocaust-disabled.html

August 12th: **Critique as a Pecha Kucha Presentation Due Today (Its presentation day!!!!)**

August 16th: **Critique as a Pecha Kucha Presentation Due Today (Its presentation day!!!!)**

Lecture: Disability Hate Speech and Current Topics **Discussion notes 5**

August 17th: **Lecture:** Ableism – Disablism

Discussion: Words Matter, And It's Time to Explore The Meaning of "Ableism" https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2020/10/25/words-matter-and-its-time-to-explore-the-meaning-of-ableism/?sh=48adce067162

#BlackDisabledLivesMatter: Why we need to talk about both race and disability https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/blackdisabledlivesmatter/

We're 20 Percent of America, and We're Still Invisible https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/26/opinion/Americans-with-disabilities-act.html

August 18th: **Lecture:** Transinstitutionalization & Disability Based Abortion (A Global Movement)

Discussion: The Last Children of Down Syndrome https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/12/the-last-children-of-down-syndrome/616928/

August 19th:

Discussion: *[Guiding Question – where do we go from here?]*

Valle & Connor Chapter 10 *Promoting Inclusive Beliefs and Practices* (pg. 248-271) + *A Final Note* (pg. 273)

Remainder of the class: Critical Essay Work Period

August 23rd: **Critical Essay + Discussion notes package Due Today** + Course Evaluation, Closing Discussion

Assignment Criteria

Discussion Notes (x 6) -30%

12 Font, Times New Roman, Double Spaced, Work Cited, APA (7) Citation

Students will record their discussion notes, to a maximum of 1 page, based on those weeks readings/material (including podcasts). This can be done in point form, but must reflect a thorough preparation for class discussion. Students will submit their discussion notes prior to the beginning of class each class for review. In addition, each student will be responsible for submitting all of their discussion notes (x6) as a package at the culmination of the course to receive a grade in this section.

-Academic discussion (small group): explanation and extrapolation of assigned readings- ideas, content, embedded problematization or critical thinking/analysis skills. Student is participatory, on task, and shares relevant ideas.

-Key terms defined and explained

- Key issues explained

- Critical appraisal of chapter issues

- Incorporation of relevant additional research and scholarship

-Implications and recommendations for (re)conceptualizing inclusive [special] education

- Implications and recommendations for inclusive education service delivery

- Implications for understanding and/or conducting research in inclusive education

Critical Essay- 40% (*Topic will be approved by/with instructor)*

Students will identify one area of interest, concept, issue or topic. Students will review relevant research on their topic, including 10 academic sources. Students will write an 8-12 page critical essay that;

*must explore topics in education coupled with course relevant concepts *

-connects disability studies topic/concept/idea or area of interest to current inclusive educational practices, curriculum/content and or pedagogy.

-students will use critical thinking/analysis to elucidate their ideas

- all key terms, concepts, and definitions will be explained

-all ideas, connections and analysis will be clear to the reader

Topic Examples:

- A critique of clinical (Speech Therapist, Phycologist, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist) practices, assessments, language, and role in the current education system

- A critique of present educational thinking on disability (definition, categorization, labeling, segregation, programming, etc.) with suggestions on how to (re)conceptualize ability and disability in the future

- A critique of present thinking on teacher education (pre-service or in-service) with suggestions on how to (re)construct teacher education for inclusive education

- A critique of contemporary approaches to working with children and/or youth with mental health challenges and/or psychiatric disorders, with suggestions on how to reconstruct attitudes and practices in education

The essay will be evaluated on:

- abstract
- introduction (rationale/problem discussion/previous research and scholarship)
- critical method (critique, criteria, and method of critical analysis)
- limitations (constraints inherent in your critique or suggestions)
- synthesis - organization of outcomes of critique with suggestions for the (re)construction of inclusive education and best practices
- summary and conclusion

- Use of APA style, length, grammar, spelling, references. [12 Font, Times New Roman, Double Spaced]
- incorporation of research and scholarship
- clarity, organization, insight, and critical thinking

Critique as a Pecha Kucha Presentation *- 30% (*Topic will be approved by/with instructor)*

Students will identify a current practice that presents difficulty (potential discrimination/segregation etc.) in the Canadian education system*. The subject will be presented to the class, outlining: history, (curricular) documentation, practice, issue and proposed solution. Students must make a cogent argument, backing up their opinion with academic sources, clearly explaining all facets of their issue and its relevance. Students will be expected to field 1-3 questions from their peers/instructor, should they arise. All presentations must have relevance to the course and content explored.

