The idea of belonging and membership, being part of a community, is a basic human need. It's one of the principles of our democratic society. We all have the same needs, we want to be loved, we want to have friends, we want to feel that we are making a contribution in our families, in our communities….We learn about understanding what someone's interests and point of view are by interacting with them. To include everyone is to open up those possibilities for learning and appreciating our humanity (Dr. Joseph Petner, former principal of the Haggerty Elementary School in Cambridge, Massachusetts).

You can build a ramp to get anyone into a building, but it truly is the attitude that facilitates real inclusion. If the people inside the building don't see the value of the individual and don't want them there, then true inclusion does not happen (Christina Smith, director of The Arc of the Mid-Ohio Valley).

University of Alberta

A Healthy, Thoughtful, Insightful Discussion about Social Inclusion in a Postsecondary Institution

By

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Abstract

This research study combines aspects of previous inquiries into attitudes towards the inclusion of individuals with disabilities. It extends previous research in that it specifically examines instructors' perceptions of social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities at the postsecondary education level, and does so within the context of Vygotsky's social development theory. Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine instructors at Red Deer College, using interpretive phenomenological analysis. Findings are presented as themes that emerged from the transcribed interviews by following the process of thematic analysis. The themes are presented with exemplars from the interviews to help capture the meaning of each theme. Five key themes emerged as primary observations of social inclusion at a postsecondary education institution: conflict between the college philosophy of social inclusion and the reality of what is happening in individual classes, conflict between encouraging social inclusion and the reality of departmental requirements for courses and graduation, slow pace at which society accepts individuals with developmental disabilities, varied expectations of the outcome of social inclusion, and comfort level with individuals with developmental disabilities. Conflict between the college philosophy of social inclusion and the reality of what is happening in individual classes refers to inclusion policies and practices that are recommended by an institution or persons in position of authority. Conflict between encouraging social inclusion and the reality of departmental requirements for courses and graduation include percentage grades needed to pass certain courses, number of

courses needed to obtain a certificate or diploma, and graduation requirements. Slow pace at which society accepts individuals with developmental disabilities encompasses attitudes towards social inclusion over the last thirty years. Varied expectations of the outcome of social inclusion refers to the general understanding of what the educational experience and future prospects of employment hold for students with disabilities. Comfort level with individuals with developmental disabilities refers to the range of understanding people without a disability have about what a disability is. Important information regarding social inclusion at the postsecondary level can be gleaned from this research. It is recommended that the discussion about the social inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities at the college level continue, as there is much to learn about how it is perceived as working, what the benefits are, and how it can be improved. We can also learn about the importance and willingness to interact on a real level with individuals with developmental disabilities.

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A Healthy, Thoughtful, Insightful Discussion about Social Inclusion in a Postsecondary Institution

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Ideally, social inclusion of students with disabilities means that there are genuine opportunities for all students to participate to the best of their abilities in all that a school or community has to offer (Shah, 2007). Social inclusion also provides the chance for individuals with disabilities to develop meaningful relationships and prepare for daily life in the community. Furthermore, social inclusion aids in reducing any fear and misunderstanding of disabilities that exists among those that do not have a disability (Shah, 2007).

Tenets underlying social inclusion hold that children are unique and vary in many ways; therefore the educational system should adapt to that diversity. However, the goal of inclusive education has remained largely unmet; it exists as an ideology, but in practice stratification appears in school discourse and daily events (Reid, 1999; Tuval & Orr, 2009). Access to inclusion does not automatically guarantee equal outcomes, full participation, or social acceptance; indeed students with disabilities who are included may still encounter the serious social problems of being bullied or teased, or of having a difficult time interacting with peers and making friends (McDougall, DeWit, King, Miller, & Killip, 2004). Furthermore, research indicates a number of specific barriers to the social inclusion of children: lack of appropriate facilities and expertise (Buell, Gamel-McCormick, & Hallam, 1999; Shah, 2007), ineffective teacher training

(Campbell, Milbourne, & Silverman, 2001), overuse of educational assistants, less freedom for personal choice (Shah, 2007), narrow perceptions of disability (Hodkinson, 2007), negative peer perceptions and attitudes (McDougall et al., 2004), and gaps between the conceptual and political acceptance of inclusion (Schenker, Coster, & Parush, 2005).

A number of barriers to social inclusion for adolescents/young adults also exist. These include negative peer and societal attitudes; lack of necessary knowledge and skills in support staff (Abbott & McConkey, 2006); variance in the willingness of schools to remove existing barriers to inclusion (Wilson, 2004); and the lack of full participation, social acceptance, and equal outcomes (McDougall et al., 2004). A small number of studies have looked at barriers to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities at the postsecondary education level, however they have focused primarily on students with physical and visual impairments. These barriers include oppressive social attitudes and policies (Hammel, Magasi, Heinemann, Whiteneck, Bogner, & Rodriguez, 2008), assumptions that a disability implies functional limitations (Zollers & Yu, 1998), inadequate physical accessibility, and quality of disability services (Pitt & Curtin, 2004).

Unfortunately, there remains very little information on college instructors' perceptions of social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities (excluding physical and visual impairments) at the postsecondary education level, and whether they view it as being successful. It is critical to fill this gap because, although there appears to be increasing support, services, and acceptance for the

inclusion of students with learning disabilities in postsecondary education, this is not paralleled for students with developmental disabilities, who have significant difficulties and who do not qualify to take courses for credit. Without the support of the postsecondary education community one could ask whether the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities would be successful.

If it is the case that students with developmental disabilities are not fully socially included, but instead isolated, this according to Vygotsky (1962), is problematic. Vygotsky (1962) asserted that the entire psychological makeup of an individual depends directly on the structure of the individual's social group, and that we exist as social beings, as members of a group. He suggested that the development of mental processes is mediated by more knowledgeable others in the context of social interactions with peers (Rodina, 2006). In essence, because development of mental processes relies on social experience, and because social experience can be significantly affected by a disability, a lack of social experience can greatly hinder the development of mental processes. These ideas about development are generally consistent with social development theory (Rodina, 2006).

My Interest in Researching Inclusion at the College Level

My first experience working with individuals with disabilities came in 1987 when I was in charge of the school-age program at a local daycare in Whitehorse, Yukon. Although I didn't initially know it, one of the children in the program had been diagnosed with what is now termed FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), and another was diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder). I certainly noticed that these two children had a hard time focusing, listening to directions, following through, staying with the group, and staying out of confrontational situations. Despite the difficulties I loved working with them, and to this day find the most challenging behaviors the most rewarding to work with. In the Yukon there were not a lot of community resources or supports for children with disabilities, so I found that the parents and I were left on our own to devise strategies and systems for the daycare centre.

This experience instilled a strong desire in me to become a teacher, which I went to university to do the year after my high school graduation. The week before our first practicum, our program coordinator told us about a difficult and diverse school in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia. There was a culturally diverse population and a number of children with difficult behaviors. The coordinator was asking for volunteers for this school as they didn't want to surprise anyone by just placing them there. I signed up without a second thought, and stayed there for the remainder of my practica, although I did move between teachers and grades. The program coordinator was right; there were a number of children who had a hard time completing work, listening to instructions, and staying out of fights or confrontational situations. This made me love the experience all the more. I spent tireless hours trying to devise ways to teach the lessons in a more hands on way, to keep the attention of all the students, and to really engage the hard to reach children. Upon graduation I moved back to the Yukon in search of a full time teaching job, but instead I ended up working in Red Deer, Alberta at the Children's Services Centre.

The Children's Services Centre has a year-long program, run similarly to a preschool, for young children between the ages of three and five who have been identified as having a severe disability. These children are provided Program Unit Funding from the Government of Alberta in order to receive services, supports and/or equipment for their successful participation in both the program, and in a community preschool setting. I loved teaching in the program at the Children's Services Centre, but in my second year there decided to return to university to take a master's degree, because I felt I was lacking in theory and background for my practical position.

After completing an M.Ed in Educational Psychology in 2003, I began teaching at Red Deer College in the Early Learning and Care Program. My first semester there I was approached by the coordinator of the Inclusive Post Secondary Education Supports program about having two young women with developmental disabilities in my class on child development. I quickly said yes. I have always been a strong proponent of inclusion and felt it would be a great experience for the class, the two young women, and me. Over the course of the semester a number of questions consistently nagged at me. Is social inclusion really happening at the college? Would other instructors say it is or isn't? What is working and what is not working about social inclusion at the college? Can full social inclusion truly take place? Could I picture the children that I had worked with previously participating in college life? The experience of having the two women in my class is, in essence, what drove me to want to further pursue the

issue of inclusion at the college level, and write about inclusion at the college level for my doctoral dissertation.

Purpose

In light of the importance of social inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities, at the postsecondary education level, the questions that this research looked at were: (a) what are college instructors' definitions of social inclusion? (b) do college instructors' perceive social inclusion, as they define it, happening at the college level? (c) if the perception is that inclusion is not working, what are college instructors' perceptions of why inclusion is not entirely successful at the college level? (d) what are college instructors' suggestions for how to make inclusion work, or work better?

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory

Vygotsky argued that a disability is perceived only as an abnormality when it is brought into the social context because it often leads to a restructuring of social relationships (Gindis, 1999). Within the framework of his model of the social nature of disability, Vygotsky introduced the concepts of primary disability, secondary disability, and their interactions. A primary disability is defined as an organic impairment due to biological factors (for example hearing or vision impairments, cognitive impairments, learning disabilities, or autism) (Gindis, 1999). A secondary disability is when an organic impairment prevents an individual from obtaining and mastering social skills and acquiring knowledge at an appropriate rate. Vygotsky stipulated that an organic disability is seen as an abnormality in behavior, therefore the expectations and attitudes of the social environment influences an individual's access to the sociocultural knowledge, experiences, and opportunities necessary to acquire essential psychological and mental skills (Rodina, 2006).

Environment can therefore modify an individual's course of development, leading to further delays (Vygodskaya, 1999). This often happens through a perceived need for assistance rather than social interaction. Parents, teachers, and other significant individuals may pity, and/or excessively help, an individual with a disability, which can hinder the zone of proximal development (what an individual can do on their own and what they can do with scaffolding from a more knowledgeable other) and exacerbate the secondary disability (Rodina, 2006).

Amelioration of Secondary Disabilities

In order to ameliorate the effects of a primary disability on an individual's social skills, Vygotsky strongly advocated for the social inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the sociocultural life of their community. He envisioned an education system in which specific, individualized methods were employed, based on need, but where individuals remained in a mainstreamed classroom. Simply put, Vygotsky felt the primary goal of special education was to correct and prevent social impairments (Vygodskaya, 1999). According to Vygotsky, remedial approaches to atypical development can only be achieved through developmentally inclusive education that takes place within a social context and the zone of proximal development (Rodina, 2006). Vygotsky further argued that true interaction with peers is one of the most important sociocultural conditions for an individual's development and socialization. In addition he stressed that teachers, and other significant individuals, should focus on intact abilities (strengths/resources) as a basis for the optimal development of an individual's potential (Rodina, 2006).

Vygotsky's Theory and Adults

Vygotsky's theories have traditionally been discussed in relation to children and young students. He suggested that a child follows a more knowledgeable other's example and gradually develops the ability to do certain tasks without help or assistance. Vygotsky called this difference between what a child can do with help and what they can do without guidance, the zone of proximal development.

The concept of the zone of proximal development, as well as Vygotsky's theories in general, can also be appropriately applied to adults. Taylor, King, Pinsent-Johnson, and Lothian (2003), and Bernat (2000), examined adult literacy programs to explore how adult literacy learners act as a scaffold with other peers in a formal classroom environment. They found that in adult classrooms where instructors encouraged collaboration among peers, the zone of proximal development was evident in relationships among students. Additionally, Vygotsky's theory has been considered a framework in which to explain how individuals bridge the gap between their mathematical knowledge and the body of socially sanctioned mathematical knowledge, and how they make personal meaning of mathematical concepts. For example, initially when writing or communicating with others, undergraduate students use mathematical symbols and words before completely understanding them and understanding emerges over time with practice and the involvement of a more knowledgeable other (Berger, 2005).

One area in which Vygotskian theory has recently been researched is that of social media and online learning. Hung and Chen (2001) discussed using internet social media to create a vibrant and sustaining e-learning community, which would mimic the intense interaction and information flow of a face-to-face traditional classroom. Huang's (2002) study extended this by applying Vygotsky's theory to the relationship between instructors and adult learners in online courses.

In addition a number of researchers have looked at the use of Vygotskian theory in teacher inservice training (Anderson, 2003), in developing higher psychological processes in teachers (Manning & Payne, 1993), in the development of joint activities in education classes (Bayer, 1996), and in designing a math methods course for teacher trainees (Moreira, 1994).

Although Vygotsky's ideas have been extensively applied to the development and knowledge acquisition of children, and to a lesser extent adult learners and teachers, they have not yet been applied to the social behavior and inclusion of college or university students with developmental disabilities. Given the importance Vygotsky places on social context and its role in ameliorating the effects of a sociocultural disability in an individual with a primary disability, it is critical that the social inclusion of individuals with a developmental disability at the college level be examined.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

As mentioned earlier, social inclusion does not automatically guarantee full participation, social acceptance, or equal outcomes for students with developmental disabilities. In fact, students with disabilities who are included often continue to encounter teasing, bullying, difficulty making friends, and other serious social problems (McDougall et al., 2004). Furthermore, research indicates a number of specific barriers to the social inclusion of individuals with disabilities. To provide a context for this investigation, this literature review will examine the definition of inclusion, and more specifically the definition of social inclusion, perceptions of social inclusion, barriers to social inclusion, and the history of inclusion at the postsecondary level.

