Cripping Accommodation and Inclusion:
A Critical Discourse Analysis of Accommodations Policies and Inclusion Discourses at BC's Three Largest Post-Secondary Institutions

by

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Abstract

Though advancements have been made on including disabled people into social institutions, ableism remains an active systemic form of oppression excluding disabled individuals from participation in all aspects of society. There is a dearth of research on disability, how their manifestations are understood in academic contexts, or on how diverse disability identities experience education. The existing research fails to account for the wide, complex range of disability, or how specific diversities fare within higher education.

This study analyzes institutional accommodation policies and discourses as they relate to students with disabilities in higher education in British Columbia. The study looks to a more expansive scope of access for students in higher education who experience ableism and asks what access might look like under a different lens of disability thought. It examines public-facing policy documents on disability accommodation at the three largest public universities in BC using a critical discourse analysis approach to critical disability studies.

Keywords: ableism; access; accommodations; cripping education; critical discourse analysis; disability studies; higher education; inclusion

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Glossary

This glossary contextualizes the working definitions of concepts used that might not be commonly understood. The purpose is also to establish a shared frame of reference for some ideas around disability and access that will be references throughout the paper.

Ableism	*Ableism* refers to “the overarching act of prejudice and/or discrimination against disabled people and the devaluation of disability (Hehir, 2002) which corresponds with able-bodied/neurotypical privilege, the set of unearned privileges held by nondisabled individuals.” (Kattari, Olzman, & Hanna, 2018, p. 478). Ableism is a form of oppression that suggests there are disabled and nondisabled ways of doing things, with nondisabled ways always being right, better, and more “normal.” Ableism is everywhere in society, constantly teaching us broader lessons about difference, normality, intelligence, reason, work, and worth (Wendy Harbour, 2019).
Accommodations	Processes for getting support for disabled folks on campus, in schools, etc. While accommodations can “make it possible for disabled students to earn degrees or diplomas, they are based on the assumption that they are sufficient to create equitable access to “level the field” so that students can compete on merit. They also exist so that universities meet their legal obligations or the equality provisions in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms”* (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006, p. 195). Biomedical models shape accommodation process: student must document, prove, and negotiate access to accommodations in order to receive supports.
Crip/Cripping	Robert McRuer (2006) describes “cripping” as a “paradoxical and transgressive act of talking back to discourses of compulsory normativity” (p. 70). With the emergence of the disability rights movement of the 1970’s, “‘crip’ gained wide usage as an “informal, affectionately ironic, and provocative identity among people with disabilities” (Adams, 2015, p. 45). Like “queering”, cripping is used to “spin mainstream representations or practices to reveal dominant assumptions and exclusionary effects” (p. 47). In this research, I use the word *crip* intentionally as a term being reclaimed as a disabled pride and identity designation.

Disabled/Disability	Much debate exists about how to define disability. As Jay Dolmage (2017) describes, “There are many different disabilities represented […]—visible and invisible, physical, and mental, et cetera (p. 10). Disability is a broad category that has been understood in many ways.
Discourse	Discourse often refers to the stories or language used to make meaning: “including (1) meaning making as an element of the social process, (2) the language associated with a particular social field or practice (e.g., ‘political discourse’), and (3) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective (Hoppstadius, 2020, p. 179).
Eugenics	An ideology that was popular at certain points in North American and global history in which scientific knowledge was used to hierarchize life. Eugenics is a philosophy, a rhetoric, and an ideology. The Nazi-led Holocaust is often associated with eugenic thought taken to extremes, as were the non-consensual legislated sterilizations that took place in Canada in the 1960-70s, which particularly impacted Indigenous women and disabled people and continue to do so.
Hegemony	Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy (2012) describe hegemony as helping to “control the ideology in society” (p. 52), enabling “domination to occur with consent of the minoritized group” (p. 52), to the extent that oppression becomes “self-imposed” (p. 52), as seen also in Foucault's Prison example (p. 52), or in the “self-defeating cycle” (p. 113) of racial internalized oppression, wherein people believe the discourse of deserving less access to society's benefits as a marginalized group.
Structural Oppression	Structural Oppression “refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media, and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms – in short, the normal processes of everyday life” (Young, 1990, p. 41).

Spoonies	Someone who lives with a chronic disease, illness, and autoimmune disorder, chronic pain etc. The term refers to spoon theory, a metaphor coined by Christine Miserandino in 2003 which describes these folks as having limited energy as represented by the number of spoons they have in reserve. Many chronically ill people use the term to indicate how the day is going to other spoonies in terms of energy, pain, etc.
Universal Design Learning (UDL)	Universal design for learning (UDL) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn (Cast.org). Universal design has its' roots in architecture and has been expanded into classrooms and pedagogies in practices for designing learning that can work for diverse learners, as their needs are considered during the design process itself.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Disabled people1 are among the world's most socially, politically, and economically disadvantaged minorities (Dolmage 2017; Hansen, 2018; Oslund, 2011; Young, 1990). Societies worldwide have marginalized and minoritized disabled people in many spheres of public life, and this is true of disability at the nexus of other marginalized identities as well. As Nancy Hansen (2018) writes, "A long-standing philosophy of segregation has meant that people lived, worked, and were educated in segregated spaces away from public view. Western society has developed for the most part, without considering the needs or perspectives of disabled people" (p. 40). This is true of Canada where disabled people "are disadvantaged in areas of education, access, transportation, housing, employment opportunities, recreation, cultural opportunities, and so on" (Dorren Demas, 1993, p. 339). As a group, disabled people experience many barriers, and experience oppression not just as individuals but also at a structural, and systemic levels. Ableism is a pervasive form of oppression against disabled people, or disability itself (Kattari, Olzman, & Hanna, 2018). The impacts of ableism, and structural, systemic oppression are many, and this oppression is immensely embedded, and "so foundational to society that it is completely imperceptible to most non-disabled people" (Waitoller & Thorius, 2016, p. 374). Kattari, S. K., Olzman, M., & Hanna, M. D. (2018), and other scholars also write of the culturally embedded, invisible nature of ableism, and the impact it has on disabled and non-disabled people alike. This is in part, why it is so important to look at policy and other documents that regulate access needs.

Marginalization is a specific aspect of oppression that significantly disadvantages disabled people, and so for this study, the impacts of marginalization matter. Iris Marion Young (1990) identifies and outlines five major "faces of oppression," and delineates marginalization as the most dangerous one, "potentially subjugated to severe material deprivation and even extermination" (p. 53). This deprivation of rights, and attempted extermination are true of disabled people in Canada and beyond. Robin DiAngelo and

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[1] A note on language: I will be deliberately be using identity-first language (i.e. Disabled person), instead of people-first language (i.e., person with disability). Though there is ongoing debate about which is most respectful, as a chronically ill researcher, I choose to use identity-first language as a signifier of disability pride. Further, identity-first language acknowledges the systemic nature of dis-ableism rather than locating it as a person or individual issue. This language is intended to be read in full respect and support that many disabled people choose to use different language to identify and describe themselves.

Özlem Sensoy (2012) observe that disabled people have been “segregated in major social institutions like schooling, housing, and the workplace” (p. 62), and that this has been “rationalized as necessary because of the false assumption that able-bodied people have nothing to learn from people with disabilities” (p. 63). Many false assumptions are made about disabled lives in part because of the separation between disabled people and the public, and the discourse, and stories told about them, often by able-bodied people and institutions. Resultingly, many popular ideas and current beliefs about disabled people come from cultural hegemonies that are often not informed by the realities of disabled peoples’ lives. Further, the lack of representation of disability, and disabled folks that we can observe in media and pop culture often reinforce these hegemonies and beliefs, rather than challenge them. This is important to this study, and the importance of representation, and rhetoric are a major component of this research.

As articulated by Hansen, Hanes and Driedger, (2018), “Institutional histories are important because, until very recently, as a result of restrictive public policy and inaccessible housing, transportation, education, and employment, institutions were the only places where most disabled people could be found outside the home” (p. 3). Many non-disabled people have little lived experience, or relationship with disabled folks. Ableism and its impacts remain largely invisible to many non-disabled people and not as widely recognized or legitimized as some forms of oppression. Further to this, ableism is structural, institutional, and normalized. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2011) reiterate that “society is structured in ways that perpetuate marginalization” (p. 5), noting that the “direction of power is embedded and normalized” (p. 101), making it even harder to recognize, undermine, or dismantle. This is true of higher education too, which normalized a power dynamic, as will be discussed in the findings of this study. “Northern society continues to consider disability a problem located within individuals and insists on controlling which individuals’ “merit” the label of disabled” (Oslund, 2015, p. 80) rather than looking to structurally embedded or systemic forms of oppression, or how they function. Institutions are a part of this functionality and play a major role in how this structural oppression manifests, as will be noted in this study, and findings below.

As mentioned, higher education and academia express specific structural oppression around disability. Though many institutions of higher education often purport to want to recruit and retain disabled students (who are vastly underrepresented in post-secondary education), the literature suggests these students still face obstacles despite these institutional claims (Evans, 2017; Opini, 2016; Taylor, 2011). Jay Dolmage (2017) writes that “universities continue to function to keep certain groups of individuals out of the work force and away from status positions, and away from knowledge and dialogue and power (p. 21). Wendy Harbour (2019), agrees that “as a gatekeeper for professional fields, economic opportunity, and democracy, higher education institutions reinforce society’s ableism and help reproduce it.” However, according to the lived experiences of many disabled folks like myself the available accommodations are not yet meeting the access needs of disabled people who wish to pursue post-secondary education, and access barriers exist that are not necessarily visible or easily understood by non-disabled people, nor are the structures meant to address access support for disabled students adequate. This is important, because education is a critical pathway to employment, academia, and many of societies’ advantages. Lack of access to inclusion in education has a major impact on real-world options for disabled people, and society. This study draws on Harbour’s (2019) ideas for radical inclusion to critically exampine how we might think about cripping educational institutional spaces. Part of this also includes cripping and questioning the ideologies that have created these spaces.