*Issue Presentation will be different from the Critical Essay

*Students may explore other education systems (upon instructors' approval)

The Issue Presentation will be evaluated on:

- 5% Introduction (clarity of issue and evidence of research)
- 10 % Context (history, curricular documentation, practice)
- 5% Critique (practice and issue)
- 5% Solution & Conclusion
- 5% Fluency (student demonstrates a strong understanding and application of their issue, presentation is clear and poignant and demonstrates a strong ability to field questions on the topic (should they arise)).

Pecha Kucha Presentation (presenter shows 20 slides for 20 seconds of commentary each (6 minutes and 40 seconds total): Using this presentation format, students will explore the application of Disability Studies in Education in their practice. For more information (https://go.pechakucha.com/for-schools).

Appendix G

Spring/Summer 2021 Course Evaluation (P1) - Core Question Report for EDUA5730 - T06 - Disability Studies and Inclusion (Michael Baker)

Creation Date: **Wednesday, October 6, 2021**

Spring/Summer 2021 University of Manitoba Student Ratings of Instruction (UM SRI) Core Question Report

This report contains the summary of UM SRI results for courses with regular course end dates.

Students were invited to share their feedback on the teaching and the course material to help improve the overall quality of education at the University of Manitoba. As part of this goal, all instructors receive an Individual Report for developmental purposes (i.e., to identify strengths and areas for improvement related to their teaching methods). Contents of this report include frequencies and comments from the core questions that may be used to guide instructors in the preparation of teaching development plans.

We encourage instructors to examine the results carefully, to seek to understand them, to take note of patterns, to draw logical conclusions, and to act on the valuable feedback that students have provided.

When interpreting the results, please consider the following:

1. The evaluations stem from student perception and the validity increases proportionally with the number of responses. A teaching development plan should be based on the most representative results and less on outlying responses.
2. Students may have provided open-ended feedback in response to two core questions.
3. This core question report is shared with the instructors and their respective Department Heads, Deans, and the Office of the Provost.
4. If an instructor added questions to the course evaluation via Question Personalization (QP) Tasks, only the instructor will be able to view responses to those questions, which will be sent to the instructor in a separate report.

A PDF version of this report can be downloaded and saved to your computer to keep for your records.

Response rate

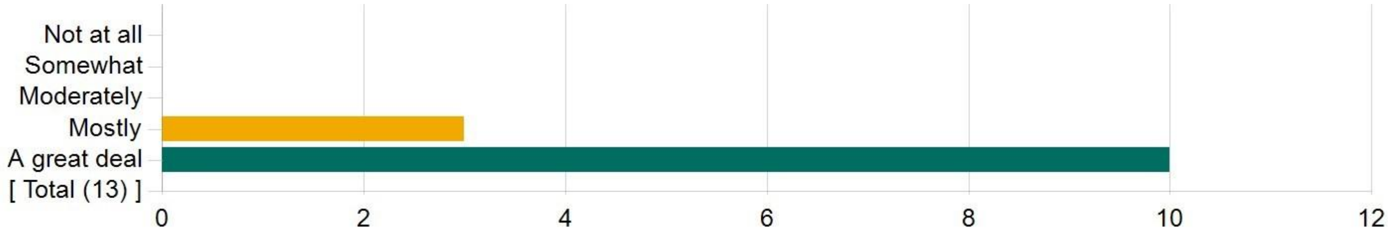
Raters	Students
Responded	13
Invited	19
Response Ratio	68%