Definition of Inclusion

Inclusion is a difficult term to define, and it continues to be a heated topic in special education. According to Kavale (2000), an expert in the field of learning disabilities and interventions, this is because inclusion attempts to alter education for all students – not just those in special education. Additionally, there remain pressing questions about the success of inclusion in the wake of little empirical evidence. Kavale (2000) argues that the inclusion debate is an ideological (comprehensive, societal vision) rather than a philosophical (set of views of an individual based, in part, on values) one, but he does attempt to explain it by suggesting that inclusion is a movement that seeks to create schools that meet the needs of both students with and without disabilities. Contrary to Kavale (2000), Winzer (2005), a Canadian authority in special education, labels inclusion as a

philosophy that attempts to change the school system to avoid exclusion. She suggests that the philosophy of inclusion is well accepted, but that it is difficult to translate the principles of inclusion into efficient school-based service delivery models. Peltier (1997), a professor in educational leadership at the University of Nevada, bases his definition on where services are provided, defining inclusion as "keeping special education students in regular education classrooms and bringing support services to the child rather than bringing the child to the support services" (p. 234). Hines (2001), a professor in the College of Education at the University of Central Florida, concurs, explaining that inclusion is placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom, where they receive direct support from special educators. Nikolaraizi, Kumar, Favazza, Sideridis, Koulousiou, and Riall (2005) argue that there is a domino effect. They suggest that the definition of inclusion impacts the design of policy, which ultimately dictates how and why inclusion should work. Unfortunately, they argue, inclusion is based on the historical conceptualization of disability, which holds that some individuals can participate whereas others are excluded.

Social inclusion. Other authors, such as Crawford (2003) from the Roeher Institute, a leading policy-research and development non-governmental organization in Canada, break inclusion into more specific facets. Whereas the above authors have focused on whether inclusion is successful, whether it is a philosophy or ideology, and where inclusion takes place, Crawford (2003) specifically discusses social inclusion. He suggests that there are two key factors in social inclusion: (a) individuals with disabilities want to be socially included,

meaning that they want to participate in valued societal situations; and (b) they want to be involved in mutually trusting, appreciative and respectful interpersonal relationships at the family, peer, and community levels.

Perceptions of Social Inclusion

Literature on inclusion contains numerous qualitative studies looking at the perceptions that different groups have of the inclusion of individuals with disabilities and its success. This section discusses the perceptions of parents, non-disabled peers, and teachers towards the inclusion of individuals with disabilities.

Parent perceptions. The literature indicates that, generally, parents give strong support to the inclusion of their children with disabilities in general education classrooms. Parents believe that there are a number of beneficial social and emotional outcomes (Leyser & Kirk, 2004), such as more appropriate social skills, enhanced self-esteem, improved employment possibilities, societally valued experience, normative experience (Grigal, Neubert, & Moon, 2002; Peltier, 1997), and enhanced academic achievement (Tichenor, Heins, & Piechura-Couture, 2000).

Parents of adult children with disabilities are also in favor of inclusion, as they believe that the attendance of their children at postsecondary institutions provides positive hopes for their children's future employment, independent living, and friendships. Parents may also feel a sense of pride that accompanies the fact that their child is attending college or university. Families have also seen their children in a different light and have noticed that they begin to feel more positively about society and the caring nature of others (McDonald et al., 1997).

Conversely, parents are concerned about possible social isolation, negative attitudes, quality of instruction, teacher training and skills, and support of non-disabled peers (Leyser & Kirk, 2004). Mothers in particular strongly value social acceptance of their child with a disability and believe that general education peers can be very critical (Yssel, Engelbrecht, Oswald, Eloff, & Swart, 2007). Unfortunately, negative reactions from peers and the general public, or fear of negative reactions, may cause families to confine themselves at home, leading to even fewer social opportunities, which is further isolating for families (Crabtree, 2007).

Parents differ in their support of inclusion based on the type of needs their child has. For example, according to a study conducted by Kasari, Freeman, Bauminger, and Alkin (1999), parents of children with a diagnosis of Down Syndrome were significantly more likely to support full inclusion, and consider it an ideal placement, than were parents of children with autism. Additionally, parents of preschool children were more supportive of full inclusion than parents of children who were elementary school aged and older (Kasari et al., 1999).

Non-disabled peer perceptions. Middle school students in particular have limited contact with students with intellectual disabilities, and do not want to interact with them socially either in or out of school (Siperstein, Parker, Norins Bardon, & Widaman, 2007). Findings from McDougall et al. (2004) corroborate this, showing that grade nine students, especially, have been found to hold more negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities than students in lower or higher grades. They suggest that advocacy by students, parents, and health and

educational professionals is needed to change aspects of school culture that are creating barriers to social inclusion. Preschool children, although definitely more positive toward, and more willing to interact with, individuals with disabilities, still preferred to interact with typically developing peers (Van Hooser, 2009). This is echoed by Whitehurst and Howells (2006), who found that even after several decades of integration (physical presence of an individual with a disability) and then inclusion (accessible to all), mainstream elementary school students continued to feel fear, a lack of preparation, and alienation with regard to fellow students with severe disabilities.

Even though typically developing peers give the impression of having little contact with, and holding negative views of, their classmates with disabilities, research shows that they are still benefitting. These benefits include increasing tolerance, learning to help others, learning to break down barriers, building awareness, accepting individual differences, and developing a greater understanding of individuals with disabilities (McDonald et al., 1997). Staub's (2005) research indicates similar benefits, finding that including students with disabilities in regular classrooms led to an increased awareness of the needs of others, and improved commitment to moral and ethical principles in students without disabilities. Furthermore, students without disabilities demonstrated increased self-esteem based on various roles (for example leadership) they might not have taken on if not for the students with disabilities in their classroom. Students without disabilities have, themselves, commented on the benefits of inclusion, noting that they had the opportunity to support another individual, and

develop an increased preparedness to deal with disability in their own lives (Peltier, 1997).

Teacher perceptions. Although research shows that a large number of teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion, there is little evidence of acceptance of a total inclusion or zero reject approach. Indeed, in practice, teachers have not been favorably disposed to the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms. Their concerns regarding inclusion consist of worry about the amount of individualized time a student with a disability might need, worry that having a student with a disability in their classroom will be a detriment to other students, worry that there will be an inadequate amount of services and supports, and worry about their own skill level and lack of training (Campbell, Milbourne, & Silverman, 2001).

Teachers' attitudes also seem to be strongly influenced by the severity of a disabling condition presented to them (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Larrivee & Cook, 1979). This is supported by Kent-Walsh and Light (2003), whose study showed that although teachers with students using augmentative communication in their classrooms identified many benefits of inclusion, they also pointed out a number of negative impacts including lack of academic gains, social exclusion, and unequal status relationships with peers. It is difficult to find consensus among teachers regarding the social inclusion of students. This is, in part, due to the belief of many teachers that students with severe disabilities should not be taught in general education classrooms, and that their teaching should be left to special education teachers (Taylor, Smiley, & Ramasamy, 2001).

Recent research suggests that general education teachers hold less favorable attitudes towards inclusion than administrators and other professional staff. As well, general education teachers do not seem to differentiate mild and severe disabilities, requesting the same level of additional services and supports for students with both mild and severe intellectual disabilities (McNally, Cole, & Waugh, 2001).

Despite a seemingly negative view of inclusion, evidence does show that faculty who included students with developmental disabilities in their classes experienced a number of positive outcomes including an increased awareness and understanding of others with disabilities, an augmented ability to adapt classes to accommodate individuals with learning difficulties, an improved sense of personal gratification, and an amplified desire to rise to a challenge (McDonald et al., 1997).

Summary. The research literature on the perceptions of parents, non-disabled peers, and teachers towards inclusion indicates that there are mixed views on whether or not it is beneficial. Parents and teachers agree that there are numerous beneficial social outcomes for individuals with disabilities including increased self-esteem (Leyser & Kirk, 2004), and improved social interaction skills (Tichenor et al., 2000). However despite this, there is little evidence of the acceptance of a total inclusion approach in schools (Campbell, Milbourne, & Silverman, 2001). For example, many teachers believe students with severe disabilities should not be taught in general education classrooms (Taylor et al., 2001). Additionally, students with disabilities may experience social isolation,

negative attitudes, and a lower quality of instruction (Leyser & Kirk, 2004; McDougall et al., 2004). Furthermore, it is not uncommon for students with disabilities to be excluded within the classroom. Qualitative research indicates that typically developing peers prefer to play with similar classmates because of comfort level, thereby further alienating their peers with disabilities (Van Hooser, 2009).

Barriers to Social Inclusion

In discussing perceptions of the success of social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities at a postsecondary institution, and reasons for its success or lack thereof, it is logical to start by reviewing the definition of social inclusion. Additionally, to provide a backdrop, barriers to the social inclusion of children, adolescents, and young adults will be discussed.

Definition of social inclusion. Social inclusion is based on notions of belonging, acceptance, and recognition, and entails the realization of full and equal participation in economic, social, cultural, and political aspects of society. It is about recognizing and valuing diversity; it is about producing feelings of belonging by increasing social equality and the participation of diverse and disadvantaged populations (YIHR, 2010). In particular, social inclusion is about participation in community based activities and a broad social network, as well as participation in socially valued activities (i.e. employment and child rearing) (Abbot & McConkey, 2006).

Definition of barriers. The Merriam Webster Online Dictionary defines a barrier as "something immaterial that impedes or separates". Barriers to inclusion,

therefore, are those things that impede or separate individuals with disabilities, and that may hinder them from being included. In terms of individuals with disabilities, researchers discuss barriers to entering the workforce (Shier, Graham, & Jones, 2009), barriers to education for children with medical needs (Seymour, 2004), barriers to relationships for children with mental health (Davies, Davis, Cook, & Waters, 2008) and emotional (Sheehy, & Nind, 2005) difficulties, and barriers to classroom inclusion for orally educated children with hearing loss (Eriks-Brophy, Durieux-Smith, Fitzpatrick, Duquette, & Whittingham, 2006). There are also a number of studies that specifically address barriers to social inclusion, however they focus almost entirely on children and adolescents. The next section discusses barriers to the social inclusion of children, adolescents, and young adults with disabilities.

Barriers to the social inclusion of children. Unfortunately, the mainstream classroom is often unable to provide both the facilities and expertise required for inclusion, which leads to exclusion within the school or segregated programming (Buell et al., 1999; Shah, 2007). A further barrier is lack of teacher training, or effective teacher training (Campbell et al., 2001), as well as the use of educational assistants, who may unwittingly isolate the child they work with from group learning situations. Often students with disabilities are taught almost entirely by educational assistants who are not qualified teachers (Shah, 2007). Furthermore, children with disabilities have a greater chance than their peers without disabilities of having decisions made for them, of not being consulted regarding

major decisions, and of having less freedom to make choices about their social and personal life (Shah, 2007).

Individual perception or conceptualization of disability may act as a barrier to the development of successful inclusive practice (Bricker, 2000; Campbell et al., 2001; Hodkinson, 2007). A narrow conceptualization of disability emerges from mixed attitudes toward people with disabilities (Hodkinson, 2007), and ignores the growing shift in perception of inclusion from an idea about how to improve services to young children with disabilities, to a human right and social equity issue (Bricker, 2000). Negative peer perceptions and attitudes are generally acknowledged as being a major barrier to full social inclusion at school, whereas positive student relationships at the school level that promote learning and understanding rather than social comparisons are directly associated with positive attitudes (McDougall et al., 2004) towards inclusion.

In addition, schools may be pressured by administration to follow an inclusive agenda, but are simultaneously expected to uphold statistical targets and normative comparisons, which lead to the informal exclusion of disabled children from mainstream schools (Shah, 2007). Indeed Schenker et al. (2005) found that there is a large gap between the conceptual and political acceptance of inclusion. Their study examined the inclusion of elementary school children with cerebral palsy and demonstrated that, although in theory and philosophy inclusion was encouraged, in practice inclusion was falling short. According to Shah (2007), the special education system is one of the main avenues through which to perpetuate able-bodied perceptions of the world and ensuring the social isolation of children

with disabilities. The success of inclusion is dependent on school community acceptance, which relies on positive individual interactions between people who have disabilities and people who do not (Hodkinson, 2007).

Barriers to the social inclusion of adolescents and young adults. In a study conducted by Abbott and McConkey (2006), young adults with intellectual disabilities self-identified four main barriers to their inclusion: lack of necessary knowledge and skills (in others); the role of their support staff; the location of their supported living accommodation, or shared group home; and community factors (i.e., lack of amenities or positive attitudes). The authors stressed that being physically present in a community, taking part in activities, and using the local facilities do not necessarily lead to meaningful social contact with the non-disabled population (Abbott & McConkey, 2006). Research by Wilson (2004) is consistent with this; young people with disabilities want to be regarded and treated as equal to their peers with the same rights of access to educational opportunities. However, schools and educational establishments vary in their willingness and capacity to address and remove existing barriers. Wilson's (2004) study showed that 41% of the 305 participating young adults said they felt isolated at school due to their impairment, which prevented them from taking part in school activities in and out of the classroom. Additionally, 25% said they felt discriminated against at school, and 34% said they felt they were unable to get as much support from teachers and other staff as needed. Negative attitudes developed at school may contribute to a culture that is less conducive to successful employment and economic/social inclusion. Therefore young people

with disabilities may learn to have low expectations about their own future contributions to society as a result of the way they are treated (Wilson, 2004).