Christy Oslund (2015) also notes the difference between what is socially perceived in academia or on campus and what happens in “the real world” (p. 95). Even I had assumed that there must be services and structures available to support my access needs, and I was shocked and disappointed by the reality of what is available on campus. Many students at SFU suggest that even the process of trying to get accommodations is not accessible to them (Anonymous, 2021). As an SFU student myself, I can relate. In trying to register for the centre, I received an email with what felt like insurmountable amounts of paperwork, doctor notes, documentation of my personal chronic illness information, and inconvenient appointments at the Burnaby campus, which is not anywhere near where I live or work. The expectation was high for what seemed like minimal benefit to me. Barriers to education are a contemporary problem on a wider scale, as disabled people are still being kept out of higher education, and “the programs and initiatives that are developed in the name of diversity and inclusion do not yet deliver tangible means of addressing the ableism inherent in higher education” (Dolmage, p. 21). In addition to barriers getting into higher education, once a student or academic, barriers remain steep, and diverse. The barriers exist at multiple levels, and in my own experience, aren’t always clearly identifiable.

Further, in thinking about access issues, we need to look beyond just physical access; as Dolmage (2017) explains, physical inaccessibility is always linked—not just metaphorically—to mental, intellectual, social, and other forms of inaccessibility" (p. 10). Ableism and access are concepts that extend far beyond the physical or structural spheres. Physical access barriers in parking lots, restrooms etc. are only "a small part of what makes education a hostile environment for students with disabilities" (Oslund, 2011, p. 53). Pedagogy itself, and classroom spaces can be inaccessible too, as ableism manifests in many forms. People who have developmental, mental, or chronic disabilities for instance, may need multiple forms of access to materials, such as verbal, written, and visual. Perhaps the pace might be difficult for a neurodiverse person, or maybe the content is difficult to connect or engage with for students with disabling anxiety. All the teaching tools considered in a classroom or learning space need to keep in mind access barriers that might exist for particular students or learners. Mia Mingus, a disability justice advocate, coined the term "access intimacy" (Mingus, 2011, p. 2), to imply that access is a much more complex, ephemeral concept than sidewalk curb cuts or ramps, though these are important and necessary too. It is also why we cannot limit our understanding of access to merely physical access barriers, as this does not address many of the reasons for which participation of disabled students in higher education is so low. As I have become more involved with disability thought, I have seen how access can be expansive as a concept under a disability justice framework.

Tanya Titchkosky (2011) writes that access "needs to be understood as a complex form of perception that organizes socio- political relations between people in social space", and asks, "what if, like access, we treat disability as a way of perceiving and orientating to the world rather than conceiving of it as an individual functional limitation?" (p. 111). Unfortunately, this study uncovers that in most existent policy language, disability is treated as an individual burden, which is then framed as the individual in question's problem to address. In the current state of accommodation models, which dominate North American education landscapes, disability is still framed as an individual, often bio-medically framed problem that looks to individual cases, rather than structural, social, or cultural methodologies to address.

This study asks too what it might look like to frame disability differently and to address disability as a broader construct that impacts many people involved in higher education, and campus life. This interrogation, and lens of considering disability access through a more nuanced perspective hopes to guide institutional policies regarding disability. Rather than accommodating disabled individuals, what if services could help increase disabled self-determination and agency, highlight disabled beauty, and pride, and reimagine the ways in which we think about the ability/disability spectrum? Dolmage (2017) suggests "there is tremendous potential, and tremendous responsibility […] to examine these buildings we work in, and how they are involved in building a larger social and public space outside of these walls" (p. 8). Access, inclusion, and exclusion affect everyone on campus, campus relationships, campus culture, and the institutional culture. Disabled people have the right to an education, and institutions of higher education need to adequately meet and support their access needs, but these rights are not being implemented. This thesis looks at these key access questions, examining current policy documents to help identify where some of these barriers may lie, and how they might be impacting disability in higher education in British Columbia. This thesis also looks at the ideologies, discourse, and narratives that have been integrated into these policies, and how we might crip, trouble, or reimagine them.

1.1. Overview of Research Questions

The research questions examined in this study are:

- What inclusion and accommodation policies are currently in place for students with disabilities at the three largest public institutions of higher education in British Columbia?
- What ideologies are embedded in institutional discourses pertaining to these policies?

This thesis is a critical discourse analysis of disability accommodation policies at BC's three largest public postsecondary institutions. The goal of the study is to: (i) Understand what current accommodation policies look like, and what ideologies, and disability frameworks they draw on; (ii) Uncover how these fits with institutional discourses, framings, and representations of disability; and (iii) examine how ideologies inform these issues in three of the largest provincial institutions of higher education in B.C. The study also makes tangible recommendations to the institutions based on these findings.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

In this study, I examine institutional policy and discourse to further investigate them as they pertain to disability. I ask how crip theory might disrupt accommodations to radically include students (Harbour, 2019), or what cripping might offer to support, uphold, and sustain disabled students within institutions of higher education (Connor & Gabel, 2013; Sherry, 2014). I draw from intersectional, anti-racist, critical praxis. Crip theory has its roots in Robert McRuer's (2006) work, which looked at ways to combine and expand upon overlaps in queer theories and critical disability studies, "to expose the intertwined theories of compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory able-bodiness" (p. 379). Cripping involves questioning, disrupting, and dismantling some of the basic assumptions we make about power, and the way the world, and its institutions are structured. Cripping is a powerful strategy in re-thinking, and re-considering problems, and power, which is why I have chosen the methodologies and my models with careful intention, with scholars who are in alignment with cripping.

This study is grounded in critical disability theories examining oppression, privilege, and power, in higher education contexts. It draws from critical race theory, discrit, and crip theories. In terms of conceptual frameworks, Carol Bacchi's (2012) framework, and critical discourse analytical tools address the research questions, respectively. Scholars suggest that critical disabilities studies might support disabled students in conjunction with new models of disability-informed design; thinking about disability differently, with more nuance, disability can be integrated more thoroughly into campus life. Richard Devlin (2006) explains critical disability theory by writing that issues of disability are questions "of who and what gets valued and who and what gets marginalized. Critical disability theory interrogates a system of justice that is based in the politics of "just us" (p. 9), and explicitly links this to power. I draw on this theoretical standpoint to ground this study by looking at disability through a lens of justice, power, and institutional priorities. Disability Studies rejects the perception that disability is an individual limitation or impairment, as "From this perspective, 'disability' is not a characteristic that exists in the person or a problem of the person that must be 'fixed' or 'cured'. Instead, disability is a construct that finds its meaning within a social and cultural context" (Oslund, 2015, p. 71). It is something that impacts institutions, and society, in more ways than just as an individual problem. It is a structural and systemic problem, and so relying on individual accommodations to address access is an inadequate approach.

Bathseba Opini (2016) looks at existing disability studies programs in Canada and critiques the gaps in incorporating critical race theory and Indigenous methodologies and analysis. She writes that using “an anti-colonial framework provides opportunities to cross-examine the subjugation and erasure of certain disability voices, experiences and knowledges, showing how the field of disability studies reproduces colonial and domineering relations” (p. 69), and she calls for more intersectional and anti-racist approaches to disability studies. Particularly as a white scholar, these issues are extremely vital, and cannot be overlooked. Nirmala Erevelles and Lisa Loutzenheiser (2019) similarly emphasize this importance, and caution omissions of disabilities and its interactions with other identity factors have “disastrous and sometimes deadly consequences for disabled people of color caught at the violent interstices of multiple differences” (p. 378). This is important, because within disability studies, there are major gaps in addressing how marginalized identities such as Indigeneity (Demas, 1993), racialization (Opini, 2016), or queerness (Sherry, 2004) overlap with disability, or examinations of how these groups share forms of cultural resistance to heteronormative, ableist, capitalist, patriarchal, and racist norms. For instance, not many people of colour are present in higher education, and consequently these voices must be given careful consideration (Oslund, 2015, p. 81). These overlaps are largely marginalized and ignored by existing research in higher education, and in K-12 educational contexts.

I also situate this study within a discrit lens and framework, which looks at the interlocking nature of race and ability. For instance, “for students of color, the label of dis/ability situates them in unique positions where they are considered ‘less than’ white peers with or without dis/ability labels, as well as their non-disabled peers of color” (Annamma, Conner & Ferri, 2013, 3). Discrit is a framework that looks at both disability, and race as constructions that work simultaneously, and interlock with each other (Annama, Conner, & Ferri, 2013), and one that can be employed to look at how disability and race intersect. Annama et.al (2013) also recognize “the shifting boundary between normal and abnormal, between ability and disability” (p. 4) as part of a discrit framework, and approach. DisCrit is an extremely useful theoretical standpoint then, for thinking about “not merely accommodating or tolerating students who do not fit the mold of what has been constructed as the ‘normal student’ (Waitoller & Thorius, 2018, p. 253), but actually transforming our schools, institutions, and selves.

We need to unpack how concepts of race, Indigeneity, gender, ability, and other identity markers have been constructed and upheld, and how these concepts intercept in education to disrupt, trouble, and confront them. Though histories have been very different, many minoritized individuals and groups have been actively disabled welcome participation from our social institutions, which is why discrit is such a useful, and vital framework, and basis from which to approach this study? Further, access to education is a human right according to the disability rights model, and according to the UN Convention on the rights of Persons with Disability. Beyond this as well, the ideological rhetorical tools used to perpetuate marginalization put these rights at stake every day, and so the constructions of disabled, racialized, and people of other marginalized identities, such as queerness, Indigeniety, etc. are important.

1.3. Schools of Thought re: disability

There are several prominent schools of thought regarding disability, often described as the “models of disability”. The subsequent sections outline several of these models’ basics and foundations. In addition to the key ones outlined below, there is also the religious model of disability, which sees disability as tragic, and sometimes even as a punitive act of god, and others. I’ve only included the key ones that I draw from in the study.

1.3.1. Biomedical / Medical Model: *Disability as disease/deficit*

The biomedical perspective views disability as something to be eliminated or cured. Within this model it is “assumed disability is inherently problematic for the individual; it must be cured, fixed, or normalized” (Harbour, 2017, p. 153). This model is a lens under which disabled people are “understood as subjects to whom the most ethical response is pity, public policies and laws designed to enable the disabled are positioned as acts of charity rather than the responsibility of governments, universities, and communities” (Sanchez, 2017, p. 22). The model underpins current norms and understandings of disability and inform many of the existing accommodations policy at all levels of education in Canada.