Course evaluation results for core questions

Responses to single-selection questions

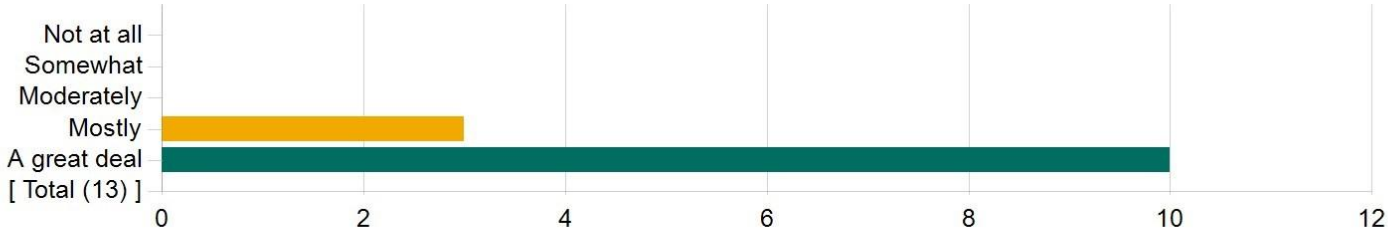
Core questions (1 = Not at all to 5 = A great deal)

1. I found the course intellectually stimulating so far.



Options	Count	Percentage
Not at all	0	0%
Somewhat	0	0%
Moderately	0	0%
Mostly	3	23%
A great deal	10	77%

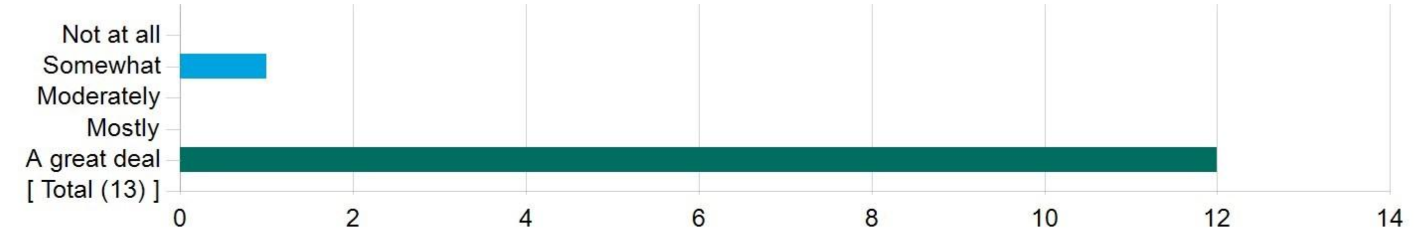
2. The course is providing me with a deeper understanding of the subject matter.



Options	Count	Percentage
Not at all	0	0%
Somewhat	0	0%
Moderately	0	0%
Mostly	3	23%