In recent history special education and integration policies have been implemented to ensure children and youth with disabilities have access to regular schools and classrooms, but access does not guarantee full participation, social acceptance, or equal outcomes. Research demonstrates that social problems remain for students with disabilities who are included, for example lesser feelings of belonging, safety, and acceptance (McDougall et al., 2004).

Norman Kunc (1992) concurs, arguing that students with severe disabilities stay in the school system for up to 18 years and for hundreds of thousands of dollars, and unfortunately continue to remain socially isolated. This is, in part, due to segregated programs/classrooms, which have not taught appropriate behavior and skills to students with disabilities. These programs have also been unsuccessful in preparing individuals for life within the community. Kunc (1992) discusses the idea of being grounded in community, and how that leads to increased self-worth. However, despite the importance of belonging in the development of self-worth and the motivation to pursue education, schools generally provide very little support in this area.

Summary. Barriers to social inclusion can be described as those things that impede or hinder individuals from being accepted, recognized, and provided a sense of belonging. Similar barriers exist to the social inclusion of children, adolescents, and young adults including a lack of appropriate facilities or staff expertise (Buell et al., 1999; Shah, 2007), a lack of necessary knowledge and

skills (Abbot & McConkey, 2006), and a lack of willingness of others to address barriers. These barriers lead to continued social problems including lesser feelings of belonging, safety, and acceptance (McDougall et al., 2004).

Inclusion at the Postsecondary Level

Although inclusive education for students has been promoted from preschool to highschool, relatively little attention has been given to inclusive education at the postsecondary level (McDonald et al., 1997). Indeed, individuals with disabilities continue to participate in postsecondary education at significantly lower rates than their nondisabled peers (Fairweather, & Shaver, 1990; Quick, Lehman, & Deniston, 2003; Ticoll, 1995). Although there continues to be a discrepancy between the numbers of individuals with disabilities and individuals without disabilities attending postsecondary institutions, increasing numbers of students with disabilities are considering postsecondary education as an option (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis-Sahlen, & Lehmann, 2006; Neubert, Moon, Grigal, & Redd, 2001; Quick et al., 2003).

The current research study examines college instructors' perceptions, with a specific focus on whether they see the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities, accessing Inclusive Postsecondary Education Supports, taking place on a college campus. It is therefore pertinent to provide a description of inclusion at the postsecondary level, including three typical levels of services for students with disabilities in college. Before discussing the following three levels of service for students with disabilities in college: disability

services, transitional vocational programs, and inclusive postsecondary education supports, a brief history of inclusion at the postsecondary level will be provided.

History of inclusion at the postsecondary level. Although there have been inclusive practices in primary, elementary, and secondary schools, the next step for individuals with developmental disabilities has historically been segregation (Guenette, 2003). In fact, only a generation ago, having a developmental disability often meant being shut away in the family home or being sent to an institution (Ticoll, 1996). If you lived at home you might have gone to a segregated school or taken special classes, then you might have gone to a sheltered workshop, and following this you would have been institutionalized or moved into a group home (Ticoll, 1996). In 1986, in Canada, there were 31 institutions housing individuals with developmental disabilities. This number has now decreased to three, one in each of Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan (Stone, 2009). In response to widespread efforts to close institutions, individuals with developmental disabilities were integrated into society by being placed in programs that emphasized vocational training and that helped those who had been institutionalized to adjust to life in the community (Schmidt, 2005). In the 1990's (in the United States) public school systems began working with colleges to establish campus based programs for individuals 18-21 who had not completed highschool. Many colleges did, and do, regard their programs as a means to provide work experience, and in some cases financial support, to individuals with developmental disabilities (Schmidt, 2005).

The inclusive policies that have been put in place for primary, elementary and secondary education are not in place for postsecondary education. Although across Canada provinces have adopted a human rights stance in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (CoRF), practice may vary greatly from province to province. Section 15.1 of the CoRF stipulates that everyone should be equal before and under the law, and that everyone should have equal protection and benefit without being discriminated against based on race, national/ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, and mental or physical disability (Guenette, 2003). Despite the Charter, one concept that has continued to come up is that of undue hardship, which appears in several provinces' human rights codes as an exception, as well as in policies of some colleges and universities. Those in positions of authority stipulate that individuals with disabilities can be accepted to postsecondary institutions as long as there is no undue hardship for the student with disabilities or their peers, meaning that the requirements for graduating, passing courses, or taking courses for credit are not altered (Stodden & Whelley, 2004).

Historically, advancements on the part of individuals with developmental disabilities have followed the passage of amendments of federal policy. A number of groundbreaking policies from the U.S., developed between public school systems and colleges that have had an effect on individuals 18-21, who have not completed high school, include Public Law 94-142, The Americans with Disabilities Act, The Rehabiliation Act of 1973, and the Olmstead Decision of 1999.

Public Law 94-142 (amended in 1997 to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) focused on quality preparation in secondary schools and transition to postsecondary education and employment (Stodden & Whelley, 2004). It was enacted by the United States Congress in 1975, and required all public schools accepting federal funds to provide equal access to education for children with physical and mental disabilities. Public schools were required to evaluate students with disabilities and create an educational plan with parent input that would emulate as closely as possible the educational experience of non-disabled students. The act also required that school districts provide administrative procedures so that parents of disabled children could dispute decisions made about their children's education. Once the administrative efforts were exhausted, parents were then authorized to seek judicial review of the administration's decision (Stodden & Whelley, 2004).

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was amended in 1990, and again in 2008 focused on providing reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to both learning and work environments. It was implemented in order to protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities by providing the necessary tools to self advocate in a variety of public settings, including postsecondary education. In essence, it is a wide-ranging civil rights law that prohibits, under certain circumstances, discrimination based on disability. It affords similar protections against discrimination to Americans with disabilities as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, and other characteristics illegal. Disability

is explained by the ADA as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. The determination of whether any particular condition is considered a disability is made on a case by case basis. Certain specific conditions are excluded as disabilities, such as current substance abuse and visual impairment which is correctable by prescription lenses (Stodden & Whelley, 2004).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 aimed to provide financial assistance and training support with the intention gaining quality employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by Federal agencies, in programs receiving Federal financial assistance, in Federal employment, and in the employment practices of Federal contractors. The standards for determining employment discrimination under the Rehabilitation Act are the same as those used in title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (Stodden & Whelley, 2004).

The Olmstead Decision of 1999 was an historic Supreme Court decision that encouraged individual states in the U.S. to reevaluate the manner in which they deliver publicly funded long term care services to people with disabilities. In addition, it challenges federal, state, and local governments to develop more opportunities for individuals with disabilities through accessible systems of cost-effective community-based services (Stodden & Whelley, 2004).

In Canada, there have also been significant advances in the area of individuals with disabilities. Canada was one of the first countries to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006, which they did in 2007. They

then ratified this agreement in March 2010 showing that Canada would not act contrary to the principles of the convention, and that they are committed to apply the rights found in the convention of Canada. The main obligation of the convention is to protect the rights to equality and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities. The convention also complements Canada's existing equality and non-discrimination protection, for the example in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, 2010).

The above advances have continued to lead to increased enrolment of students with disabilities in postsecondary education environments. Postsecondary institutions typically offer one of three types of programming for individuals with developmental disabilities: the separate model, the mixed program model, and the individual support model. The substantially separate model is separate from the regular campus curriculum, often housed separately, and does not provide interaction with typical peers or the opportunity to take standard college courses. The focus is on life skills, community based instruction, and/or rotation through a limited number of on the job employment training tasks (Stodden & Whelley, 2004). The mixed program model usually includes a combination of inclusive college classes, and a substantially separate life skills program. Students have limited opportunities to interact with typical peers and take regular courses. However, they also have a curriculum focused on life skills, community based instruction, and a rotation through a limited number of employment options (Stodden & Whelley, 2004). The individual support model provides students with the individualized services, accommodations, and supports needed to ensure

access, participation and progress in typical college life. This consists of a range of course options, certification programs, internships, and degree programs. All services and supports are student-centered and based on student choice and preference (Stodden & Whelley, 2004).

Although improvements in the educational system have led to the increased placement of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education environments, and a higher educational index, this improvement is not proportionate with the change in the occupational demands of society (Ticoll, 1995). Typically individuals with intellectual disabilities have had jobs such as custodians, nurses' aides, waiters/waitresses, kitchen helpers (Ticoll, 1995), fast food servers, or landscapers (Schmidt, 2005). These types of jobs do not usually require postsecondary education, and even when an individual with developmental disabilities has attended a college or university, he or she may still end up in one of the above positions. A disconnect exists between involvement in postsecondary education and employment following attendance at university or college (Ticoll, 1995).

Levels of inclusion in postsecondary institutions. Inclusive postsecondary education initiatives began in Alberta nearly 25 years ago with a few Edmonton parents who were concerned that the employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities who graduate from highschool were very slim. This program was the first of its kind in North America, began at the University of Alberta in 1987, and was called 'On Campus'. The development of inclusive postsecondary education practice initially followed typical special education

practice which meant either segregation or congregation, not full inclusion. (Hughson, Moodie & Uditsky, 2006). This is also represented at numerous colleges and universities. Disability services at postsecondary institutions are provided to those students taking courses for credit, and both transitional vocational programs and inclusive postsecondary education supports are provided for students with developmental disabilities.

Transitional vocational programs. Transitional Vocational Programs (TVP) is an exclusionary model of support for students with developmental disabilities. Traditionally, students with severe disabilities were not given the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of post highschool options. Instead, they were often placed in a workshop with little to no access to their nondisabled peers. Transitional vocational programs have developed as an alternative to workshop and other limited placements. TVP programs typically offer employment readiness and job skills training to adults with developmental disabilities. These programs are aimed at individuals who spent most of their school years in special education classes or left school early because of educational difficulties. In recent years the focus in TVP has shifted to trying to place individuals into their communities, with training taking place in actual business settings. Advantages of implementing community based vocational training include promoting independence, higher success rates for employment, better generalization of skills, and education of the public (Livelli, 1999).

Disability services. Postsecondary education institutions typically house some type of disability services office on campus, which supports students taking

courses for credit. This office is responsible for providing modifications and accommodations to academic requirements (i.e., note taking services, exam accommodations). However, they are not required to compromise on requirements that are essential to a program or course of instruction that are directly related to licensing requirements, or that alters the content or process that is essential to evaluation (Sitlington, 2003). A major difference in services between highschool and postsecondary education is that students, not the institution, bear the burden of obtaining services when they begin postsecondary education (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Hurtubis-Sahlen, & Lehmann, 2006). Unfortunately, according to Tagayuna, Stodden, Chang, Zeleznik, & Whelley (2005), the disability supports that are offered at postsecondary institutions are frequently inconsistent, are non-individualized, are discrepant, are often uncoordinated, and at times may be irrelevant to students' needs (Quick et al., 2003). Indeed, although every year an increasing number of students with disabilities enter postsecondary education, many of these students fail to successfully compete academically, or they leave prior to graduating (Quick et al., 2003). An additional problem at the postsecondary level is that most postsecondary instructors are unlikely to have the knowledge and skills necessary to make educational accommodations for students with special needs. Furthermore, they are not well equipped to implement learning strategies and innovative techniques, because they, for the most part, continue to rely heavily on lecturing (Eckes & Ochoa, 2005). Although disability services attempt to be an

inclusive model, there are still a number of issues inherent in the support provided. However, these are not the topic of the current research.

Inclusive postsecondary education supports. My research focuses on college instructors' perceptions of the social inclusion of students who are accessing Inclusive Postsecondary Education Supports (IPSE), which is a program that attempts to fully include students with developmental disabilities. The majority of the literature on postsecondary education for young adults with disabilities has focused on learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and physical or sensory disabilities (McDonald et al., 1997). The literature has infrequently focused on the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities, including cognitive impairments. Inclusive postsecondary education is intended to offer adults with developmental disabilities the right to access opportunities on college campuses and to participate in regular college courses (McDonald et al., 1997). Inclusive postsecondary education supports provide individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to participate alongside their peers in a normative university/college experience (Bowman & Weinkauf, 2004). Although few empirical studies have been conducted on students with developmental disabilities accessing inclusive postsecondary education supports, the existing research has shown that the programs have had a significant impact on the lives of students with developmental disabilities, in terms of friendships, new skills and knowledge, increased independence, and improved self-concept (McDonald et al., 1997).

Inclusive postsecondary education has been growing to meet the needs of parents, students with developmental disabilities, and their families. There are currently over seventeen programs in Alberta, with the first one having been implemented nearly twenty-five years ago at the University of Alberta (Inclusive Postsecondary Education, 2010), and approximately 110 programs across twenty-eight states in the U.S. (although this includes disability services for students taking courses for credit in this number) (Hart, 2006).

Summary

Social inclusion, fundamentally, means that individuals with disabilities are accepted, feel that they belong, and are socially included. It's a sense of having a place and fitting in (Crawford, 2003). Generally parents give strong support to the social inclusion of their children with disabilities in general education classrooms, believing that there are a number of beneficial social and emotional outcomes, for example improved self-esteem (Leyser & Kirk, 2004). Additionally they see inclusion, particularly in postsecondary institutions, as a means to gain socially valued roles. However, they also worry about possible social isolation, negative attitudes, quality of instruction and lack of support of non-disabled peers (Leyser & Kirk 2004). Research shows that parents' fears may be well founded, in that typically developing peers have limited contact with students with intellectual disabilities and tend to hold relatively negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities (McDougall et al., 2004).