1.3.2. Disability Rights Model: *Disability as a Civil Rights Issue*

Disability rights activists “have argued since at the least the 1960’s, that the bio-medical model is a limited way of understanding and managing disability” (Jung, 2011, p. 266). Activists and academics advocated for disability to be thought of as a human rights issue. “As a radically marginalized sector of society, individuals with disabilities have found solidarity and community to fight for their right to education, through a process of conscientization and identity politics” (Gabel, & Danforth, 2008, p. 293). This led to legislation, such as the human rights code, and the Canadian Charter, which now enforce certain rights for disabled people in Canada. Importantly, as Chrtisy Oslund (2015) notes, “it was students with disabilities themselves who in the process of fighting for inclusion began the act of educating their societies. It was from this movement that Disabilities Studies as a field would grow” (p. 53). This is interesting, as higher education housed some of the landmarks of the disability rights movement, and student and campus activists were critical participants in this area. Both the social model and rights model were driven by disabled activists, and the area of disability studies itself (Degener, 2014).

1.3.3. Socio-political / cultural model: *Disability as a social construct*

This model sees disability as a social construct: the “Socio-politics model assumes people with disabilities may have impairments of some kind, but disability is a social construct like gender or race” (Harbour, 2017, p. 153). The world and social environment are seen as disabling, rather than the individual impairment. Within this model, many different bodies can be understood to benefit from access technologies, assistive devices, which can be built into the design of our society to accommodate, assist, and provide access to unique bodies in all their diverse forms. For instance, deafness might be seen as an individual deficit under the biomedical model, but under this model, the issue is actually lack of supports, resources, or interpreters.

1.3.4. Disability Justice/Liberation model: *Disability as an asset/disability pride*

Disability under this model is a source of pride, identity, and connection. Disability Justice uses a critical lens in how colonialism, capitalism, ableism, and white supremacy are deeply entwined systems of oppression that uphold one another. Disability justice works to look at justice and liberation for disabled people and highlight the unique assets that come from what has often thought of as disability; neurodivergence, and different kinds of body minds are seen as bringing new, diverse, and unique talents, ways of think and being in the world, and skillsets that improve, create, and diversify knowledge.

1.4. Researcher Positionality

I am a white settler on the unceded, occupied traditional territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱ wú7mesh (Squamish), & Səl̓ ílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. I understand and acknowledge that as a settler and a white person I benefit from the ongoing project of settler colonialism and associated white supremacist structures and colonial institutions. I am deeply committed to actively participating in anti-colonialism, decolonization, disability justice, and anti-racism work personally, professionally, and academically. I am also a disabled, queer, cisgender, femme, graduate student. I use the word “queer” to be inclusive of non-gender conforming folks, and people with marginalized genders, and the word “femme” to imply that I have lived a feminized life. Many trans and non-binary peoples also identify with the term femme, and I intend it to be inclusive of these identities. I have a chronic illness, and a disabling mental health diagnosis, and I have experienced first-hand many barriers to schooling. Additionally, I acknowledge that on the spectrum of disability, and as a graduate student, I have much more privilege than many disabled lives ever will, and I carry this awareness with careful consideration, and commitment to unpacking my privilege and power, in addition to active work to dismantle, confront, and grapple with my positionality, and how to be an active agent in anti-oppressive thought, work and praxis.

1.5. Organization of Thesis

This thesis is comprised of five chapters, in addition to references and appendixes. In chapter two, I review literature on disabilities and accommodations for students in post-secondary schooling with a focus on the following subthemes: Historical context and post-secondary discourses of inclusion, accommodations, and its problems, and cripping accommodations. Phillip Turcotte (2018) writes that “occurrences of systemic oppression and social injustices cannot be explained away by simplistic rationalizations; rather, they demand a thorough analysis of the political and social circumstances that created them, and the social power relations that sustained those circumstances” (p. 192). To contextualize the complex experiences of disabled people navigating institutions today and their associated challenges, I examine the equally complex political and historical forces that shaped the institutional relationships between disability and public institutions, including educational ones as part of this review.

Chapter three outlines methodology, and research procedures used in data collection and analysis. Chapter Four discusses my findings, as organized by research question, and outlier findings. I organized my findings by research question and used themes from my data to present my findings in an organized manner. I chose to narrow in on five findings per questions, which are presented below in the findings chapter. In chapter Five, I conclude with key issues that arose in the study. Finally, the References and appendixes are at the end of the document.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

In this chapter, I review existing scholarship on the historical relations between disabled people and institutions to situate these discussions in context. I begin with disability in education and acknowledge multiple marginalization’s as they pertain to disability and higher education. I then look at the ideological and historical foundations of accommodation and disability thought in Canada in particular. In the next section, I go over key problematizations that scholars point to in accommodations policy, and inclusion discourses. Finally, I review literature on models that are more in alignment with disability justice models of disability, which include cripping, and more radical models for institutional inclusion and accommodation. I include current available scholarship on what inclusion and accommodation discourses might look like that incorporate different understandings of disability, and to what crip theory might offer accommodations and inclusion policies for institutions of higher education.

2.1. Situating Disability in Education

There are a multitude of fields that have examined disability, though it generally remains a largely under-researched area across disciplines. In Canada, Hansen (2018) argues that “Disabled people make up nearly 14% of the Canadian population, and those 3.4 million people compose one of the largest minority groups in Canada […] however, the richness and complexity of disabled people’s lives remain largely overlooked and undocumented” (p. 1). Disabled people, their issues, rights, and stories are not generally studied, examined, or understood as far as the literature shows. Disabled people have had to fight hard to advocate for rights, including the rights to education, which have not historically been assumed, even though education is considered a human right. In fact, “Prior to the 1970’s, children with disabilities were not guaranteed a public education, nor did nonveterans with disabilities have a legacy protected right to an accessible education” (Rocco & Collins, 2017, p. 327). The disability rights movement fought for basic rights and freedoms for disabled folks, given this marginalization.

In terms of access, the ability to attend post-secondary education is currently understood as a civil right, students with disabilities know that their experiences of this education are often difficult. What students with disabilities have often experienced is that universities that proclaim equality, or market themselves as so, however, are not necessarily actually “willing to accommodate the visibly or invisibly disabled once they arrived on campus” (Oslund, 2015, p. 53)? Education is an arena in which these complex struggles have been present, as “the accumulative result of multiple forms of social disadvantage has a direct impact on the access of disabled students to higher education as well as their ability to complete their course of studies” (Liasidou, 2014, p. 124). Many scholars agree that disabled students still have limited access, and specific, structural barriers to higher education (Dolmage, 2017, Evans, 2017, Taylor, 2011, Opini, 2016). Students may experience a gap between how universities claim they engage with these issues, and the realities of campus life.

Additionally, disability is a powerful concept with which to approach educational studies. Discussing questions of “social justice and accessibility in higher education on the grounds of disability necessitates a nuanced analysis of the myriad of hidden dynamics that create power inequities and exclusionary regimes for disabled students” (Liasidou, 2014, p. 131). Disability and crip studies are key analytical areas and standpoints from which to host these conversations in their nuances and complexities, as both are about power. This is in part because, as Loutzenheiser and Erevelles (2019) write, “disability is central to the very logic of oppression and its concomitant violence in social and educational contexts” which draw on practices and policies that support ableist ideologies, which are then in turn used against disabled people in oppressive ways (p. 376). Loutzenheiser and Erevelles (2019) further write that disability “as a pivotal analytic, is deployed in educational contacts to often simultaneously disrupt and reproduce the everyday workings of the settler colonial state that are simultaneously anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, anti- immigrant, antitransgender, antiqueer, antipoor, and also anti-disability” (p. 375). Disability is a powerful unifying tool to address power, oppression, and social exclusion. Other scholars, including Harbour (2019) also affirm that greater understandings of disability may have enormous promise for helping higher education wrestle with some of its most difficult questions. This research is interested in this nexus of disability and how oppression, and ableism operate, and in uncovering these areas in higher education policy, rhetoric, and practice for disabled students.

2.1.1. Historical Context and Post-Secondary Discourses of Inclusion.

Disability is a complex category and there are many ways of thinking about disability. As noted in the glossary, there is no one simple way to think about disability, and what it means to people. Harbour (2019) agrees that disability may be many things: a medical condition, a legal definition, a social construct, an identity, or a basis for community and culture. Disability can be understood as a spectrum, an impairment, political identity, and/or a point of pride, among many other things. I find that my chronic illness is also a fluid, ever-changing part of my life, identity, and embodied experience, and as my relationship with that part of myself evolves and changes over time, so does my understanding of disability, and the impact it has at various points in my life. As a researcher looking to understand how to support access for people who may experience a variety of changing, inconstant symptoms, relationships to their bodies that may be ever changing, and stories about themselves and their abilities inspires ever growing questions about disability works within institutions, and systems that simply aren’t built with these fluctuations in mind. Disability can be fluid, understood very differently by people experiencing its’ many forms, and is a part of most human lives at some point or other, in some way or another, which makes it a vast, evolving, and fascinating subject.

Whether people identify as disabled, or are identified as such however, the category of disability is associated with undeniable social disadvantages and realities. Nirmala Erevelles (2009) describes “the harsh reality of disabled people's lives, which are bound by oppressive social and economic conditions that are much more difficult to transcend” (p. 27). Iris Marion Young (1990) notes the forced dependency of marginalized groups, including the disabled, whose rights to “privacy, respect and choice” (p. 54) are often suspended, removed, or negated without any accountability on behalf of the welfare state that Erevelles (2000, p. 39) also describes. The economic marginalization of disabled folks over time adds to the barriers to access, and resources. This issue of forced dependency comes up in some of the accommodation’s criticisms in the following section, as students still must conform and disclose to access. It is also important to note this treatment in terms of forced institutionalization, which denies folks of privacy rights, and in most cases, agency in self-determination. The historical roots of the denial of agency, privacy, and self-determination informs current policy issues, as these themes still resonate for disabled people, which is why it is so critical to look at in this research.

Similarly, to critical theories of race, which understand race, and racialization as a socially constructed tool used to divide, marginalize, and oppress groups of people, (Baldwin, 1993; Dei, 1996; Fanon, 1952; Satzewich & Liodakis, 2013) disability can be understood as a social construction, which has changed over time, and whose understanding as a concept influences the ways in which disability is treated. Race and disability have been treated in similar ways. Discrit brings together critical race theories, and disability studies in the education field to examine the overlaps, gaps, and intersections between these important areas of studies. Annama, Conner, & Ferrari (2018) write that "Providing new opportunities to investigate how intersecting patterns of oppression target students at the margins of Whiteness and ability, DisCrit has since been taken up by scholars to expose and dismantle entrenched inequities in education" (p. 1). Annamma et.al (2018) locate DisCrits' roots as scholarship related to critical race, feminist activism, and scholarship, which explore interlocking identities, and marginalization, and write that discrit aligns with critical disability studies. They also recognize the importance of artists and activists who have been influential in intersectional disability and race framing and discussions. "Patti Berne, Anita Cameron, Mia Mingus, Leroy Moore, and Alice Wong, to name a few, have led the conversation, naming how interlocking systems of oppression have affected the lives of disabled people of color", and they write that "Our aim in naming this varied genealogy is to rupture the distance between artists, activists, and academics by recognizing that we owe our evolution in thinking to the knowledge generated from these multiple communities" (Annama, Conner, & Ferrari, p. 3). This study incorporates DisCrit theory and pulls from the literature to acknowledge and understand the critical interlocking realities of racism and ableism.