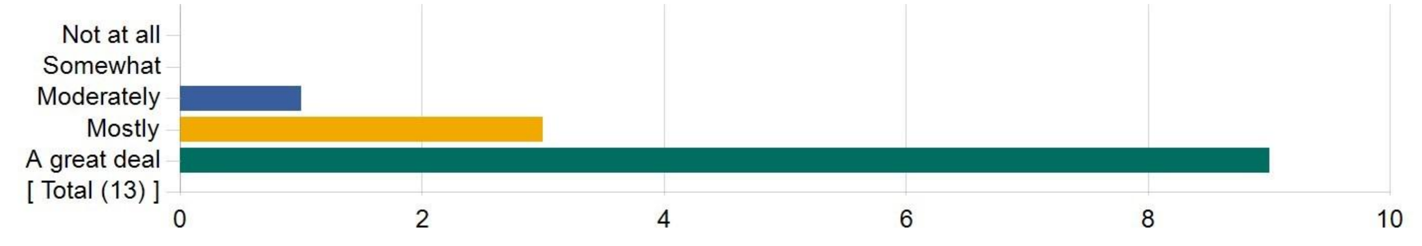
A great deal	10	77%

3. The instructor is creating a course atmosphere that was conducive to my learning.



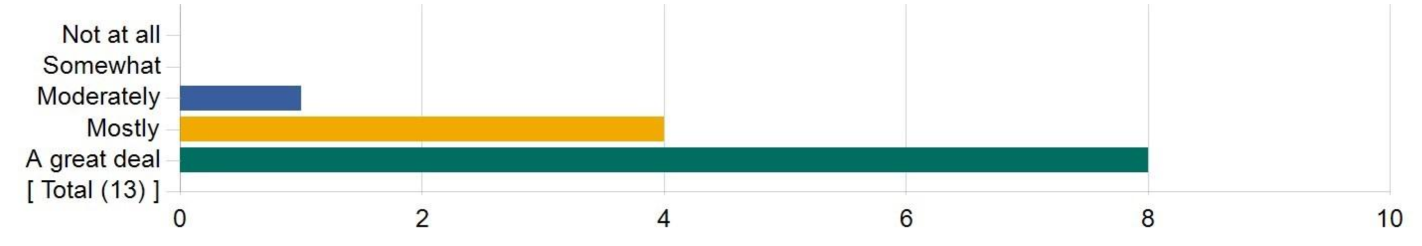
Options	Count	Percentage
Not at all	0	0%
Somewhat	1	8%
Moderately	0	0%
Mostly	0	0%
A great deal	12	92%

4. Course projects, assignments, tests, and/or exams are improving my understanding of the course material.



Options	Count	Percentage
Not at all	0	0%
Somewhat	0	0%
Moderately	1	8%
Mostly	3	23%
A great deal	9	69%

5. Course projects, assignments, tests, and/or exams are providing an opportunity for me to demonstrate an understanding of the course material.

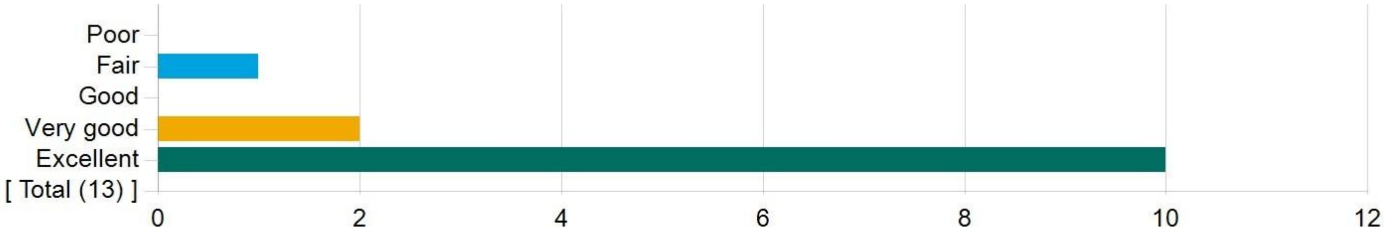


Options	Count	Percentage
Not at all	0	0%

Somewhat	0	0%
Moderately	1	8%
Mostly	4	31%
A great deal	8	62%

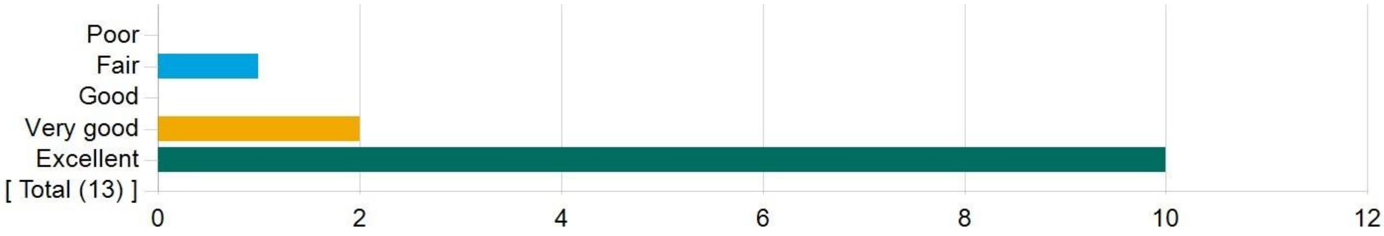
Core Questions (1 = Poor to 5 = Excellent)

1. Overall, the quality of my learning experience in this course so far is . . .



Options	Count	Percentage
Poor	0	0%
Fair	1	8%
Good	0	0%
Very good	2	15%
Excellent	10	77%

2. Overall, the quality of my learning experience with this instructor so far is . . .



Options	Count	Percentage
Poor	0	0%
Fair	1	8%
Good	0	0%
Very good	2	15%
Excellent	10	77%

Responses to open-ended questions

What did this instructor do to facilitate my learning within this course?