In contrast to student perceptions, research shows that a large number of teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion. However, in practice teachers

have not been favorably disposed to the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms (Campbell, 2003). Part of the reason for this lies in the inability of the mainstream classroom to provide the facilities and expertise required for successful inclusion (Buell et al., 1999; Shah, 2007). Additionally, students with disabilities face the barriers of having decisions made for them and enduring negative peer perceptions (McDougal et al., 2004; Shah, 2007).

Currently, inclusive policies have been put in place for primary, elementary, and secondary education environments. However, these same policies do not always exist for postsecondary education, with practice varying greatly between provinces (Guenette, 2003). Furthermore, improvements in the educational system have led to increased placement of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education institutions; however the improvements remain disproportionate to the occupational demands of society (Ticoll, 1995).

Within postsecondary institutions there are typically a number of programs that exist on an inclusive continuum, with Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) having the goal of fully including students with developmental disabilities. Although literature typically focuses on students with disabilities including learning disabilities, ADHD, and physical and/or sensory disabilities, it has infrequently focused on the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities (McDonald et al., 1997), and whether or not it is successful.

The purpose of IPSE, generally, is to provide individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to fully participate alongside peers (McDonald et al., 1997). Existing research has shown that, according to students with

developmental disabilities, IPSE programs have had a positive impact on their friendships and independence. However, what has not been explored is whether true social inclusion is taking place, and if not, why not.

Research indicates that parents and teachers of students with developmental disabilities, and the students themselves, perceive numerous positive benefits of social inclusion. Generally parents seem to want their children in a program of full inclusion particularly for the social benefits that are believed to ensue. We also know that, for the most part, peers of students with developmental disabilities have demonstrated somewhat negative perceptions towards individuals with developmental disabilities. Perceptions of the social inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities have been collected regarding preschool children, elementary school children, and adolescents. A small number of studies have looked at college instructors' and students with developmental disabilities' beliefs about whether inclusion is a positive entity, and what the benefits of inclusion are. These studies typically examined individuals' perceptions of their own inclusion, or the effect that social inclusion has on typical peers, instructors, and the classroom. Previous research assumes that inclusion is taking place, and that individuals involved will be affected either positively or negatively. This study does not make that assumption. It starts by asking instructors for their definitions of social inclusion, then asks the question of whether inclusion is perceived to be happening on the college campus. In order to do this, a number of college instructors were interviewed with the purpose of specifically looking at (a) college instructors' definitions of social inclusion; (b) college instructors'

perceptions of whether they see social inclusion, as they define it, happening at the college level; (c) if the perception is that social inclusion is not working, to get college instructors' opinions on why it is not happening at the college level; and (d) college instructors' suggestions for how to make social inclusion work, or work better.

Chapter Four: Method

Introduction

When I first began reading, researching, and interviewing, my intention was to look at the experiences of college instructors and peers of individuals with developmental disabilities on campus. In particular, I was interested in whether or not any of the participants had experienced a transformational experience as a result of being involved with an individual with developmental disabilities. A transformational experience can be defined as:

> . . . a process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing those structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative perspective; and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (Mezirow, 1990, p. 167)

However, in the course of conducting interviews, analyzing the data, and re-reading the interviews, what became clear to me was that an unexpected direction had surfaced (Smith, 2004). Rather than transformational experiences, what came through in the data collection and analysis were instructors' perceptions of the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities. Embedded in their perceptions was also a discussion of conflicting definitions of inclusion, changes at the college over the last 20-30 years, and explanations of why they felt inclusion was faring the way it was. This new direction was personal, interesting, thought provoking, and pertinent. Therefore I decided to follow the lead of the

participants and adjust my research questions accordingly. It occurred to me while analyzing the data, and examining the perceptions of barriers to inclusion, that looking at transformational experiences may have been trying to jump a step ahead. Based on perceptions of inclusion, the doubtfulness that it is actually taking place, and descriptions of the reasons why this is felt to be the case, it seems unlikely that instructors would have been exposed to a situation in which the possibility of a transformational experience existed. This, however, remains a topic for future research.

My research focused on inclusion in postsecondary education, asking instructors what their definition of social inclusion is, asking them if they perceive social inclusion existing at the postsecondary level, and if so, in what capacity, or if not, why not, and asking instructors for suggestions of how to make inclusion work, or work better. The purpose of asking these questions was to glean information that could provide insight into inclusion in postsecondary education, as well as reasons for why it was or was not successful

Assumption

Prior to engaging in a research project researchers must examine their philosophical assumptions and paradigms. Creswell (1994) described a paradigm as a worldview, a framework of beliefs, values, and methods, in which research is conducted. I conducted this research within the constructivist paradigm, as part of the ontological assumption.

Ontological philosophy means that reality is subjective and made of multiple views as seen by individual participants in a study. In this approach to qualitative

research, the researcher uses participants' quotes to develop themes and provide evidence of differing perspectives (Creswell, 1994). Within ontology, constructivism refers to a relativist philosophy, which means that all truth or knowledge is subjective, therefore all truths are equal, and that there are local, and specifically constructed, realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Scapens and Yang (2007), ontology is concerned with explaining the nature of reality, of being in the world. They argue that the realm of perception, thought, feeling, desires, and emotions has a direct bearing on the cultural world. This suggests that, rather than being entirely private, individual emotions are inseparable from the social cultural context.

Stetsenko (2008) argues that ontology, being inseparable from social context, and being the process through which learning and development take place, is the foundation of social cultural theories of development such as Vygotsky's. Ontological explanations of being and Vygotsky's perspectives on development are compatible in that they are both addressing the same essential issue of connectedness to the social cultural context.

Overview of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Qualitative research is the preferred method for documenting, analyzing, and interpreting attributes, patterns, characteristics, values, and the meanings of specific contextual features of a phenomenon under study (Webster-Stratton & Spitzer, 1996), which is why I believe it to be the most appropriate type of research to use in this study. In particular, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen because, as in this study, it is considered an inside account of

an individual's perceptions of events, which are attained through the careful study of verbal accounts (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Additionally, it is assumed that these verbal accounts will reveal meaningful information about participants' private feelings and thoughts, which in turn are related to their lived experiences.

IPA as a research approach holds three main tenets. It is idiographic, meaning that the researcher starts with a detailed examination of one case until closure has been achieved, and does so until themes can be developed and then examined for convergence and/or divergence (Smith, 2004). It is Inductive, meaning that researchers use techniques that can be flexible and allow unanticipated topics or themes to emerge during analysis. Smith (2004) argues that the most exciting analysis is typically one that has been unanticipated, which is exactly what I felt happened in the current study. It is interrogative, meaning that one of its key aims is to contribute to psychology through interrogating or illuminating research. IPA involves an in depth analysis of cases, but it is also critical that results be placed in relation to psychological literature.

In the realm of qualitative research, IPA is a relatively young approach that has been used primarily in the field of health psychology in the United Kingdom (Smith, 2004). According to Smith (2004), studies using IPA often deal with life-altering events, decisions, or conditions that relate to major existential questions, for example questions of identity. In the last several years a number of research studies have employed IPA and the empirical evidence for IPA as a research method continues to grow.

As its name suggests, phenomenology is at the centre of IPA. Phenomenology seeks to reveal something of an individual's world (Husserl, 1970), which, in psychological research, is apparent in the goal of understanding and giving a voice to participants' concerns and experiential claims pertaining to a particular realm of their lives. This inside account of an individual's perception of events can be attained through the careful study of verbal accounts (Larkin et al., 2006). Distorted memories, goals, and current context all play a role in the construction of a participant's account (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). After a participant has provided a verbal account, the researcher must make sense of this account through the lens of his or her culture, prior experience, and conceptions (Smith, 2004). This process is, in essence, the hermeneutic circle (Heidegger, 1927/1996).

The goal of IPA is not to generate large quantities of information but to gather quality information that will enable a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences. For this reason, Smith and Osborn (2003) advocate small sample sizes (less than 15) that are as homogeneous as possible (purposive sampling) to allow the researcher to explore a phenomenon as it is shared by a specific group. Additionally, the IPA approach adopts both emic and etic positions (Clarke, 2009). The emic (insider) position enables the researcher to hear and understand the participant's story and place his or her experiences at the centre of the account. Adopting the etic (interpretative, outsider) position involves the researcher trying to make sense of the data by bringing in his or her own interpretations and theoretical ideas, but using verbatim quotes to ground these interpretations in the participant's actual experience.

Key Role of Researcher

Qualitative research assumes that the researcher is an integral part of the research process (Byrne, 2001), and that he or she must participate and/or be immersed in a situation in order to learn the most about it (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Merriam (1998) describes a researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis explaining that

> Data are mediated through this human instrument, the researcher, rather than through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer. Certain characteristics differentiate the human researcher from other data collection instruments: the researcher is responsive to the context; he or she can adapt techniques to the circumstances; the total context can be considered; what is known about the situation can be explained through sensitivity to nonverbal aspects; the researcher can process data immediately, can clarify and summarize as the study evolves, and can explore anomalous responses (p. 7).

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), researchers must also have theoretical sensitivity, which

> refers to a personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning and data…[It] refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't (p. 42).

As I was responsible for collecting and analyzing the data, I believed it

was critical to prepare for the process prior to completing the dissertation. Therefore, I will discuss my experience, education, and philosophy in order to provide the context in which data analysis took place.

I have extensive experience working with individuals with disabilities. An initial experience with children with disabilities, in 1987 at a local daycare, led to the completion of a Bachelor of Education degree and a job at a centre specifically designed for young children with special needs. To round out this practical experience I completed a Master of Education degree in Special Education and used this as a springboard from which to begin teaching at Red Deer College (RDC). This experience gave me insight into students with disabilities from an instructor perspective. The vast amount of practical work experience I have amassed, coupled with instruction in theory, research, and methods at the graduate level, has given me a degree of comfort and familiarity with both disability and inclusion.

In terms of my philosophy, I believe in the idea of inclusion. I strongly believe, as does Vygotsky, that while individualized instruction is critical, this can be done within the general education classroom (Rodina, 2006). Some disabilities make inclusion a challenge (i.e., emotional and behavioral disorders, or medical fragility), but I believe that with support for the teacher and student(s) (i.e., educational assistants, training, administrative guidance) it is possible. I am a proponent of including individuals with their peers, and celebrating the small gains in learning along the way.

Given the central role of the researcher, it is of the utmost importance to recognize individual fallibility. If a researcher does not recognize that her perceptions can influence her ability to analyze data, the embedded meaning of her own or another's experiences will not be seen. It is tempting to start accepting one's own perspective as truthful and then seeing all records as either supporting, or contradicting this perspective. It is therefore essential to guard against this by acknowledging (bracketing) biases and identifying them for the reader. In relation to the current inquiry it is important to reveal four of my own values, beliefs, assumptions, and biases that I see as pertinent:

1. I believe that individuals with disabilities need a sense of belonging, a community, and relationships of significance just as any individual does.
2. I believe that inclusion is important, in fact critical, to social development and in breaking down barriers and fears around disability.
3. I believe that lack of information, education, and inadequate understanding make it difficult for inclusion to be effectively implemented.
4. I believe that there is a pervasive attitude of *ableness* within post secondary institutions that prevents the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities.

Trustworthiness of the Research

In qualitative research the aim of trustworthiness is to support the argument that the findings of the inquiry are worthwhile, and worth listening, or paying

attention, to. There are typically four issues of trustworthiness in a qualitative research project including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is an evaluation of whether the research findings signify a realistic interpretation of the data. Transferability is the extent to which findings can transfer beyond the immediate inquiry, and is the responsibility of the person seeking to apply the results of the study to a new context (i.e., the reader) (Brown, 2005). Dependability is an appraisal of the data collection, data analysis, and theory generation. Confirmability is a gauge of how well the findings of the inquiry are supported by the collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To address credibility within this inquiry multiple session interviews and member checking were used. *Multiple session interviews* involved conducting interviews in more than one session, which can reduce the threat to the accuracy of the participants' testimonies, allow interviewees enough time to think more deeply about their own feelings, reactions, and beliefs, and help develop rapport between the researcher and interviewees so as to increase validity of the interviews (Glesne, 1999). In this research, three follow up interviews (to the initial face-to-face interviews) were conducted via phone call to participants at their individual offices at Red Deer College. These interviews consisted of clarifying the participants' philosophy of inclusion, their belief about whether inclusion was effective or ineffective at the postsecondary level, and their definition of social inclusion. *Member checking* consisted of taking the data and the tentative interpretation back to the informants to ensure that the data collected

were objective and represented them and their ideas accurately (Glesne, 1999). In this research, the interview transcripts were emailed back to each interviewee for their feedback. All participants responded via e-mail stating that they had reviewed the transcripts and had no questions. One participant did ask several follow up questions regarding the maintenance of anonymity in the completed dissertation, and the researcher responded to these questions.

To enhance transferability, I attempted to provide *thick description,* meaning that details are provided so that readers can decide for themselves whether the results are transferable to their own unique contexts. In essence, the reader assesses the descriptive data in order to decide whether they can make similar judgments to the ones made in the current research (Brown, 2005).

There are a number of strategies for enhancing dependability and confirmability. For example, the researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Alternatively, another researcher can take a *devil's advocate* role with respect to the results, and this process can be documented. In this study, peer viewing and debriefing were used.