Historically, disability has also been constructed, positioned, and reinforced in very damaging ways. Christy Oslund (2015)'s book discusses constructions of disability, and outlines how popular narratives stigmatize disability via reality television, popular culture, biblical stories and other religious texts, freak show, etc. This stigmatization led to the notion that disability is a sign of moral defect, which upholds the biomedical model, and characterization of disability. As such much cultural representation reflected the notion that disabled people were deviant, immoral, and less intelligent. This led to "the historical social belief that disability could be a sign of moral defect, a view which was reinforced by discourses going back hundreds of years" (p. 29) which reflected this belief and bias of disability as undesirable, or even deviant. These constructions and ideologies are keys to understanding historical treatment as the ideologies underpinning these laws were eventually enforced, legislated, and institutionalized and continue to be in our current society.

For many years, those who were designated as disabled were segregated, and essentially confined to “medical and private spheres” (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 37), as was discussed briefly in the introduction. This legal, state-initiated systemic, large-scale marginalization had and continues to have intensive impacts on disabled lives, as well as the lives of other minoritized groups, and impacted how disability itself is understood, and treated for many years to come. These impacts are long term, intergenerational, and cannot be understated in terms of importance to our current context. Further, the ideologies are interlocked and inseparable from settler colonialism, and Imperialism, which also rely on these kinds of ideological constructions as tools to dehumanize and colonize Indigenous nations and peoples world-wide. As a white settler, this analysis, and historical awareness is particularly important, as I do not want to the perpetuation of this kind of ideology which often shows up in research.

Continuously, governments and state institutions have had an enormous role in deciding and delineating what is considered ‘normal’. The question, and construction of what is ‘normal’ comes up in disability, queer, and crip studies regularly. If normalcy fails to be achieved, then the “fault” lies within flawed individuals, making them a burden within families, educational institutions, and society at large (Connor & Gabel, 2013, pp. 100-1), resulting in separate spaces that also reinforce these notions on what is “normal”. The result of this separation is then “the creation and perpetuation of a vicious circle of social disadvantage whereby these individuals have systematically experienced discriminatory and paternalistic forms of provision” (Liasidou, 2014, p. 121). This cycle of disadvantage was then legislated, normalized, and reinforced, after which social and cultural norms reflected them as truth, and to some degree, still does. The seeping of these cultural norms, assumptions, and beliefs into policy, law, and institutional structures is key in understanding current experiences of institutional norms, and another reason for which policy analysis is of paramount important in understanding these cycles of disadvantage and discrimination.

In terms of legislation, a good example of this is in the so-called ugly laws that Oslund (2015) describes. These laws were the “beginning of legalizing the removal of those with physical differences from public sites and thus from public view” (p. 32), and part of it becoming more socially acceptable to keep disabled bodies away from the general population. This led to escalated state-violence against disabled people that took the form of involuntary legislated mass institutionalization. Turcotte (2018), Dolmage (2019), Sherry (2004) and other scholars put forth detailed, specific documentation of this governmental and institutional violence against disabled folks. They each outline how via settler colonial, capitalist, and ableist ideologies, disabled people and other minoritized groups were constructed as abnormal to justify dehumanizing state-sanctioned eugenic practices, such as the Forced Sterilization Act (p.184) in Alberta in the 1970’s, (which also impacted many Indigenous women in particular) and other harmful treatment. Though seldom acknowledged or publicized, Canada specifically has a documented legacy of institutionalizing, segregating, and perpetrating systemic violence against disabled peoples (Demas, 1993; Garland-Thomson, 2011; Sherry, 2014; Turcotte, 2018; Young, 1990). This history caused deep, long-term harm to many communities, and continues to impact people ongoingly today.

In large part, rationalization for this wide-spread institutionalization is associated with the Eugenics movement in North America, one of the specific ideologies that influenced historical processes, and institutionalization outlined above. The roots of eugenic thought are largely attributed to Sir Francis Galton, cousin to Charles Darwin. Eugenics is attributed to his “1883 publication, Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development” wherein Galton proposed that nature did not equally endow people with similar potentials. Galton insisted throughout his life that “some human characteristics were desirable, and others were not”, which was a so-called scientific way of explaining an arbitrary hierarchy of desirability (Oslund, 2015). The eugenics movement which became popular in many western countries, and which influenced much of public and cultural thought from the late 1800’s up until post World War II. Eugenics is a set of beliefs around reproduction that promotes valuing particular kinds of bodies, and characteristics over others. Turcotte (2018) explains how, conveniently, to those in power, “Vagrancy, poverty, Indigeneity, and physical and psychological disabilities could now be explained away as consequences of inferior biological traits” (p. 183), and this could be used to justify in dehumanizing, devaluing, and belittling these traits, among others, across society.

Though popular thought now recognizes these practices as morally incomprehensible, and repugnant, eugenic philosophies were extremely popular as an ideology, and worked to both attribute disability to specific groups, such as Indigenous women, immigrants, people living in poverty or experiencing homelessness, and to construct disability as not only undesirable but absolutely abhorrent. “Recognizing hate around disability is an important dynamic in comprehending the eugenic policies that were instituted in various countries to kill large numbers of disabled people, most famously in Nazi Germany, which attempted to destroy humans not deemed “desirable”, including the disabled” (Oslund, 2015, p. 31). In the US, eugenics advocates convinced 30 state legislatures to pass involuntary sterilization laws that targeted "defective strains" within the general population, such as the blind, deaf, epileptic, feebleminded, and paupers” (Stoskepf, 2013). This dynamic also manifested through sterilization programs in Canada, the UK and the Scandinavian democracies, which largely specifically impacted Indigenous women, particularly in Western provinces, as well as disabled people in institutions across Canada. Turcotte (2018) writes that “this particular construction of disability as evil and the sterilization programs that sought to prevent the recurrence of disability were an attempt to exterminate a particular social group from the Canadian population” (p. 186). Further, conveniently, the category of what was considered under this lens could shift to encapsulate many groups living at the margins, such as Indigenous Women, who faced other discriminatory legislation barriers, such as the Indian Act, amongst others. Both Indigenous peoples, and disabled people are targeted by these ideologically driven state attempts to destroy them entirely and eliminate them from colonial Canada.

Demas (1993) and Turcotte (2018) connect the specific shared experiences of Indigenous and disabled people during this time. Both scholars link the impacts that eugenics policies and associated ideologies had on these groups, which “help us understand the ways in which disability has historically been constructed as a threat to social order, and as a biological source for social problems”, similarly to how race, class, and Indigeneity have been treated (Turcotte, p. 181). Both scholars link settler colonialism, white supremacy, capitalism, and ableism in sharing values, aims, and methods. Dolmage (2017) write of eugenics that it “is tightly connected to scientific racism and sexism, compulsory heterosexuality, the control of reproductive rights, the creation a bifurcated workforce, even a global capitalist system" (p. 21). This link to capitalism is important, as later I will discuss neoliberalism and higher education, and how capitalist thought might layer into these conversations of disability, especially around constructs of productivity.

The leveraging of eugenic theory was certainly used as false justification for harm caused to many other groups as well, under the guise and rhetoric of morality. The Eugenics movement in the U.S. and Canada relied on attributing disability to anyone deemed different, or undesirable, and the Eugenics period impacted many racialized groups in Canada, and beyond. As an example, we can look to queer folks, and their historical treatment in Canada, such as in "the early positioning of homosexuality as a form of psychiatric disability. Not only did the medical model represent homosexuality as sexual deviance and a psychiatric or mental disability, but many homophile organizations did also as well" (Sherry, 2004, p. 780). Sherry names that disability was central to homophobic discourse at this time, and does continue to inform this discourse in different ways today, as queer folks as often positioned as unwell, crazy, deviant, etc. Ableism impacts many groups, since underpins eugenics, and eugenics is used to leverage against many minoritized groups. In fact, many of the multiple marginalization listed in the introduction are a result of eugenicist ideologies that works to separate queer, mentally ill, Black, poor, and other marginalized groups from the population, using ableism and the category of disability as a construction with which to do so, and then enacting policy, legislation, and programs such as forced sterilizations to particularly target these groups at a state level. Eugenics explicitly linked racialized, poor, disabled, and other groups, and used ableism to justify their ongoing harm, which is why uncovering the experiences of all these groups is so powerful in terms of understanding the harms of how ableism was used to leverage this harm, which I argue continues today in more subtle forms, and why further research on how ableism impacts marginalized groups, and those with multiple marginalizations is so important.

Analyzing the historical violence, and ideological, normative assumptions that shape the ways in which dominant society views disability can help us follow ongoing issues of stigmatization and constructs of disability given these documented histories of institutional harm. "Not only did eugenics actually reshape the North American population through things like immigration restriction, not only did it reshape families through its campaigns for ‘better breeding,’ […] but it reshaped how North Americans thought about bodies and minds” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 12). This point on how North American’s thinking about disability cannot be overstated, as understandings of disability have been constructed, informed, and continually reinforced by these ideologies, and their associated devaluing. The devaluing of disability, and the assumption of disability as being bad, and something fearful, has seeped into hearts, minds, and of course, then reflected into cultural stories, structures, and eventually also legislation. Turcotte (2018) writes that because of eugenics policy and rhetoric “everyday Canadian’s began to fear disability and persons living with physical disabilities, and those determined through testing to be ‘feeble minded’” (p. 185). Resultingly, disabled people were, and still are “often perceived as solitary individuals whose presence is somehow disruptive to the ‘natural’ speed, space, and time elements that impact the rhythm of life’s daily activities, and this invisibility is naturalized and normalized” (Hansen, 2018, p. 40). This perception lives on, and continues to dominate much of western thought, representation, media, and apparent general understanding around disabled people. This is as big of a barrier for many disabled folks as tangible barriers, because representation, or misrepresentation is such a powerful force in our world.