Comments

The instructor used videos, podcasts, and readings to explore the course content, which made the course deeply engaging.
Michael Baker was open, honest, and very easy to talk to. He listened and provided feedback and taught me so much. He made the course relevant to education today and Itruly feel that every teacher should take this course.
–good selection of readings. –very thought provoking articles.
I felt that the instructor facilitated thorough and well–informed lectures; provided relevant texts; and supported rich discussions. I also appreciated the consistent Treaty Acknowledgment at the beginning of each lecture.
The instructor offered lots of time to discuss readings with classmates, which helped process information and deepen my understanding. This course should be required in the Bachelor of Education program. The content is very relevant and important to create inclusive schools.
I liked how he got us to make discussion notes before every class about the readings we did. He also had a sense of humour. I also liked on the syllabus that he outlined what we were doing each class.
There were lots of opportunities to discuss matters. Individual projects that were shared in class broadened our scope of what other issues were out there. Videos, blogs , articles as well as lectures. I liked that time was provided to work on assignments. This is important during summer session. Would love to see this as a compulsary undergrad class!
The instructor was passionate about the material and asked challenging and thought provoking questions. The smaller breakout rooms to larger group discussions were led very well and many great knowledgeable conversations were shared.
The instructor provided reference material that was up–to–date, pertinent, and useful for deepening my understanding of the course content. He was open to questions and provided clear and robust explanations.
The podcasts, readings, textbooks and lectures were all fantastic and very thought provoking. I felt that the assignments were fair and led to a deeper level of understanding and engagement with the course content. The discussion notes were a great way to keep up with the reading material as they kept us accountable and on track (time). I firmly believe that this course should be a required course in the B ED program!
– provided excellent context for issues around subject areas – time management was excellent – structure of class was great with time for small group discussions for further our understanding
Michael was an excellent instructor. He really challenged my thinking and created numerous opportunities to discuss and share our perspectives on the information presented. I would definitely recommend this course.

How might this instructor improve this course?

Comments
It might be interesting to have a guest speaker present on a topic during an online seminar.
I have no suggestions for improvement. It was very well implemented. The presentation materials were phenomenal.

–more structured questions in breakout groups pertaining to the course readings. –first email sent out was very aggressive. –the Pecha Kusha presentation format was stressful. Just tell people they have to do a 6–7 min. presentation with 20 slides and to not go over. –have a chat with the class on the first day about breakout room etiquette. At times it was brutal during breakout group time with certain people dominating the conversation and interrupting others.
I would really have appreciated a rubric for the assignments and more detailed instructions, perhaps even examples/samples of expectations. I was provided with a letter grade but no feedback on what to do to have done better. I don’t know what the letter grade was as a number/percent of my coursework.
My only critique would be to have more detailed feedback on the assignments.
While I really appreciate the instructor’s passion for disability studies (it truly made the course more engaging and the instructor more likeable), I would suggest he try to ‘be neutral’ at times, especially because of the sensitive topics we discussed and the lack of expertise among the students.
I like the idea of the final assignment being either an essay or some lesson planning that allows us to demonstrate our learning.
– options for the final assignment, perhaps instead of an essay an application for in class learning– more canadian readings/podcasts – a guest speaker on the subject
I think the course and format was excellent. For a three week course he definitely made to most of the time we had to share his insight as well as provided content that further added to the given topics. Great course.

Appendix H

Research Opportunity

TITLE: SITES OF RESISTANCE

HAVE YOU TAKEN <u>INTRODUCTION TO DISABILITY STUDIES</u> AT SPRINGFIELD COLLEGIATE?

This research project will explore:

What are students' perceived effects of participating in a grade 9-12 Disability Studies course?

This research is being conducted by Michael Baker for the purpose of obtaining a PhD. For more information, please contact:

☎

✉

bakerm
38@my
umanito
ba.ca