Although a colleague from my place of work (who holds a PhD, and is a registered psychologist), a nursing, social work, and psychology instructor from Red Deer College, and a psychology and sociology instructor from Canadian University College were invited to review and verify the data and interpretation of the notes to ensure a realistic record of the data (Glesne, 1999), only one individual was able to review the data. Unfortunately, none of the instructors from Red Deer College or Canadian University College were able to take part in

reviewing the data; however, my colleague was. My colleague, although not entirely experienced with the topic or setting under study, had a vast amount of knowledge and experience with students with developmental disabilities at the highschool level. Debriefing took place primarily during the data analysis phase of the research. We typically met once every other week for approximately 30 minutes for about six months. My colleague was invaluable in terms of checking the coding process, checking whether my initial categories were staying close to the collected data, and if my summaries of the data accurately reflected the participants' perspectives. This colleague was instrumental in questioning whether the original purpose of the study was being met, or whether it was pertinent to look at a new direction for the dissertation, based on the data and analysis. For example, it was in conversations with my colleague that the idea to switch the topic from transformational experiences to instructors' perspectives on social inclusion at the college level emerged (Spillett, 2003).

In addition to the above issues, a number of steps were also taken to further ensure the accuracy of the inquiry. For example, all interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Moreover, participants were contacted via phone or e-mail when issues regarding clarification or understanding emerged; or to elicit additional information in the event that it was felt that the point of informational saturation had not been reached.

Context

Red Deer College (RDC) is located in the city of Red Deer, Alberta, which had a population of 89, 891 in 2009. A census completed in 2006 showed that

7.1% of the population self-identified as visible minorities. RDC was established in 1963 and has now been in operation more than 45 years. It is a board governed, public college that operates under the authority of The Postsecondary Learning Act of Alberta. There are more than 75 program options at RDC, and class sizes typically include 40 students or less. RDC primarily serves learners from the central Alberta Region, and plays a pivotal role in the community by providing facilities, expertise, and leadership. RDC is the largest and most comprehensive institute of applied learning in central Alberta, providing training and education for 20, 000 full and part time students each year. RDC employs nearly 400 full time equivalent academic staff, and offers programs in both Red Deer and Rocky Mountain House (Census Results, 2009).

Inclusive Postsecondary Education supports at Red Deer College. The Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) supports began at Red Deer College in 2001. At this time, Christine Becker, Executive Director of Persons with Developmental Disabilities, a not for profit organization that supports adults with developmental disabilities, approached Ron Woodward, President of Red Deer College, to see if the college was interested in housing such a service.

The IPSE service provides individuals with developmental disabilities the same opportunity that their peers have, a natural pathway into adulthood via postsecondary education (Bowman & Skinner, 1994). Specifically, the IPSE service is intended to provide students with meaningful learning opportunities while developing increased life skills, social skills, and employment potential (RDC, 2004).

The IPSE service at Red Deer College accepts three students. Students register and take courses as auditing students; they are not registered for credit. IPSE is intended to support students who are unable to take courses for credit. The college offers other disability services and supports to academically qualified students who need additional support. Students enrolled in IPSE are part of a twelve-month support model. Students enroll in classes from September to April, and then during spring and summer, students participate in work experience in order to develop skills for employment (RDC, 2004).

Students are given the opportunity to participate in a number of activities including exploration of areas of interest, involvement in extracurricular activities, and participation in employment. The service lists their goals for the students as:

- Provide adults with developmental disabilities with the opportunity to learn in an inclusive college environment
- Provide opportunities and support for students as they develop social skills and personal relationships
- Encourage students as they develop self-identity, self-esteem, and self-determination
- Support and encourage the unique personal development of each student
- Increase employment potential for students (RDC, 2004)

Individual learning plans are created in consultation with the students and their instructors early in each semester. The learning plan is based on the course syllabus, which is provided by the instructor. It is intended to reflect the

individual's learning goals, and lists supports that are needed. The learning plan is given to the student, the program chairperson, the instructor, and the parents/guardians. At the end of each term the learning plan is reviewed with the student (RDC, 2004).

Students are required to create a portfolio of their college experience. This portfolio provides the students with a visual record of their college experience, and provides them with a tool to share their experience with others. At the end of each year students and family/key support persons are required to complete feedback forms about the students' experiences at Red Deer College (RDC, 2004).

A number of people are involved in the students' life once they are enrolled at Red Deer College. IPSE staff (typically the director and one support staff) support students in identifying their interests, developing personal relationships, assisting with problem solving, encouraging participation in activities, providing one-on-one tutorial time, modifying student coursework, and recruiting volunteers to support the students. The IPSE coordinator consults with interested students, guardians, and families; supports students on campus; partners with instructors; acts as a liaison to Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD); networks with college staff, faculty, and community organizations; advocates for the IPSE service; and ensures appropriate documentation and records are kept up to date. Red Deer College faculty meet and communicate with the coordinator in support of the student, and provide feedback on assignments. Peer helpers share class notes, provide clarification of notes and assignments, support staff in updating

due dates et cetera, offer support in class, and assist in bridging opportunities for students to meet their peers in class. Before working with a student, peer helpers are required to meet with the coordinator for training, and must sign a confidentiality and anonymity acknowledgement form (RDC, 2004).

In order to be eligible for the IPSE service students must be 18 years of age, have personal goals and needs that can be best met by continuing education, cannot meet the existing criteria to enter a college program, be eligible for funding from PDD, and can be supported by IPSE while attending College for up to four years (RDC, 2004).

In order to apply for the IPSE service, students must access an application form from PDD, or from the IPSE coordinator at Red Deer College. Completed application forms are then returned to the PDD office. The interview/selection committee notifies applicants (and their family/supports) of openings, interview times, and processes. The committee then determines eligibility based on both the application and an interview. Applicants and their family/supports are notified by phone and by letter as to whether the applicant has been successful (RDC, 2004).

Once accepted, students fill out an RDC Application for Admission form accompanied by the application fee of $40. Once support of the chair and various instructors are confirmed, the IPSE Coordinator meets with the registrar's office to ensure that an extra student can be added to the chosen course. Students are required to pay the equivalent of auditing fees, (which is 50% of tuition, and 50% of the Student Association Fees), as outlined by the Red Deer College Academic

Calendar. In addition, students are responsible for their own books and materials for each course (RDC, 2004).

In the event that funding services change, or that there is a conflict with the mission and goals of the IPSE service at RDC, appropriate notice will be given that RDC can no longer provide services for IPSE students (RDC, 2004).

Participants. Participants were acquired through a non-random, purposeful sampling process intended to identify individuals who could give a rich description of their experience working with, and understanding the inclusion of, students with developmental disabilities at the college level. In this case participants were instructors at Red Deer College who have had face-to-face interaction with students with developmental disabilities accessing Inclusive Postsecondary Education supports. According to the Persons with Developmental Disabilities agency, individuals with developmental disabilities, who are eighteen or older, may be eligible for support and services funded through PDD. One of these supports is Inclusive Postsecondary Education Supports. In order to be eligible, the applying student must have a significant limitation in one or both of intellectual capacity or adaptive skills. An IQ score of 70 or lower indicates an intellectual disability, and for adaptive skills the indicator is a significant limitation in daily living skills. Either, or both, of the above must have existed before the child turns 18.

Involvement with students accessing IPSE had to be more extensive than merely an awareness of the students with significant disabilities on campus, or simply having acknowledged these students (saying hello, stopping to chat for a

few minutes). An e-mail, soliciting participants, was sent through a faculty wide e-mail, and posters were distributed throughout the college campus (See Appendix B for sample poster). The initial group of respondents consisted of nine instructors, two staff members (one from the transitional vocational program, and one from IPSE), and two college students without disabilities. The sample was then chosen based on level of involvement with students with significant disabilities, and position at the college (i.e,. instructors). Specifically, the interviews were done with instructors who, over the course of at least one semester, had a student(s) in their classes with a developmental disability accessing inclusive postsecondary education supports on the Red Deer College campus. Participants were given a gift certificate to the Red Deer College Bookstore, in the amount of $30, for volunteering their time to participate in the interview process.

The sample consisted of nine instructors, one male and eight females. All the participants were Caucasian and their ages ranged from 35-55. Highest level of education obtained included a bachelor's degree (1), master's degree (5), and PhD (3). The median amount of time the instructors were involved with (teaching/taught) students accessing IPSE was four years. Programs that instructors taught in included: Early Learning and Care Services, Disability and Community Studies, Degree Transfer Programs (History and English), and Computer Studies.

Participant one. Participant one was a Caucasian female with extensive experience teaching at Red Deer College. Prior to having students with

developmental disabilities in her classroom, she had not had purposeful experience with individuals with disabilities, and none of her friends or family members have an identified disability. However, she did comment that in her twenties she worked at an agency where she is certain there were individuals with disabilities attending. She has a Bachelor's and Master's degree. She believes that the program she teaches in is a good fit for students with developmental disabilities because it is self-paced and alleviates the stress of concrete deadlines.

Participant two. Participant two was a Caucasian female who has taught at Red Deer College for an extensive period of time. She first came to the college because of a move, and she was looking for a job that fit with her educational experience. She has a B.A and Master's degree and has been published. She has two immediate family members with disabilities, and until she had her children had not had much experience with individuals with diagnosed disabilities. She teaches courses in a university transfer program, and believes that, depending on the presenting diagnosis, it may be difficult for students with developmental disabilities to be successful.

Participant three. Participant three was a Caucasian female who has taught at Red Deer College for less than 10 years. She has a background in human services, and holds a PhD. Before working at RDC she had been teaching at another college in Alberta. She has extensive experience working with individuals with disabilities, and a number of her friends have an identified disability.

Participant four. Participant four was Caucasian female who has been at Red Deer College more than 10 years. She has a Bachelor's and Master's degree. She

taught at another college in Alberta before coming to RDC, and has also worked with youngsters with disabilities. Additionally, she has a number of friends and family members with special needs.

Participant five. Participant five was a Caucasian female who has taught at Red Deer College for more than twenty years. She has a bachelors and master degree. Prior to having individuals with developmental disabilities in her classroom she had no work experience with individuals with disabilities, although two of her own family members have diagnoses.

Participant six. Participant six was a Caucasian female who has taught at RDC for more than ten years. She has a bachelors and masters degree. She has worked in health care, and has taught in three different departments at Red Deer College. She has had a vast amount of experience working with individuals with disabilities including children, youth, and adults.

P***articipant seven***. Participant seven was a Caucasian female who has taught at RDC for over twenty years. She has a bachelors, masters, and doctoral degree. Her experience includes teaching at the elementary level, teaching at the college level, and working as a private consultant. She has experience working with children and adults with disabilities.

Participant eight. Participant eight was a Caucasian female who has been at RDC for more than twenty years. She started at the college immediately after taking a bachelor's degree. She has had a great deal of experience with individuals with disabilities through previous jobs, and two members of her family have a diagnosed disability.

Participant nine. Participant nine was a Caucasian male who has taught at Red Deer College for approximately twenty years. He has a master's and PhD degree, and teaches mainly university transfer courses. He has had students with disabilities in his classes almost every semester, and has both friends and family members with a disability.

Research Ethics

Informed consent. In order to successfully obtain information about the participants' perceptions, their cooperation and willingness to participate in the interview process were of the utmost importance. The researcher provided an information sheet outlining the research study along with a description of the participant's role, and a signature sheet for written consent to each participant. In addition, prior to participating in each interview, the issue of informed consent was revisited and the participants were requested to verbally state their willingness to participate in the activity. As well, at the end of each interview session, participants were again given the opportunity to verbally commit to continuing their involvement with the evaluation process. Furthermore, participants were informed of their freedom to withdraw, as well as to refuse to participate at any time during the study.

Anonymity and confidentiality. During the interviews only personal information that was pertinent to the research study was solicited, in order to keep participants anonymous (to the public). In addition, the researcher explained how the participants' personal information was going to be protected in the publication and presentation of the research findings (e.g., no use of identifying information).

As the data collected in this study may be published or presented at a conference at a future date it was necessary to protect the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the data. Participant names will not be released to any source and will not appear on any completed materials.

Storage of data. Written, audiotaped, and computer files containing data and material used for this study will be stored for a minimum of five years. The data are being kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's work office.

Research Procedures

Data collection. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with study participants. The interview is the most commonly used approach for data collection in qualitative research. A qualitative interview is an interaction between the researcher and the interviewees through conversation, a basic mode of human interaction. When people talk to each other, they interact, get to know each other, and understand each other's experiences, feelings, expectations, and the world they live in (Kavale, 1996). Through interviews, the researcher can enter into other people's perspectives and understand how people make sense of their world and experiences (Restine, 1999). The interviews conducted in this study were designed as semi-structured interviews, in which the interviewer asks predefined questions but also tries to leave freedom for the interviewee to talk (Kavale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Interviews were conducted until no new information was shared, which is in accordance with qualitative practices (point of data saturation). In addition, sampling saturation was achieved, which means that no new information was

generated and information redundancy occurred within the sample. An initial face-to-face interview, ranging in time from one to three hours, was conducted with each participant (depending on each participant and the information shared) (see Appendix A for the list of general starting questions). Interviews were followed up with phone calls, e-mails, or additional face-to-face interviews to clarify information and to ask further questions. Additionally, follow up phone calls/e-mails were done before the interviews were transcribed, and all follow-ups took place within six months of the initial interviews. After soliciting further information and clarification, the interviews were then transcribed and e-mailed to participants for perusal. All transcribing and sending of the transcripts was completed within 12 months of the follow up emails/calls.

Data analysis. Thematic analysis was used to examine instsructor perceptions of the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities at the college level. In this case thematic analysis included deriving general themes (verbal descriptions) from the raw interview data, and then coding the themes in order to identify patterns across the participants' experiences. In essence, coding is the creation of categories in relation to the data. It involves grouping different instances of datum together under an umbrella term that allows them to be regarded as the same type (Aaronson, 1994).