Turcotte (2018) writes that, “such an embedded and resilient construction of disability required a substantive intellectual and medical infrastructure to legitimize and sustain it throughout the eugenics period” (p. 187). The naturalization of exclusion extended to cultural and institutional spaces, including of course, education, and we see this in the K-12, as well as higher education systems. Eugenicists “actively worked for legislation that would limit immigration from southern and eastern Europe, sterilize those judged as socially inferior, and segregate the feeble-minded”, and had influence and impact on school policy and curriculum (Selden, 2000, p. 3), which also continues to have impact on current school policy. Alan Stoskepf (2013) agrees, and argues that high-stakes and standardized testing, such as IQ tests, have their roots in eugenic thoughts, and that the eugenics legacy “hangs over current demands for increased testing” (p. 1), and refers to this period as “one of the most damaging experiments in public education” (p.2). He describes how eugenic policies seeped into educational reforms in the 1920’s and 30’s to have deep, long term impacts on curriculum, testing, teaching, training etc., and eugenics-based ideals on “intellectual worth of students penetrated “deeply into the fabric of American education” (Seldon, 2000, p. 2). These tools and strategies, such as IQ tests, were then used to create a tiered system, with "gifted" or "special" tracks that can lead to segregation, racism, ableism, and other forms of non-equity and normalized discrimination in schools.

Annamma, Conner & Ferri (2013) outline how ableist notions, such as "special education" streams have been created, and work to separate and segregate black and brown students in educational systems, and on how school, programs, and policies leverage ableist ideas and ideologies about (p. 2) to racialize black and brown students using the ableist, and eugenics-based ideologies above. In other words, "dis/ability status justifies segregation and unequal treatment for students of color compared to their white counterparts" p. 7). These K-12 streams are important to include, as they feed into higher education, and so the hierarchies and stratifications that are formed at the K-12 level certainly then influence access in terms of higher education.

Additionally, eugenics had a two-way influential relationship and impact on higher education. "North American academics systematically developed the means to segregate society based upon arbitrary ideas of ability—the university was the place for the most able, the mental institution or asylum or school for the "feeble-minded" the space for the "least" (Dolmage, 2017, p. 15). Dolmage notes that eugenics was in many ways "the perfect ideological vehicle for the settler colonialism of higher education" (p. 14). Academia became the place where "North Americans could most efficiently destroy what and who came before European settlement. Eugenics—the idea that certain bodies were biologically inferior—was rhetorical fuel for this very efficient destruction" (Dolmage, p. 14). This was part of the ideological basis for the Canadian Residential School system, which existed for over 100 years in Canada, and had extremely detrimental impacts on Indigenous individuals, families, communities, and nations. The human rights abuses at these schools were atrocious, the death rates of children extremely high, and large-scale physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse occurred, which in many cases caused intergenerational traumas that contemporary Indigenous peoples still experience, and must content with (Milloy, 1999). This is crucial to include to emphasize the damage these ideologies cause when implemented.

Eugenics was a "powerful rhetoric as well as a series of practices. […] the teaching of actual classes on eugenics, especially at larger land grant institutions, was widespread at North American schools, providing an "opportunity historical structure" for eugenics to become a widespread and transnational social movement" (Dolmage, 2017, p. 11). Academia, and higher education itself is one of the institutional arenas wherein much of this entire process took place, as well as being an active agent that caused it. Dolmage 2017 argues that "academia was the place from which eugenic "science" gained its funding and legitimization" (p. 15). The relationship between higher education and this ideology needs to be examined to realize the ongoing harm this two-way relationship caused over time. Turcotte (2018) agrees that "the participation of academics and universities in the dehumanization of persons living with disabilities, and the implementation of sterilization should provide cause for concern. For too long the academic community has been a vessel from which to perpetuate problematic understandings of diversity and disability" (p. 193), and perhaps continues to do so in more subtle, refined ways. Scholars implicate academia, and higher education in the processes of institutionalizing the colonial, eugenic, and imperialist thought in specific, ongoing ways, and this history, though not well known or understood, is extremely important, and the impact on both K-12 policies, and higher education has yet to be confronted. Scholars suggest that eugenic thought lives on in policy, culture, and practice (Turcotte (2018), Seldon (2000), Dolmage (2019)). Universities, and higher education, were responsible for ongoing violence, harm, and overtly ableist policies of many decades, and I believe should have a role in acknowledging, correcting, and repairing harm caused. Though eugenics are no longer acceptable, "social views also continue to be influenced by the ideas that disability is an individual problem, located within people, and can be controlled by controlling the reproduction capacity of disabled bodies" (Oslund, 2015, p. 35). Eugenics ideologies live on in popular assumptions, representation, and institutional norms, and are steeped into many parts of modern life. For instance, with the Covid-19 pandemic, we see how almost immediately eugenicist conversations and debates pop up about who might deserve access to care, or even vaccination, and oftentimes disabled, and elderly people are those deemed less of a priority, even though we are the most vulnerable subsections of society to the virus. These conversations in public forums, government rhetoric, and media continue to dominate conversations around public health. Further to this, eugenics policies resulted in large scale institutionalization, exclusion, and violence, the ongoing impacts of these policies, philosophies, and the ways in which they have been embedded into institutions and their practices is little understood, which is why this study takes a policy approach.

Policy, injustices that are built into our institutions indicate how the historical forces that have shaped our cultural and social ideologies, especially in education, which was so imbedded with the perpetuations of these beliefs. Eugenics, and negative constructions of disabilities have been created, upheld by, and supported in higher education, and this study is interested in unpacking how policy may still be impacted, and formed with eugenic-based assumptions. Ableism and other forms of oppression have “gone underground, dwelling in everyday habits and cultural meanings of which people are for the most part, unaware” (Young, 1990, p. 124). Eugenics-based practices are not easy to spot, however their impacts are. For instance, the ongoing exclusion of people with developmental disabilities, the underrepresentation of Indigenous, Black, and disabled students in Canadian institutions of higher education indicate there are still problems that likely trace back to the infusing of these harmful ideologies, which are at least in part responsible for justifying racist policy. Institutions, and their discourses, are therefore important to examine, and “all stakeholders in higher education can utilize rhetorical tools both to better understand academia and to change it” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 8). The ideologies in question no longer fit the current theory and critical though regarding disability or race and are not upheld by lived experiences of these communities. However, the constructed notions of disability, which has been supported, reinforced, and institutionalized over such a span of time is a challenge to uncover, trouble, and disrupt as it is so deeply embedded in policy, practice, and culture.

2.1.2. Accommodations and its Problems

As discussed, disabled people have been forced to “live at the margins of multiple normative structures” (Samuels, 2017, p. 17), and this includes institutions of higher education which often have pervasive cultures of hyper-ableism (Brown & Leigh, 2018) wherein ableism is normalized, and disabled bodies continue to be perceived as undesirable or abnormal (Mullins & Preyde, 2013). Many universities use an “accommodations” model to address the “issue” of disability. This model usually consists of students registering with their institution, documenting, or proving their disability, and being offered from a list of services available. However, many scholars problematize this model, and I agree that it is an inappropriate model to use given the evolution of disability thought. Dolmage (2017) links eugenics practices and thought to accommodations policies, and advocates for a more nuanced understanding of disability to inform how we look to policy making in our education institutions. Many scholars problematize the ways current disability services operate, though little research has been done on how these services particularly impact different groups within higher education, and the specific barriers each encounter.

There is tension between the lived experience of students and institutional ideologies, the performativity of inclusion or tolerance and their impacts, and how particular students cope with institutional cultures, policies, and norms, including stigma, disclosures, and identity building. This tension informs this study, as the discrepancy between policy and discourse could indicate a degree of performativity of values. Individually based accommodations are also criticized by many scholars as a problematic model. For example, Carter, Catania, Schmitt, and Swenson (2017) write that “accommodations on an individual basis do not sufficiently destabilize structural ableism or reduce inequality” (p. 111). As ableism is a social force that impacts people systemically, and on an institutional scale, individual based interventions clearly are not adequate in addressing it. Jung (2011) problematizes the biomedical model and advocates for a social model of disability to inform disability services in higher education. As mentioned, the biomedical model of disability is at the heart of ideologies and narratives that dehumanize and harm disabled people. We need to expand our access to institutions to include modernized, more accurate ideologies, which must include teacher education and training in addition to policy and curriculum changes.

Hibbs and Pothier (2006) agree that “the theoretical framework of disability under which [post-secondary institutions] operate significantly impacts how policies and practices advance the goal of equitable access” (p. 198). Overall, the existing research frames “accommodations”, and other biomedical based approaches are unhelpful in addressing the realities of disabled students’ needs. Going further that this, research suggests that current models of accommodation services paradoxically lead to further barriers and constraints, which impact students with invisible disabilities in particular ways. Since the accommodation model approached disability as an individual issue or problem, rather than a social or cultural part of life, it does nothing to build systematic access. Rather it focuses on minor access for a few individuals, which does not address the larger issues that are at play.

Another issue is that disability is such a spectrum, and people may experience barriers very differently, as specific disabilities and positionalities are marginalized in inconsistent ways. Carter et al (2017) highlight the experiences of disabled, chronically ill, and neurodivergent graduate students as a particular subordinated group, and write that “the convergence of white capitalist academic institutions and the discourse of able-body minds as good, productive, disciplined, and capable promote the exclusion and erasure of graduate students with disabilities in academia” (p. 96). For students with multiple disabilities, things can be even more complex in terms of both disclosures and getting access needs met. Freedman (2017) draws attention to the particular difficulties experienced by students with intellectual disabilities, as another example of a particularly marginalized group. Freedman writes that these students “may not be sure who to approach, what the process will be like, or what their accommodation needs will even be” (p. 301). Stigma towards intellectual disabilities in hyper-intellectual environments can add to student discomfort. In fact, stigma impacts different kinds of disabilities differently, and so it can be hard to understand how disabled people may be experiencing stigma on campus. Their perceptions of stigma may be different that existing stigma, though I assume from the surprisingly high percentages of students who choose to not disclose, that this stigma is significant across disabled identities.

Moira Carroll-Miranda (2017) additionally interrogates disclosure as the means by which disabled students and faculty are expected to access services and frames it as problematic given that disclosure has risks, stigmatization, and involves ongoing labour and advocacy on behalf of the person with the disability. She frames disclosure as not a single act, but an ongoing series of conversation, describing disability as dynamic and not fixed, and presenting in ways and times that do not always meet the demands or criteria of institutional bureaucracy, explaining that it is not best practice for access. As a queer person who constantly navigates coming-out as an ongoing, complex process of disclosure mixed with education, there are many parallels to my experiences of disclosing illness. In both situations, it requires vulnerability, and often a degree of preparedness to educate whoever you are disclosing too. It takes a lot of effort to have these personal conversations about our identities and puts a lot onto students. Aubrecht, K., & Monica, N. L. (2017) additionally suggest that “the ‘emotional labour’ associated with disclosure conversations (microaggressions, invasive questions etc.), places unnecessary burden on disabled students.

Further, Carroll-Miranda (2012) writes that "The institutional practices of requesting services through disclosure engage in further acts of discrimination" (p. 281), as "students in study believe disclosure will protect them from discrimination…however, after engaging in several acts of complying through the institutional requisite of disclosure, they learned that it is a daunting process that does not render the befits they thought it would" (p. 285). The lengthy, time consuming, and sometimes expensive processes that students must go through do not always provide the options, supports, and resources a student might require, and aside from legislative action, there is little recourse available to students if they wish to continue to attend the institution, or finish their program of study. Disclosing does not always lead to supports, and students may be disappointed to have gone through the lengthy, sometimes costly process of getting the documentation required, only to find that the university does not even offer what they need. Further, they have to continue to document throughout their program, and continue to "prove" their disability exists each individual term, in most cases. Institutional disclosure a "tiring struggle that in the end did not accomplish what the institute of higher educations claimed to offer. It became an endless cycle that perpetuated a sensation of needing to comply in order to participate" (Carroll-Miranda, 2017, p. 287).

The issue of disclosure also specifically impacts the experiences of students with invisible illnesses who navigate which spaces to pass in, or in which to be "out" about their disability in, and how they may be perceived if they do not "look disabled enough", for instance. People with invisible disabilities face difficulties such as internalized ableism, policing, invisibility, pressure to educate others (Kattari, et al. 2018, p. 201), organizational barriers that block participation (Mullens & Preyde, 2013), and simultaneous isolation from disabled community. Freedman et al (2017) agree that students may be keenly aware of the negative judgements made within schools about individuals who are perceived as having limited intelligence and therefore, too often presumed academically incompetent, and this particularly impacts those with developmental or mental disabilities. The perception as accommodations as the service that takes away the barriers is also dangerous, as it takes away any community care or responsibility across faculty, staff, and student peers to offer supports, care, or assistance in navigating access.

Further, passing is a complex issue. Negotiating accommodations and navigating institutional barriers can be time and energy-consuming, and barriers are complex, and “sometimes, the work of it all-not just the disclosing, but then working to obtain what you need-is a job unto itself” (Carter, 2017, p. 103). When I looked at what the process for registering for the SFU centre for accessibility would be, I found it to be extremely intimidating. There was an email full of instructions, paperwork to be filled out, several appointments that I would have to make, and it would have likely taken hours to complete. Disabled individuals whose impairments may not be visible are therefore likely to hide, minimize, or pass as non-disabled to meet environmental norms and expectations. For instance, I had a job for several years in which I was too nervous to disclose my chronic illness, for fear it would jeopardize my job, as I need, and use more sick time than other employees might, and I’ve heard of people being de-valued after disclosing medical conditions. I would hide my symptoms, check my sugars in the bathroom, and conceal my medical equipment. Passing is a process of “accommodating oneself to one’s environment, while asking and expecting little or no effort of the environment to accommodate the disability” rather than expecting your environment to be welcoming to you (Samuels, 2017, p. 16). The decision “to “hide” a disability may be a rational choice in the face of social stigma” (Freedman, 2017, p. 295), and I can attest to this as a reasonable thing for disabled people to do, especially in certain environments, where ableism is codified, and ever-present. This logic applies to students of diverse impairments, such as madness, chronic health issues, neurodivergence, etc. who might experience particularly enhanced stigma in campus life, and in general. Passing also takes a toll though, as it can be exhausting to censor oneself, omit information, and keep secrets from people you engage with every day. It can also be dangerous to not inform people of what steps they may need to take if a medical emergency arises, for instance. Further, one always feels the pressure to work twice as hard so as to keep up with the expectation made for a non-ill or non-disabled person, for instance. Rebecca Sanchez (2017) writes to disclosure, identity politics, means of rendering populations “legible” (p. 212) to society and institutions, and how disability is positioned as secret and shameful. This shame is reinforced by lack of easy access to accommodations, and so further perpetuates lack of access or supports. I personally did not choose to disclose my health or disability status to my campus accommodation centred for many of these combined reasons, and so have not received any accommodations. I have found it easier to manage on my own than try to make it through the complicated paperwork, multiple appointments, and intrusive conversations that appears to involve, based on my initial inquiries. I’m sure many students make similar concessions, and function without needed supports, because the barriers to accessing them are just too insurmountable.

Beyond this, the scholarship also indicates that institutional culture is often antithetical to disability. Whether students choose to access services, or make efforts at passing, stigma, and prejudice still exists against disability. “For graduate students and faculty alike, it remains a highly risky endeavor to reveal any form of mental or cognitive difference of vulnerability: our minds, our justifications for being here, must run like steely machinery, always reliable, always stable” (Samuels, 2017, p. 19). Alshammaraia (2017) agrees that “disability holds negative connotations and is associated with lack, failure, and loss. Socially, it is often interpreted as unfeminine, and chaotic, even subhuman” (p. 48), and that “though many academics might protest and deny this, academia relies heavily on presenting an intellectual, coherent, and productive identity that emerges as distinctive and distinguished” (p. 31). This stigma still exists, and the perception of disability may also be creating unconscious biases yet to be explored or researched. I know even from basic, small conversations with peers, members of the public, etc. that many people still have very limited understandings of disability. I often find myself having to educate people and rely on my experiences and my body as a teaching tool for people who are just ignorant to the realities of disabled life.

This happens both as a person with a chronic illness, and around mental health conversations regarding post-traumatic stress disorder that I experience. There are many ableist micro-aggressions that take place, and lots of them have eugenicist based, or neo-liberal/capitalist ideologies at their roots. Carter et al (2017) unpacks complex politics of disclosure, invisibility, and how “academia often ‘automatically precludes’ disability in cultures where intellectual productivity is so valued”, which connects back to the question of what is valued in neoliberal institutions which have become more and more productivity based. Higher education environments affect staff, students, and faculty; disabled faculty are also in positions of marginalization, and encounter ableist norms that block participation, since they often do not have access to the same centres of supports that students do (Brown & Leigh, 2018). It is unsurprising that within these cultures, disabled people with invisible impairments often choose to pass as non-disabled. People with invisible disabilities have valid reasons for remaining illegible to problematic institutional processes of disclosure, such as to avoid bureaucracy and stigma, and therefore, their experiences remain invisible (Sanchez, 2017). The issues of ableism impact people across campus life, not just students with disabilities.

Another point which informs this conversation is around that of neoliberalism, and how it has evolved to create further barriers. Dolmage (2017) writes that “The economics of accommodation might tell us that universities get the outcomes they pay for” (p. 22). He writes that accessibility offices, and student supports in Canada and the US are extremely underfunded, the ratios of staff-to-students in accommodations is low, and overworked, and above capacity. He writes of implicit restraints that minimize supports and points out that “This underfunding also tells the rest of the university that disability doesn’t matter” (p. 22). Certainly, it indicates where priorities lie – if the policies really intended to uphold universal design learning, make welcome environments, or support disabled students, they would assumably offer resources with which to do so. Dolmage 2017 continues: “Unsurprisingly, but also depressingly, higher education is a neoliberal business like any other. Maybe this is because governments have been cutting funding to schools, maybe it is because the managerial class within universities knows no other way”. Despite being publicly funded institutions, neoliberalism is clearly upheld within the three policy documents in the study over humanizing disabled students. Benjamin Ostiguy (2018) agrees: “Under the dominant neoliberal regime, virtually everything and everyone is valued in proportion with their perceived economic utility”. Ostiguy further argues for the inherent value of disability in higher education: “The richness and diversity of life has intrinsic value” (p. 242), and that recognizing and valuing disabled identities, challenges and perspectives can “cultivate an awareness of intersectional oppressions which benefits the entire university ecosystem”. This is more resonant of a disability justice or liberation lens such that Berne, Morales, Langstaff, and Sins Invalid (2018), and Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) put forward regarding the inherent value of disabled life.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2011) write that racism “adapts to and coopts efforts to challenge it” (p. 118), as do many institutional systems informed by racist underpinnings. I argue that ableism has similarly adapted to efforts to challenge it. This is exemplified in the ongoing refusal of institutions to acknowledge, uncover, or be accountable to their own histories of upholding eugenics, excluding disabled people, and perpetuating false ideas about disability. Ableism has adapted over time through these ideologies, and the discourses do not challenge or disrupt the existing structure, which are embedded in policy. Couette and Taylor (2007) write on the ignorance of how historical events are linked to current barriers, and how systemic discrimination invisible is difficult to document; they also describe victim blaming, wherein power is embedded and difficult to see (James, 2010, p. 30) from the outside, resulting in widespread “acts of silencing violence” in favour of assuming trauma and violence are individual matters, not public or structural (Cote Meek, 2014, p. 30). The source of the problem seen as the individual rather than the social forces at play in their historical contexts. The intuitional bottom line still frames disability through a lens of a deficit model of disability thought. As Dolmage (2017) writes, “ableism drifts. Therefore, so must accommodations” (p. 10). Given that understandings about the ability spectrum have changed so much over the past century, the ways in which we address this issue in schooling ought to adapt, and catch up to meet these ideas, and current ideologies. This study looks to policies with all this in mind, as I suspect some of the ideological basis for contemporary policy is likely to house these issues. The next section examines alternative models explored in the scholarship that disrupt, challenge, and crip the accommodations model, and looks at how other models of disability thought might help us shape more effective policies and practices that disrupt the status quo.