In order to conduct the thematic analysis, a four step process of coding and analyzing suggested by Foss and Waters (2003) was used. These steps are coding the data, developing themes from the data, developing a conceptual schema, and writing up the analysis.

Coding involved going through the data and looking for statements pertinent to answering the research questions. In line with the suggestion of Foss and Waters (2003), I separated, and then paraphrased meaningful units of data and then assigned headings to each unit.

Developing themes from the data required making another copy of the coded data. Using one of the copies, I physically cut out the units/chunks, and saved the other copy for future reference. I then sorted the cut out sections into piles according to codes. All of the meaningful units of data that had the same code or closely related codes were put in the same pile. Each pile was coded with a word or phrase that captured the gist of what was going on in that pile. At the end of this step I ended up with nine themes: student classroom behavior, department requirements, student expectations, societal change, philosophy of inclusion, administrative directives, knowledge of disability, and scope of inclusion. Piles were then assessed by asking questions including does everything in each pile relate to the code it has been given? Can some piles be combined? Can some piles be deleted because they are insignificant, do not relate to the research questions, or have very few pieces of data in them? At this point the piles were reorganized and combined to end up with five distinct themes: top down directive, department requirements, societal change, varied expectations, and understanding of disability. After further organization and examination of the data, these five headings were renamed: conflict between the college philosophy of social inclusion and the reality of what is happening in individual classes, conflict between encouraging social inclusion and the reality of departmental

requirements for courses and graduation, slow pace at which society accepts individuals with developmental disabilities, varied expectations of the outcome of social inclusion, and comfort level with individuals with developmental disabilities.

Conflict between the college philosophy of social inclusion and the reality of what is happening in individual classes refers to inclusion policies and practices that are recommended by RDC or persons in position of authority. Conflict between encouraging social inclusion and the reality of departmental requirements for courses and graduation include percentage grades needed to pass certain courses, number of courses needed to obtain a certificate or diploma, and graduation requirements. Slow pace at which society accepts individuals with developmental disabilities encompasses attitudes towards social inclusion over the last thirty years. Varied expectations of the outcome of social inclusion refers to the general understanding of what the educational experience and future prospects of employment hold for students with disabilities. Comfort level with individuals with developmental disabilities refers to the range of understanding people without a disability have about what a disability is.

Developing a conceptual schema from the data consisted of taking Vygotsky's social development theory and the five themes that emerged from my research and developing a visual schema to guide the process and writing. This schema is not included in the dissertation, as it was more a part of the process than the product. Writing up the analysis involved taking each of the five themes that emerged and, using participant quotes and comments, explaining them in detail.

Chapter Five: Results

Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this research was to: (a) ask college instructors' for their definitions of social inclusion; (b) obtain college instructors' perceptions of whether they see social inclusion, as they define it, happening at the college level; (c) if the perception is that inclusion is not working, to get college instructors' opinions on why inclusion is not happening at the college level; (d) ask college instructors for suggestions for how to make inclusion work, or work better. This chapter provides information, gathered from interviews, that addresses each of the above four questions. In particular, it will inform the reader of five themes related to the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities at the college level. These themes include conflict between the college philosophy of social inclusion and the reality of what is happening in individual classes, conflict between encouraging social inclusion and the reality of departmental requirements for courses and graduation, slow pace at which society accepts individuals with developmental disabilities, varied expectations of the outcome of social inclusion, and comfort level with individuals with developmental disabilities.

Red Deer College Instructors' Definitions of Social Inclusion

Participants' definitions of social inclusion, parallel to definitions of inclusion within the research literature, varied somewhat. This was evident in conversation with Participant 8, when she said "What is inclusion? We all define [it] differently". Participant 2 explained that she sees social inclusion as "an

atmosphere of respect" for an individual with a significant disability. She explained that social inclusion is "[seeing] people with disabilities as fellow citizens that [we] see every day". Participant 3 defined social inclusion, in part, as "celebrating when a student does something, when a student participates". She also commented that when "[she thinks] of Inclusive Post Secondary Education [she thinks] of people with developmental disabilities being able to participate in learning that's interesting to them – like writing or dance". Another participant (7) explained that to her it meant that "everyone should have the opportunity to do whatever they want to do in society and others should adjust and adapt…it should be an opportunity given to people and that they should be set up for success". To participant 6 social inclusion at the college level meant that students with developmental disabilities "come for the experience of college and the social stuff". Particpant 8 explained that social inclusion is "[looking] at each individual and what they need". According to participant 5, social inclusion is "having the student among peers, giving them a feeling of being in a real college class, and an opportunity to come away with some real learning". There were definitely a number of commonalities within definitions, which included the belief that social inclusion means that individuals with developmental disabilities should be given the opportunity to participate, to follow their interests, and to engage in a normative college experience.

Do Red Deer College Instructors Perceive Social Inclusion Happening at The College Level?

What became evident in conducting interviews with instructors who had had students with developmental disabilities in their classroom, was that all of them strongly believed in inclusion as a personal philosophy. In line with their philosophy, all of the participants felt inclusion was important not only for the student with developmental disabilities, but also for the students' peers, the college staff and faculty, and the students' parents. However, in talking about how social inclusion was faring at Red Deer College, the participants all seemed to come to similar conclusions – it was not. Participant 3 was very straightforward stating that "inclusion is not working at RDC. We're not inclusive". The general argument seemed to be that inclusion exists on a policy level at RDC, but that the policy has not trickled down to individual classes (Participant 7). Further, it was argued that the adults at the college are the ones who are setting up the environment and ensuring that things get done. For example Participant 6 commented that "all the adults get together and make sure the students get here on time and there on time, and modify that, and at the end of the year the student goes yay I've been to college…". Another participant expressed regret over not always consciously remembering to include the students with developmental disabilities at events outside of specific classes:

> We didn't always remember to invite the IPSE students to our social events, and I wish we had done that more, so we could think about making

> cohort connections not just class to class. We didn't always make it clear that they were welcome at different events (Participant 4).

Reasons Red Deer College Instructors Perceive Social Inclusion Being Unsuccessful at the College Level

The participants were open in discussing reasons they felt social inclusion was not taking place on the college campus. The main reasons, or themes, that inclusion is not effectively happening include conflict between the college philosophy of social inclusion and the reality of what is happening in individual classes, conflict between encouraging social inclusion and the reality of departmental requirements for courses and graduation, slow pace at which society accepts individuals with developmental disabilities, varied expectations of the outcome of social inclusion, and comfort level with individuals with developmental disabilities.

Theme one: conflict between the college philosophy of social inclusion and the reality of what is happening in individual classes. Several of the participants believed that inclusion was working in individual classes, with specific instructors, but only during that 50 or 130 minute block of time. They thought it was quite different in the college as a whole. The consensus seemed to be that the college wanted to uphold the philosophy of inclusion, but that in reality it was not being effectively implemented. One of the participants (2) commented that "it's one thing to have the administration or leadership teams uphold an inclusive value, but is that filtering into the rest of the institution ?". Participant 9 argued that "faculty are bored by ideas [inclusion] that won't make

an impact or change things anyway. People might be open to change if it actually made a difference". One of the participants (2) commented that "we're not inclusive. Do you see any faculty with disabilities? We don't have inclusion at an instructor level, we don't have it at a student level, we don't have it at an administrative level. How do we change it?". Participant 3 agreed, that "[she does] not see it in [her] classroom." She commented that "one of my students told her peers how much she hated coming to class because she felt ostracized. I then debriefed every student individually about the situation. What was hardest was that no one wanted to accept any responsibility." The frustration that came through in interviews was that, although the college was attempting to maintain an inclusive philosophy, no one was invested in the inclusion process, or taking responsibility for its implementation. For this reason, it was just not happening.

Part of the difficulty in implementing social inclusion effectively, according to one participant (8), was that administrators in educational institutions try to ensure inclusion is in place, and that individuals feel included, but that it can be very transparent. Another participant (4) believed that inclusion was not successful because, although mandated at a policy level, those making the decisions did not understand the day-to-day concerns, typical classroom tasks, and workload of instructors. In essence, she argued that it was easier for administration to mandate inclusion when they did not know how difficult it might be to implement it on a daily basis.

Theme two: conflict between encouraging social inclusion and the reality of departmental requirements for courses and graduation. A strong theme

that came through in terms of inclusion was that of concern about meeting department and course requirements. One instructor said that the tough part about inclusion is that we have different standards for different classes; for example not all classes at RDC use the same grading scheme or use the same standard for passing (i.e., some classes have a minimum grade requirement of 70%, rather than 50%, for passing). She felt bound to uphold these standards even if she knew a student was struggling. She feels conflicted between upholding the standards and being encouraging; she doesn't want to see students shut down and give up, and sometimes wishes she could let someone pass half or one third of a course. The inner turmoil was evident when she said:

> I had to be careful to not lower the level of the class and keep it at a university level. Our classes have certain standards and I just can't lower those – whether it's a student whose second language is English or if it's a student with a disability (Participant 2).

Participants believed that they were responsible to teach to the level and needs of the whole class, which affected their ability to slow down or give extra time in classes for individuals with developmental disabilities. One instructor commented about the necessity of being careful not to lower the level of the class, in terms of material and/or expectations (Participant 6). Another instructor commented that if the pace was an issue that perhaps the student could be given an aide as a support to help them stay on track (Participant 4). Additionally, as students with developmental disabilities were taking courses for audit only, it was believed that

it didn't make a lot of sense to not cater the instruction to the majority, as the student with a disability was not going to formally pass or fail anyway:

> There's this part of me that says yes come here, yes do this , yes sit in on the classes, yes, yes, yes, yes, but does that in some way waterdown the diploma, certificate, whatever, for the other kids? And I don't know, and I also wonder about high school diplomas too.They all come out with high school diplomas, but they are not the same. Many are just paper diplomas, not academic, but many think "I have a diploma, now I can go to college" (Participant 6).

Nearly every participant brought up the issue of graduation requirements for programs, and that they believed it was not always absolutely clear to themselves, or other students, whether the students with a developmental disability were auditing or taking courses for credit, whether they would finish with a diploma or certificate, and what that would mean (Participant 1). A number of instructors worried about setting up false expectations for IPSE students, or the reaction of other students who were trying to reconcile seeing a student with significant disabilities and program requirements:

> I have a real problem with credentialing. I went to a human rights presentation once and it was really interesting. At that time we had a blind student and a deaf student taking courses for credit [in an early childhood program]. Those students were really problematic for me because we had to put the children's safety first [in a practicum]. At the meeting they said that

> everyone should have the opportunity to do whatever they want to in society and we should just adjust and adapt (Participant 7).

One instructor in particular was worried that if the students without disabilities thought the IPSE students were taking courses for credit, it would damage the reputation of a program and that word might spread that the program is so easy and lax that anyone could get into it (Participant 6). Another instructor questioned whether IPSE students attend graduation and what it looks like; for example, did that mean they took a certain number of classes, attended a certain number of hours, completed work to a certain level, or was it just to experience graduation?

> What wasn't clear was whether they would be getting a certificate and coming out with the same qualifications. Yes it's great they come for the experience of college and the social stuff, but should the certificate be the same and how is that dealt with (Participant 6)?

Another instructor wondered about students with developmental disabilities taking a program like Disability and Community Studies and then potentially finding work with others who have developmental disabilities. She found it hard to connect all the pieces and make sense of it, and wondered what the typical peers were thinking:

> My experience with inclusion has been positive, but very frustrating. I think I still have mixed feelings. I think of individuals who are severely profoundly disabled. I don't know as a typical student if I would have the patience and tolerance in class for students with disabilities, and I'm a sensitive person. I wonder how peers would make sense of the situation.

> When I think of inclusive postsecondary education I think of people with developmental disabilities being able to participate in learning that's interesting to them – like writing or dance. But an issue came up – with a student who convocated – but does taking 3 classes and a practicum in our program mean that she has graduated, reached fulfillment? (Participant 3).

One of the participants suggested creating a certificate or diploma that reflected the accomplishment of the students with developmental disabilities:

> I don't think it [inclusion] works for all students at all times. I think it should be an opportunity given to people and that they should be set up for success. I wish we had some sort of diploma that would recognize the courses and work that individuals with developmental disabilities do academically, even if the entire program is not finished (Participant 7).

Clearly, there was a lot of perceived conflict between encouraging social inclusion and the reality of departmental requirements for courses and graduation.

Theme three: slow pace at which society accepts individuals with developmental disabilities. Participants brought up the slow pace with which society changes. One instructor mentioned that in her first two years of teaching (approximately twenty years ago), she had students of visible minority who, when writing on topics of their choosing, wrote about personal experience with discrimination in central Alberta. She commented that, although there seem to be more culturally diverse individuals in this area, there are still very few students with visible disabilities at the college (Participant 2). The reigning opinion of the participants seemed to be that, although society has come quite far in terms of

acceptance of racial differences, it is, according to one participant, moving very slowly when it comes acceptance of individuals with developmental disabilities:

> I think inclusion exists but is slow as molasses. We talk in my class about the movie *Forrest Gump*, which set the field of mental retardation back about 20 years. It did nothing for our field. *I Am Sam* and *The Other Sister* are much more realistic depictions. Stereotypes take a while to disperse. I think we're making progress, but I don't know. One thing that I really believe is that when we take inclusion too far to the nth degree we make it a very uncomfortable place for people, so their experience will block every other experience they have, and I don't think we do the person with a disability any favors. Why would we call inclusion putting a student in a science class where the other students are laughing and rolling their eyes? It [inclusion] would work if we just looked at each individual and what they need (Participant 8).