2.1.3. Cripping Accommodations

Disability is in the margins, as are accommodation, which Hansen (2018) describes as “often on the fringe of the social mainstream” (p. 40). Normative assumptions are that the disability centers exist to support these students and include them on campus. However, as discussed, many critical disability theorists argue against using the biomedical model of disability in accommodation services. So “rather than focus on ‘fixing’ people with disabilities, disability rights activists and feminist disability studies scholars’ direct attention to the disabling effects of a normalizing society” (Jung, 2011, p. 266), and look to what forces may be at play that impact individuals, rather than locating the individual as the problem. Sanchez (2017) agrees that “inaccessibly built and social environments are disabling and need to be adapted so as to maximize the number of people who can move through them safely and comfortably” (pp. 221-222), locating the social and physical environment as barriers or gatekeepers to the individual. And yet, most institutions, including those in this study, rely on the medical model for accessibility services, policies, and practices which focus on individual needs rather than shifting institutional culture, widespread ableist assumptions, or implementing more radical inclusion strategies. I want to explicitly connect the bio-medical model as having the same values and messaging as do eugenicist ideologies of disability. Both position disability as an individual problem, a deficit, and morally unfit, or less human.

Many scholars posit critical disability studies and crip theories to challenge these problematic understandings of disability. “The field rejects the perception of disability as a functional impairment that limits a person’s activities. Instead, disability is a construct that finds its meaning within a social and cultural context” (Opini, 2016, p. 67). Further, disability studies do active work to undo, and dismantle the eugenics-based ideas that make up our education systems. One tactic that can address this is in creating disability study departments. Stephen Taylor (2011) cites disability studies as a vibrant, important area of scholarship and argues that higher educational institutions should incorporate (critical) disability studies programs to their offerings. He writes that these programs can “can complement offices of disability services and help to make campus culture more inclusive and accepting of students with disabilities” (p. 95), while challenging campus cultures that stigmatize or marginalize disability. There are now models that can work to replace bio-medical-based ones.

For instance, Universal Learning Design (Carter, 2017) works from a social model of disability to inform policy, and is a strategy recommended by many scholars for approaching education inclusion (Liasidou, 2014). Rather than being based in a eugenics or bio-medical model, UDL sees disability as embedded into, and part of life, and therefore design should incorporate immediate access. It has potential for replacing current inadequate individualized accommodation strategies with the goals of greater equity, inclusion, and justice for disabled students, and adjusting institutional culture norms. It takes a more comprehensive, systems look at the issues that impact humans and bodies on campus, not just individuals with particular, specific barriers. Dolmage (2017) writes of universal design that “If we were to look at some of the foundational principles of UD and apply them beyond the physical sphere, we could begin to understand how deep accessibility and transformative access would work in a classroom” (p. 119). He cautions that universal design in terms of structure, or physical design alone is inadequate. We also need praxis, cultures, and implementation supports and. measures. However, Universal Design may show transformative potential as a model when the underpinning philosophies are expanded upon, and the basic tenant that spaces broadly can be built with all bodies in mind is a departure from the idea that disabled folks are somehow disrupting to spaces.

As discussed, accessibility goes far beyond just building ramps, or having physically accessible spaces; we also need to consider how to include a wide variety of diverse body-minds into campus and classroom spaces. We know ableism reaches beyond the physical plane; we need to look to critical classroom and pedagogical strategies of inclusion and access too. Conner (2013) agree that the active acceptance, teaching of disability and its history is important to progressing beyond biomedical models towards a more expansive and holistic understanding" (112). Spaces, classrooms, and entire institutional cultures are implicated in these changes for them to be effective for inclusion, as our pedagogies, teaching tools, curriculums, and instruction need to evolve and shift. Connor and Gabel also "assert the relevance of social justice to reframing disability. Instead of deficit-based conceptualizations of what has come to be known as "disability," we believe cognitive, physical, emotional, and sensory differences among humans can be understood as natural human variation" (p. 101). Taking a social justice-based approach to disability is another useful tool that came up in the literature as a forward-thinking area. More research is needed to explore how this framework might impact disability in educational spaces to come, however, and how it compares with disability justice.

Though not implemented as current practice, Wendy Harbour (2019) speaks to tangible strategies to build what she calls "radical inclusion" into our higher education institutions. She suggests the invisibilitization of disability on campuses, and lack of representation are ways in which ableism shows up in higher education, which is why I address markers of radical inclusion in my findings section. Harbour's research through the National Centre for Disabilities (2017) suggests cripping tactics such as faculty and staff training programs, disability orientations, multiple centres of disability expertise on campus, streamlining funding for disability accommodation and supports, and including disabled voices in planning. In short, she argues that disability is part of campus life, and should be upheld, valued, and honoured in all areas of campus life, not accommodated. A similar report of recommendations exists in a Canadian context (NEADS Report, 2018), and these recommendations offer clear tangible examples of ways to improve disability campus culture, and also the daily lives of disabled individuals in campus environments. However, there are few examples of institutions that I'm aware of practicing these techniques in Canada.

Cripping is about troubling, disrupting, and uncovering notions of what disability is, and to trouble that which relies upon social constructions of disability, rather than disabled experiences or needs. "This perspective necessitates the removal of disabling barriers by means of problematizing and modifying existing organisational attitudes, processes and practices that exclude certain individuals from mainstream cultures and communities" (Liasidou, 2014, p. 122). This study looks at the policies to see what barriers might be deeply embedded into existing frameworks to challenge and disrupt these barriers, and the ideas which inform them.

This works seeks to "shift the boundaries between private and public domains, making personal troubles into policy issues, drawing attention to inclusion/exclusion, interrogating conventional models and practices, attacking oppression, and advancing citizenship (Prince, 2016, p. 7). Cripping is transformational. There are many reasons to uphold, strengthen, and resource disability infused projects, services, and supports on campus, and scholarship argues the transformative, diversifying, and knowledge mobilizing potentiality of these practices. Given the harmful and violent actions of educational institutions in upholding ableism, spreading, and teaching eugenics policies and practices, and underfunding disability services and supports, these institutions have great responsibility to be accountable to, make reparations with disabled communities. Through reframing, and relearning how we think, write, talk about, and navigate disability is complex, campuses have a key role to play in re-imagining what radical inclusion could look like, and a responsibility to adapt to ideologies as they change and evolve. Cripping, and critically re-imagining institutional practices, spaces, and policies requires delving into the historical, current, and future ways in which these spaces are governed, funded, and regulated.

2.2. Disability and Multiple Marginalization in Higher Education

Education research shows that students with diverse identity intersections, including disability, experience magnified forms of stigmatization and exclusion from institutional contexts (Evans, 2017; Taylor, 2011; Opini, 2016). However, limited research exists on their specific embodied experiences. Indigenous, racialized, and queer identities are examples of this, particularly when students may experience multiple forms of marginalization. The purpose of this discussion is not to compare or hierarchize histories of particular groups, but rather to understand that oppression is linked across identities, and though groups experience differences in how they are treated, the processes are distinctive but also often similar, and linked to similar ideological processes. This is important because in looking at ableism, for instance, some of the patterns of power can also be leveraged to better understand similarly constructed hierarchies, such as racism and heteronormativity. Since these hierarchies of power work together in structures that support each other, looking at these power dynamics help us understand the complex, embedded nature of power in oppressive dynamics.

This thesis is also interested in packing the impact of oppression on those who may not be directly impacted. Crucial questions to consider include: How does ableism also impact non-disabled students, and campus culture at large? How does a lack of disabled representation, visibility, and access impact the entire community, not just the individual disabled student or staff member? Since oppression is structural, how can we look at the ways it impacts the entire structure of the institution, not just individual experiences within? For instance, we can look at overlaps and intersections in queer identities as related to disability. Mark Sherry (2017) links their associated academic disciplines and writes that “Both Disability Studies and Queer Theory problematize the public and the private, the social and the biological, difference, stigma and deviance, and the construction of identities” (p. 769). Sherry goes on to outline shared and divergent experiences and argues for attention to be paid to this intersection, as queer and disability theories can inform each other, drawing attention to the ways in which queer and disabled people have resisted and unsettled dominant normativity. Sherry suggests it is “necessary to examine the ways in which disability has been evoked in the construction of queerness and queerness has been evoked in the construction of disability” (p. 770). This interests me as a researcher, because it makes me wonder how queer people, and other groups may also have been specifically impacted because of the rhetoric and policy surrounded disabled people. Further, what strategies of resistance have other groups used to trouble and respond? The specific construction of disability that will be unpacked in the study has impacted communities and groups beyond just disabled people. This is important, as ableism has by-products that may yet to be noted, examined, or disrupted.

The impact of ableism on Indigenous folks is paramount as well. Doreen Demas (1993) outlines some of the specific ways in which disabled Indigenous women in Canada are particularly marginalized, segregated, and overlooked as citizens. This group is disproportionally impacted by disability: “It is estimated that in some Native communities, more than 40% of the population lives with a disability of some kind” (Demas, 1993, p. 339). Demas points to ongoing jurisdictional unclarity around Indigenous governance and services, forced segregation to reserve land, ongoing femicide against Indigenous women (particularly relevant in light of the 2019 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls’ inquiry report), and describes overlapping, intersectional oppressions shared between Indigenous women and disabled people in Canada such as forced sterilizations, experiences of violence, segregation, and barriers to services and rights. Colonialism, capitalism, and ableism are linked in complex, ongoing ways, and Indigenous women are significantly underrepresented in higher education (Demas, 1993). Little research has been done on how particular identity enmeshments experience ableism; however, this study acknowledges how certain ideologies have impacted multiply marginalized communities alike, including specifically Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit folk across Canada. This is important to include, because Indigenous women, and folks of other marginalized gender identities in Canada have been particularly targeted in many ways, including by the ableist and eugenicist philosophies, ideologies, and their associated practices discussed in the next section. The struggles of disabled people, and Indigenous women, girls, and non-binary/Two-Spirit peoples in Canada share many of the impacts of institutionalized ableism, and it would be amiss to not to unpack these similarities in experience, and treatment.