One instructor commented that the IPSE program seemed to be trying so hard to be inclusive that it had somehow made itself invisible, putting the students at a disadvantage. She felt that if people knew more about the program, and if it was more visible, the support might extend past individual classes, for example, the line up at Tim Horton's, or needing help in the hallways (Participant 5). Another talked about seeing individuals with disabilities as fellow citizens:

> When I was growing up people with disabilities were not part of everyday life, they were institutionalized and didn't even take the same transit and you just didn't see them. So when you did see them people tended to stare

> and react. So I think it's really important for everybody to see people with disabilities as fellow citizens that they see every day. They're a part of our society instead of having them sort of shoved away. Even if people aren't aware of how they're affected it makes them more sensitive and they can contribute as well (Participant 2).

This visibility might also encourage a greater amount of interaction between the general college population and students with developmental disabilities. Another instructor questioned a long history of segregation saying:

> Inclusion has to be truly inclusive, there's no such thing as one way for all people, it's kind of like when we did everyone in an institution, then everyone out of the institution, then everybody in a segregated school, and then everyone in a regular classroom. Every time we've done that it's caused terrible chaos. Individualized has become a bad word, and people seem to think it means separated. When we see what's happened in history why can't we learn and say it should be personal choice and why shouldn't it be okay? What is special education? What is inclusion? We all define them differently. Our field is terrible for language and we don't all change at the same time. We could sit down at a table and my definition of inclusion, and your definition of inclusion, and that other person's definition of inclusion would all be different (Participant 8).

Theme four: varied expectations of the outcome of social inclusion. There was a lot of questioning about who inclusion was for (i.e. racial minorities, students with physical disabilities, ESL students, etc.), and what the expectations

were for the student(s) with developmental disabilities. For example, several participants believed that if the purpose of attending college was for experience, social aspects, or to participate in a 'normative' milestone, then inclusion made a lot of sense (Participant 7). However, when it came to academics, or benefits for the 'typical' population, inclusion was seen as problematic. One instructor kept believing that the students with developmental disabilities weren't getting anything out of being in her class:

> At one point I said to one of my colleagues – is this meaningful for the student? I had a sweet, positive, but very quiet student, and I wondered, is she getting anything from this? I hope it's a good experience for her. My colleague said just being here on this campus is meaningful. It's a very different experience; it's about being out in the world like other people can, not about the relaying of information. It's about normative experience.

Another instructor talked about the importance of individuals finding their fit, their niche, and having a safe place where everyone can share their abilities and desires:

> When I think of inclusion I think we create a world where people find their fit, their niche. I think people with ADHD, who need structure, tend to gravitate towards careers in the military, RCMP, and jobs in that vein. So to me that is what inclusion is – finding that space and place for people where they want to belong, and just because you have a developmental disability doesn't mean you can't appreciate music or art or trades.

However, another instructor questioned the practice of, as she sees it, dumping students into classrooms and what purpose that serves.

> I think that they should be included in all regular activities of the program, but may need extra help, or modified materials and so they need that support to be successful. I hate having them dumped for the sake of integration or inclusion and I think they need that support. I really worry that sometimes we are dumping them and integrating just in body only (Participant 7).

She also felt that, if asked, the IPSE students would not have a clear understanding of the end result of their college attendance. For example, would they know that, if auditing, they do not get credits and a certificate or diploma for the courses they have attended? Would they know that their attendance had not qualified them for a work situation? She also believed that, because of potential academic difficulty or distraction to peers without disabilities, it is hard to implement inclusion on a practical level. This instructor also wondered if the IPSE students had expectations that differed from their parents, or IPSE staff members. She thought that parents were probably expecting a normative experience for their child, and IPSE staff were most likely looking at the social aspects of inclusion. She wanted to know what the student's expectations were though – to experience the subject matter? To learn something new? To graduate? To get a job? She wasn't sure expectations would be realistic and was afraid we were setting people up to fail. She was uncertain about taking a student with

developmental disabilities in her class, but changed her mind when the IPSE coordinator explained the program's purpose:

> I was really uncertain about it (inclusion/IPSE), but because they said how beneficial it will be and there was no duress so I thought if they're really convinced, I can't see how this is going to work, but if they're really convinced it will make a difference, I guess I should try it. They said the student would be among peers, would give them a feeling of being in a real college class, that they would come away with some real learning, the student had expressed interest in the particular subject (Participant 5).

Theme five: comfort level with individuals with developmental disabilities. Instructors' answers to interview questions varied greatly depending on their experience with individuals with disabilities. Those who did not have friends or family members with disabilities, or who had little or no previous experience with individuals with disabilities felt much more apprehensive and awkward about having students with developmental disabilities in their classes. They explained it as the thought process of fearing things you don't know very much about. For example, one participant explained about one of the students with developmental disabilities in her classroom that "because she was so different the rest of the students just didn't know how to interact with her and it was very awkward" (Participant 7). Participant 6's interview corroborated this; she commented that "when something or someone is different from you, you tend to move away. If peers found a student odd or embarrassing they wouldn't choose them to be in the groups or socialize with them". Participant 5 agreed, stating that "when

someone's different, people often shy away unless they're invited to be supportive and inclusive, and when they are they rise to the challenge".

None of the instructors refused to include a student with a developmental disability, hoping it would teach them something about inclusion and disabilities, but that did not seem to be the case; they said they actually did not learn much about inclusion or accommodations. Several, however, did comment about how the experience increased their empathy. One instructor commented:

> I think it opened me up more. I think just empathy for the challenge. I guess there's just knowledge even about what it's like for a young person to make their way in the world with those challenges, what is their place in the world, and how can we accommodate their finding their place and feeling valued by all of us (Participant 5)?

One instructor thought it might help the rest of the class learn sensitivity and empathy, but when she had a student whose developmental disability was not overtly obvious she found that the rest of the class was not very accepting. The students in the class would engage in rolling their eyes at answers and sighing loudly when they felt a student was monopolizing time or giving inappropriate answers (Participant 4). This just served to make the student feel more isolated and caused tension in the classroom. Most instructors found that group times were particularly difficult, especially if students were left to choose their own groups – in this case the student(s) were usually left out and on their own. It was questioned whether it would have been valuable to let the class know there was a student with a developmental disability and to provide some information about

that particular disability. Many instructors believed that would have helped to eliminate fear based on lack of knowledge and perhaps taken away some of the awkwardness. However because of lack of student or parent consent, or FOIP issues, this was not always possible.

Although participants were very clear in explaining that they felt inclusion was not happening at the college level, they had a more difficult time suggesting ways to make inclusion effective. Of note however, several instructors did talk about the difference between inclusion in elementary, versus high school and/or college environments. It was believed by a number of instructors that children in elementary schools were more sensitive and inclusive than adolescents, and that by college there is a distinct and engrained separation between students with developmental disabilities and their 'typical' peers.

Red Deer College Instructor Perceptions of How to Improve Inclusion at the College Level

Given the number of concerns identified with the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities, it seemed difficult for the participants to come up with a large number of suggestions for improvement. One participant (3) mentioned "I don't know. I'm probably more disillusioned than I've ever been". Despite this feeling of helplessness, the participants did come up have several suggestions for how to make social inclusion more successful. One instructor (Participant 2) questioned whether students could perhaps get partial marks for a class to show their success in a certain area – for example verbal work versus written work. An extension of this idea was suggested by another participant (7)

who suggested creating a certificate or diploma that accurately reflects the accomplishment of students with developmental disabilities. The idea of taking the individual student into account came through in several comments. Participant 8 commented that "[inclusion] would work if we just looked at each individual and what they need". Another instructor (Participant 5) suggested that the Inclusive Post Secondary Education Supports program seemed to be trying so hard to be unseen that students with developmental disabilities did not seem to be acknowledged. She believed that if the program was more visible, and provided information and education, people might be more willing to extend support past individual classes. Visibility may also encourage interaction between the general college population and students with developmental disabilities. In terms of specific classes, Participant 7 suggests that we find a space and a place for individuals with developmental disabilities where they want to belong, and that we include them in all regular activities, although they may need extra help or modified material in order to be successful. Even when providing suggestions on how to achieve social inclusion, it was clear that there was a general belief that it may be a significant amount of time before social inclusion is in fact successfully achieved in a college environment.

Researcher's Point of View

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis I found myself thinking, many times, of my own experience with students with developmental disabilities at the college. I, too, have felt it critical to look at each individual student and their particular needs, and have felt disillusioned with the overwhelming prospect

of trying to ‘fix’ inclusion in a college environment. The act of talking with instructors made it clear to me that this is a process, not a quick fix, a part of an ongoing discussion about social inclusion at the college level, and part of an important progression of studying the inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities in post-high school academic settings. The themes that emerged from this research show a willingness on the part of instructors to be flexible, to try what will work in order for a student with developmental disabilities to feel a part of the college experience. The data also shows frustration with top down direction and mismatch of personal and work philosophies. Primarily, the conversations with instructors highlight honest, sometimes aggravated, views of social inclusion, how it is faring at the college level, and what might be done to improve its implementation. This is an important discussion, and one that will hopefully continue in personal, professional, and academic arenas.

Summary

The theoretical framework of this study was Vygotsky’s social development theory, which stipulates that an individual with a disability is typically excluded from sociocultural environments, which then leads to a secondary disability – sociocultural developmental complications. These secondary complications can be ameliorated by participating in a socio-culturally inclusive environment. However, if there are issues affecting inclusion the opportunity to improve sociocultural development does not exist. In this study, interviews with college instructors about inclusion at the college level, suggested a number of themes, reasons that inclusion at the college level did not seem to be successful, that

prevent participation in a socioculturally inclusive environment, therefore continuing to complicate an individual's social integration on a daily basis.

Chapter Six: Discussion

Semi-structured interviews were held with nine college instructors at Red Deer College, in essence, to ascertain college instructors' perceptions of whether or not inclusion exists at Red Deer College. Instructors were further asked to explain in what capacity they felt inclusion was evident, if they believed it was happening at the college level, and if they believed it wasn't, why not. The prevailing view was that although inclusion is seen in individual classes and in small snapshots, overall it is not very evident or successful at the college level. Reasons for this emerged in the form of five themes regarding the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in a postsecondary educational environment.

Generally speaking, instructors believed that inclusion exists at the policy level, but that it's one thing to have administration endorse it and a very different thing to see it working practically on a day to day basis. Instructors felt bound by course and department requirements that make it difficult to be inclusive in their classrooms. Rather than focusing on individual pace, social situations, or relationships, instructors are aware of college timelines and policies that require them to meet deadlines, cover material, and teach to the majority. It was believed that this adherence to traditional models of teaching and hesitance to accept inclusion is due in part to the slow nature of societal change. Instructors commented that, while they have seen changes in the acceptance of different racial groups, and various age groups, inclusion, and acceptance of individuals with disabilities, has been slow and static. Instructors wondered whether this was a product of varied expectations of an individual's attendance at college. For

example, the prevailing view seemed to be that if inclusion was taking place for integration reasons or a normative experience that was great. However, if learning and academics were taken into account it was complicated. The instructors were hesitant to sanction inclusion if they felt that it would be a distraction to the majority of the students, or in some way negatively impact the group's learning. Part of this hesitance appeared to be due to uncertainty of the purpose of inclusion, as well as to a lack of knowledge of disabilities in general. Instructors believed that other students, as well as themselves, would be more comfortable with inclusion if they knew more about it.

Interpretation of the results highlights a major gap between policy and practice when it comes to inclusion. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section fifteen, makes it clear that every person in Canada (regardless of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, colour, sex, age or physical or mental disability) is to be considered equal, which means that governments must not discriminate for any of these reasons in their laws or programs. Additionally, the Supreme Court has defined discrimination as when a person or group, for example, because of a personal characteristic such as age, sex or race, is denied an opportunity that exists for other members of society. This section is meant to protect those individuals or groups who suffer social, political, and legal disadvantage in Canada (Hodge & Radzikowska, n.d.).

Based on the Charter of Rights, the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission has developed a publication discussing the responsibility and duty of postsecondary institutions to accommodate students with disabilities.

Accommodation is explained as the process of making alterations to the delivery of services so that the services become accessible to more people, including those with physical and mental disabilities (Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, n.d.). Physical and mental disabilities include hearing impairment, mobility impairment, psychological and psychiatric disorders, vision impairment, learning disabilities, neurological impairment, chronic health problems, serious illness, and developmental disabilities. The document does stipulate that accommodation does not require postsecondary institutions to lower their academic standards, or relieve students of the responsibility to develop expected skills and competencies (Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education Institutions, n.d.). Students with a variety of disabilities are participating successfully with accommodation in the postsecondary education environment. These accommodations range from auditing, to taking courses for credit, to selectively participating in a program. The publication does caution however, that there may be programs and courses where it will not be possible to accommodate students with developmental disabilities (Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, n.d.).

Information gleaned from interviewing instructors in postsecondary education indicates that, overall, at the college level, there is a profound lack of knowledge of policies or responsibilities related to students with disabilities, particularly those with developmental disabilities not taking courses for credit. Additionally, IPSE takes only three students per year, but, as one instructor pointed out, many other students could come on their own and register as an auditing student.

However, this information is not usually shared, and parents and students alike do not seem to realize this as an option. One of the instructors interviewed was aware of only one student at the college who was registered as an auditing student and not part of IPSE. Instructors are hesitant to share this information because auditing students can bring a lot of extra work to a course, but they are not counted in course numbers and the administration does not give instructors extra time for auditing students.

Most postsecondary institutions now have some variation of disability services, tailored to students with disabilities taking courses for credit. However the equivalent does not exist for students with developmental disabilities. How can we ensure equal access and prevent discrimination if we are not providing the opportunities and supports to students with developmental disabilities that other students have available to them?

Results of this research indicate that instructors perceive there to be a number of issues with the successful implementation of social inclusion at a college. These results corroborate, and extend, the extremely small number of studies done on barriers to inclusion at the college level. Pitt and Curtin (2004) argue that, although educational policies for students with disabilities stress inclusion, a number of students are moving out of mainstream schools and instead attending specialist colleges for postsecondary education. This is happening because of inadequate physical accessibility, low quality of disability services available, and prior negative experiences with inclusion in main stream schools (Pitt & Curtin, 2004). Gitlow (1999) agrees that there are a number of barriers to the inclusion of

students with disabilities in professional programs, and an underrepresentation of individuals with disabilities in the work force due to limited access to higher education, perhaps based on the faulty assumption that every type of disability implies functional limitations (Zollers & Yu, 1998). It is difficult for students with disabilities to feel included at public postsecondary institutions if there are oppressive societal attitudes and policies (Hammel et al., 2008). Indeed, mainstream colleges are challenged to create a truly inclusive environment so that students with disabilities are offered a real choice of postsecondary education institutions (Pitt & Curtin, 2004).

Although research literature has looked at barriers to inclusion at the postsecondary level for students with vision impairments (Gitlow, 1999; Zollers & Yu, 1998), physical disabilities (Pitt & Curtin, 2004), stroke, spinal cord injuries, and traumatic brain injuries (Hammell et al., 2008), extremely few studies have focused specifically on perceptions of the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities on a college campus, as the current study has. Additionally, only three studies could be located on obstacles to inclusion at the postsecondary level. Therefore more research is very much needed in this area.

Issues impacting access to social inclusion are extremely problematic, especially in relation to Vygotsky's view of development and amelioration of sociocultural disabilities. Vygotsky argued that inclusion is critical as it provides social opportunities that may work to improve difficulties caused by a primary disability (Rodina, 2006).

According to sociocultural theory, inclusion provides a context that is

imperative to making connections between social communication and mental activity. This connection develops the mental functions necessary for the regulation of biological and behavioural activity. In part this is due to the ability of humans to imitate intentional activities of others, which is simply not possible in socially isolated situations (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Many individuals who have a primary disability also develop a secondary, sociocultural, disability. This secondary disability may be inadvertently strengthened overtime, leading to a rapid loss of parental hope for their child to develop self sufficiency, independence, and social relationships. However, according to Vygotsky (Rodina, 2006), this situation can be partially remediated by providing social opportunities which, if successful, will lead to connections between those interactions and mental activity.

In summary, this study looked at college instructors' definitions of social inclusion, perceptions of whether social inclusion is taking place at the college level, beliefs for why social inclusion is not working, and suggestions for how to make social inclusion more effective at the college level. Results indicated five themes regarding the social inclusion of students. These include conflict between the college philosophy of social inclusion and the reality of what is happening in individual classes, conflict between encouraging social inclusion and the reality of departmental requirements for courses and graduation, slow pace at which society accepts individuals with developmental disabilities, varied expectations of the outcome of social inclusion, and comfort level with individuals with developmental disabilities.

Participants indicated that inclusion seems to work from a policy level, but not in practice, and that it is not going to be successful if it is a top down directive that not everyone is buying into. The whole versus the one was also a topic of great discussion. Concern arose around whether the class be organized to support the student with a developmental disability, or whether it is structured to accommodate the larger group. Currently, in postsecondary institutions, classes are taught to the larger group with little to no individualized instruction. Additionally, society in general seems to be slow moving in terms of accepting students with disabilities on a real level, and getting past the unknown in order to develop a degree of comfort and true friendship. Finally, expectations were a much discussed topic. Most participants seemed in agreement with the philosophy of inclusion if it was for social reasons, or to provide a normative experience. However, when it came to questions of academics, or learning in general, participants were not as comfortable endorsing inclusion.

Implications

Results of this research indicate that it is difficult to determine whether full inclusion is actually successfully taking place. Although previous research indicates both positive and negative perceptions of the inclusion of various aged individuals with disabilities, what has not been specifically looked at is the perception of whether inclusion is actually being implemented, and if it is successful. It is essential to look at this and subsequently determine those issues that are affecting the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities, in an attempt to remediate this situation, if we are going to see inclusion happen

more frequently and to its full extent. I believe that previous research missed a crucial step. Rather than looking at whether inclusion was being implemented, and if it was successful, studies most often jumped to a question of perceptions of inclusion. It is difficult to get an accurate perception of inclusion if it is not happening, or if it is not being implemented adequately. It seems that this must first be examined before asking about perceptions of inclusion. This study aimed to do just that. By talking to college instructors I was able to get a sense of their definitions of social inclusion and find out whether they felt inclusion was taking place and to what degree.

After analyzing the data I was left wondering what happens to inclusion. Previous research, as well as the current participants, discusses the success of inclusion for young children and in early childhood. However, despite teacher reports that disability is talked about and discussed beginning in early childhood, in lessons that include books and movies/television shows, children do not necessarily develop an awareness and understanding of the term (Van Hooser, 2009). According to teachers, this lack of understanding may negatively impact children's perceptions of peers with a disability (Diamond, 2001; Diamond & Hestenes, 1994; Diamond, Hestenes, Carpenter & Innes, 1997; Diamond & Kensinger, 2002). By the time students reach junior high they have been found to hold more negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities than students in lower grades (McDougall et al., 2004) and, as this research demonstrates, by the time students with developmental disabilities reach college they are more often than not a small, socially isolated group. The detriment of this pattern is that

individuals with disabilities, and subsequently their families, become further removed and isolated from their community and society placing additional burden on the family unit itself, and providing less opportunity for social interaction and development for the family member with a disability.

Applications

In order to remediate, or prevent, the possibility of individuals with disabilities becoming a socially isolated group, it is important to put practical interventions in place aimed at increasing society's understanding about inclusion and the nature of disability. This should be done starting with young children at the early childhood level by evaluating current methods of disability instruction and bycreating an environment that encourages real and positive interactions with peers with a disability (Van Hooser, 2009).

Furthermore, it is important that college and university teacher training programs consider how pre-service teachers are trained in regard to disability instruction in their classrooms. In courses that discuss individuals with disabilities, future teachers should be given specific instruction demonstrating how to encourage positive interactions between students and their non-disabled peers (Van Hooser, 2009).

In addition, it is critical that policy makers be aware that putting an individual with a disability into the general education environment will not, in itself, lead to an accurate understanding about disabilities or to positive attitudes, behavioral intentions, or social inclusion. Consequently, consideration must be given, at the public policy level, to increasing understanding about inclusion. This should

include information on what issues prevent the successful implementation of inclusion (Van Hooser, 2009).

Finally, on an individual classroom and student level, the four principles of a Vygotskian classroom (Maddux, Johnson, & Willis, 1997) can go a long way to creating more successful inclusion.

The first principle is that learning and development are a social, collaborative activity. Interaction among students and between students and instructors is critical, but not in the traditional sense of the instructor imparting knowledge to an empty vessel. According to constructivist theory, nothing is really 'taught', but students construct understanding and knowledge in their own minds, a process that is facilitated by collaboration. For individuals with disabilities the learning outcomes may be different, but will still be more successful in a collaborative environment with their peers.

The second principle is the zone of proximal development. Individuals do not simply know something or not know it. They may arrive at a particular learning experience without knowing something but be ready to master the task if they have appropriate support. Appropriate support may include guidance from the instructor, discussions with peers, electronic information resources such as encyclopedias on CD-ROM, software such as grammar checkers, and electronic brainstorming software that supports group problem analysis. Many students with disabilities have learned how to use equipment, how to interact in more socially appropriate ways, or how to participate in class because of the guidance of a classmate who has demonstrated interest and caring.

The third principle is that learning should occur in a meaningful context. Several movements in education, including authentic instruction, situated learning, and anchored instruction highlight the need to provide learning opportunities in a meaningful context. For individuals with disabilities, learning skills in a meaningful context is of the utmost importance. For example, learning about food or money is an excellent opportunity for going grocery shopping or eating out at a restaurant, and social skills learning and practice can be done with peers and in more informal, relaxed situations.

The fourth principle is that an individual's out-of-school experience should be related to their school experience. It is recommended that "school learning" be structured around the culture and experiences an individual already knows and understands. This context will aid in the assimilation of new information. For example, for all students, but particularly those with disabilities, it is important to draw on what is working at home to help with success at school and vice versa.

Limitations

Two main limitations exist in this study. First, the inclusive postsecondary education supports program has undergone several cuts (in funding, and staff) over the last several years, changes in staff, and is now a separate entity from Red Deer College (it was previously a Red Deer College program). Therefore, I am unsure of how much or little the program changed during the course of data collection. For example, were there fewer students accepted to Red Deer College, therefore less involvement with students with developmental disabilities? Second, I question whether instructors wanted to participate or slant answers in such a way

that made them look more socially desirable, based on how they felt inclusion should be accepted and responded to rather than how they actually felt.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this was a meaningful study looking at college instructors' perceptions of the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities on a college campus. This study differed from previous research in two ways: First, its goal was to gain an understanding of college instructors' perceptions of the reasons the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities was not successful on a college campus (in comparison to elementary or secondary schools). Second, it specifically looked at the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities, whereas previous research focused on other categories of disability. Therefore it is believed that this research fills a gap that exists in current literature.

Despite the limitations of this study, the findings suggest that inclusion on a college campus is not being successfully implemented, and instructor perceptions highlighted five themes regarding its application. Furthermore, individuals with developmental disabilities who are attending the college seem far more likely to be in an isolated group, than socially included. From these findings, important research and practice implications can be drawn. Future research should focus on continuing this important discussion around the social inclusion of students with developmental disabilities at the college level, with specific focus on developing understanding, creating positive attitudes, and facilitating social relationships. Social inclusion is a right, a basic human need to be included in society, and in

one’s community - to belong. Only when we see social inclusion as a human right, can individual attitudes and willingness to interact with peers with a disability, in a real way, begin to emerge.

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Appendix A: List of General Questions

A semi-structured interview format was used to gather information from the participants. These questions were added to, or taken away from as necessary.

1. Demographic Information
    a. Ethnicity
    b. Gender
    c. Age
    d. Education
    e. Socioeconomic Status
2. Tell me about yourself
    a. Educational background (Instructors), program (students)
    b. Do any members of your immediate or extended family have disabilities?
    c. Do you have any friends with disabilities?
    d. Do you have any previous experience working/interacting with individuals with disabilities?
3. What brought you to Red Deer College?
4. What are your thoughts on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities?
5. How did you hear about the Inclusive Postsecondary Education Supports (IPSE)?
    a. Did you know about the program before becoming involved?
6. In what capacity where you involved with students receiving support?
7. For how long were you involved?
8. Would you do it again? Have you done it again?
9. Tell me about your experience
    a. Why did you decide to become involved?
    b. How did it go? (Positive or negative and why?)

c.Did your experience in any way change the way you interact with individuals with disabilities?

d.Did your experience in any way change the way you feel about/view individuals with disabilities in general? Attending college?

e.Did your experience in any way change your thoughts and/or beliefs about inclusion? Why or why not? If so, how?

f.Did your experience in any way change the way conducted your class, and presented material in your class (for instructors)?

g.Did you encourage others to become involved with IPSE?

h.What (if anything) would you change about your experience?

10.Do you think that students and staff know about the Inclusive Postsecondary Education Supports and what it is all about?

a.If yes, how do you think they found about it?

b. If no, how do you think it could be more visible?

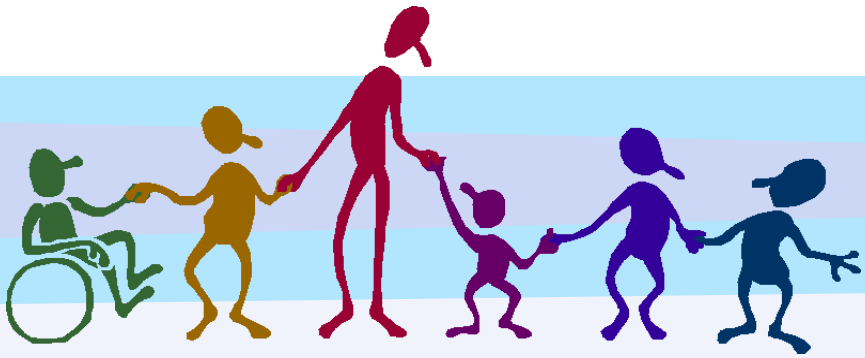
11.What is your definition of inclusion?

12.What is your philosophy of inclusion?

13.Do you see inclusion working, or not working at the postsecondary education level?

a.If you said that inclusion is not working at the postsecondary education level, how do you think we could make it work, or work better?

Appendix B



Do you have experience with individuals with developmental disabilities?

Volunteer to participate in a research study!

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated if you:

- Have been involved with an individual on the Red Deer College Campus who has a developmental disability (through **Inclusive Postsecondary Education Supports**)
- Would like to talk about your experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities
- Have 2-3 hours to spare

For More Information or to Volunteer Contact:

Krista Pierce

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Email: kristajpierce@gmail.com

Receive a $30 gift certificate to the RDC Book Store as a thank you for your time and participation