We see this marginalization at work too in how racialized students are underrepresented in higher education. Again, the overlaps in experience of marginalization, and ableism in particular, is key to look at in trying to unpack and challenge ableism at the institutional level. There are overlapping barriers with race and disability in educational contexts; Wendy Harbour (2017) writes that “Since the abolition of slavery, there has been a long history of racism, segregation, and over-representation of African Americans in special education systems predominantly run by white, non-disabled educator” (p. 150). She points to the whitewashing of academia, noting that

“Disability scholars and African American studies scholars share histories that intersect at many points. Exploitation by entertainment venues, exoticization, eugenics movement victimization, struggle with access to public education, police violence against both groups etc.” (p. 152). Disabled and racialized bodies share having been actively excluded from academic life. This active, shared exclusion, and the ongoing, long-term impacts of systemic, exclusion, are area that interest me in understanding both how power works to exclude, and what shared experienced amongst excluded groups might teach us about reclaiming spaces, resisting exclusion, and how crip theory might also support other marginalized communities in resisting and combatting exclusion. Further, since higher education is often seen as a pathway to address poverty, these access barriers have direct impact on communities that experience complex forces of oppression (Demas, 1993). We know little about the ongoing effects of these multiple overlapping impacts, and how they are experienced, and we need to examine, disrupt, and interrupt these connected forces to remove the existent barriers. It may be easier to look at the impact of oppressive forces that to see them directly, and so impacts, outcomes, and this data is very informative.

Within the described communities, it is important to understand that people experience violence exclusively because of their identities, not their decisions, choices, or actions. Structural oppression means that being located within certain identity marker intersections means being specifically targeted. We see this in the lived experiences of racialized trans-women, which demonstrate the overtly violent reactions people have to this very interlocking identity itself. For example, Lori Saffin (2011) writes that “the interconnection of racism, classism, and transphobia” cannot be ignored, and that “transgender peoples do not occupy one homogenous category of identity, but instead occupy multiple subjectivities across race, class, nationality, and ability [...], and transgender women were disproportionately targeted for hate motivated violence, representing roughly 65% of reported violence” (Saffin, p. 162). This violence is structural, and systemic. The violence that transwomen of colour in particular experience is not random, but an outcome of many interlocking structures that indicate a much more complicated layering of how “the interlocking systems of oppression can be mapped” (Saffin, 2011). This analysis and comparison help us to better understand how ableism might work. The identity of disability itself is structurally impacted, and so locating the burden of unpacking ableism on the individual, rather than addressing systemic impact of unpacking how ableism works. Ableism can continue to thrive when disability is seen as an individual issue or problem.

As such, this study examines disability, and these complex, interwoven systems of power to come “together to engage the complicated spaces where disabilities interact with other social constructions, and where discursive productions and historical material conditions are understood to be interwoven, interconnected, and enmeshed—and impossible to analyze singularly” (Loutzenheiser and Erevelles, 2019, p. 377). To understand barriers that disabled people face in accessing higher education, these shared histories are crucial to acknowledge, witness, and analyze. The long term, ongoing impacts of multiple forms of oppression and exclusion on groups cannot be understood without looking at these systems as collective movements that disable folks from access to institutional power, wealth, or justice.

We know that “racism and ableism often work in ways that are unspoken, yet racism validates and reinforces ableism, and ableism validates and reinforces racism” (Annamma, Conner & Ferri, 2013, 4). DisCrit, Critical disability studies, and the disability justice model of disability mean acknowledging, incorporating, and embedding these analyses into research. This study acknowledges the shared experiences of many marginalized individuals and groups that stem from ableism, and the ideological roots of ableism that our institutions, policies, and cultures have been steeped in for many decades. It also acknowledges that many oppressive histories and forces cannot be analyzed singularly, as they are bound up in ways that are not always obvious or clear.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This thesis is a critical discourse analysis of disability accommodation policies at BC's three largest public postsecondary institutions. This section begins with contextualizing issues of disability as they pertain to education to situate and ground the work into critical disability studies. Following this, I overview my research questions, data collection and analysis, and the trustworthiness of the study.

Danica Hayes and Anneliese Singh (2012) write that "qualitative research can serve as a political tool" (p. 25) and advise that "we should only engage in research that provides insights to practical and meaningful real-world problems" (p. 202). Practical and meaningful outcomes can inform and direct change, and this project therefore seeks to be practicable and politically applicable. Hayes and Singh (2012) also write that "qualitative researchers must recognize that their approaches of inquiry fall along a continuum of the degree to which the role of action is valued in research" (p. 23), and that "researchers hold immense potential for societal change because this knowledge is more easily transferable, accessible, and accountable to the needs of everyday people and communities" (p. 25). I embrace this role, and a qualitative approach, and intend this project to be action centred. I approached the research from an anti-oppressive framework that looks to political and transformative change, and movement towards innovative and radically inclusive ideas (Harbour 2019).

Mirka Koro-Ljungberg also (2015) argues that methodologies are political, and that they can "not be divorced from the values, beliefs, backgrounds, bodies, and effects of the researcher or the researcher context" (p. 79). The methodologies used therefore vital and require careful consideration. Potts and Brown (2015) write that "the ethics of anti-oppressive research reflect a commitment to and respect for people and relationships, as well as a commitment to action and social justice" (p. 27). They write that "we need the research process itself to be consistent with socially just and anti-oppressive values (p. 25), meaning that there is "political purpose and action to our research work […] that involves making explicit the political practices involved in creating knowledge" (p. 17). Looking at policy, and issues of institutional power is inherently political, and my methodologies are chosen as such.

Ibram Kendi, a prominent anti-racism scholar, argues that policy is what causes racism, not ignorance and hate (O'Neal, 2017). Policies such as the Indian Act that are created to justify colonization, and as tools of cultural decimation have led to hatred and ignorance. As Kendi describes, racism often shows up as a function to justify policies. As with racism, these issues each pertain to ableism as well, and policy work, and the ideologies that inform policy, and the discourses and logics that uphold policies, are central to understanding, and confronting ableism in its many pervasive forms: “The problem is not the person of colour and/or the personal with dis/ability but the ways normalcy and whiteness are constructed to generate certain groups of students as problems” (Davis, 2013, p. 373). This is again, upheld by institutional policy, and as described in the literature review, “If policy is used as an attempt to find solutions to social problems resulting from disabled people living in challenging conditions, the medical model does not produce desired solutions” (Connor, & Gabel, 2013, p. 109). We need to move beyond the medical model as a framework, and philosophical underpinning for policy and access regarding disability and higher education. Therefore, policy is a good approach for this study.

In being mindful of Rebecca Cox’s (2012) direction for “a careful nuanced investigation of the problem itself” (p.132), I specifically chose Carol Bacchi’s (2012) model as a framework for my data analysis. Bacchi’s model is a political analysis tool, which includes a framework of six questions, which I ask of my data, particularly my first research question. Although Bacchi not explicitly linked to discrit literature, it is nevertheless useful because it helps us ask what the problem is being presented as, which can help support deep inquiry in how we are thinking about issues, and with what ideologies we utilize in the process. So much in critical disability studies is about challenging notions of normativity, and assumptions we made based on these notions. Further, Bacchi’s model uses critical policy analysis, which works well with looking at institutional policy work. I believe this model was a useful framework for the policy analysis goals in this study. This was important to me as a researcher, as looking to who, and what the problem is assumed to be is a helpful analytic for unpacking critical disability theory, and institutional policy documents. In looking at disability policy, I was interested in where the problem is located, what model of disability is used in institutional discourse, and what impacts this might have on actual disabled identities in higher education. As outlined in the methodology section, policy analysis and work are key in advancing changes in intuitional cultures.

Disability has largely been erased from public view and thought. With an absence thereof, it is much easier for dominant, often inaccurate rhetoric to override lived experiences or encounters with actual disabled people, which risks dehumanizing people. These dominant, and sometimes de-humanizing understandings of disability, and public representation matter momentously. "When disability is perceived primarily through the lens of personal tragedy and the disabled understood as subjects to whom the most ethical response is pity, public policies and laws designed to enable the disabled are positioned as acts of charity rather than the responsibility of governments, universities, and communities" (Sanchez, 2017, p. 222). Shifting the conversation from a frame of pity to one of justice involves disabled people being understood as humans with legitimate rights by both the state, its institutions, and by individuals. So, rhetoric, discourse, and positioning of disability are key in disability rights across history, and ongoingly: "Challenging deeply rooted discourses of normality is a critical step toward dismantling negative attitudes and elitist approaches that assign inferior and marginal subject positions to disabled individuals" (Liasidour, 2014, p. 73). Stories and representation are of massive import, and humanizing disabled folks is crucial in the work of confronting and challenging ableism, and exclusion.

Therefore, discourse is an essential vantage point from and works well in conjunction with Bacchi's analysis tool. Discourse and rhetoric have major impacts on how disability is understood and treated, which is why critical discourse analysis is also an important part of how I approach my second research question. Critical discourse analysis is a methodological framework often used "to explore how power is constructed and reproduced in society" (Hoppstadius, 2020, p. 93). Fairclough (2013) writes that "CDA brings the critical tradition in social analysis into language studies and contributes to critical social analysis a particular focus on discourse, and on relations between discourse and other social elements (power, ideologies, institutions, social identities etc.) (p. 178). Critical discourse analysis is a critical strategy to analyze power, rhetoric, discourses, and "the interface between the local and the global and between the structures of discourse and the structures of society" (Hoppstadius, 2020 92). This approach works well in conjunction with Carol Bacchi (2012) given that both seek to uncover the “problem”, its’ representation, and how individuals and intuitions engage using critical questions.

Critical discourse analysis is interested in the location of power, much like Bacchi. It’s starting point is “what various groups of people take to be problems, though these cannot be taken at face value: critique asks what the problems really are regarding some issue, through evaluation of the various problematizations of it that currently exist, and explanations of why that issue is problematized in the ways that it is by various groups of people “(Fairclough, 2013, p. 185). Both approaches are concerned with power, the location of the problem, and rethinking how we might approach problems from a different vantage point. Both are interested in problematizing the problem, (ie. Problematizing disability as a problem) and as such, lend exceptionally well to critical disability studies. Further, discourse and rhetoric recognize that words, language, and “meaning-making systems shape beliefs, values, institutions, and even bodies—sometimes negatively, sometimes positively, often powerfully”, and that these systems and beliefs deeply connect with, and shape power (Dolmage, 2017, p. 7). This power, housed in public institutions, works to include, and exclude certain people, and in turns, shape ideologies and policy, as they are in relation with one another. Dolmage (2017) also writes that rhetoric is it “not only useful for studying disability, but it is also necessary, indispensable” (p. 8). As such, this study looked to how disability is problematized in institutions, or represented as a problem, and how these institutional policies exercise power in addressing it; processes of inequality must be examined through institutional frameworks in which power is exercised (Fairclough, 1992) using tools that specifically look at these issues.

3.1. Data Collection

This research critically assembled, synthesized, and analyzed relevant to a policy analysis contributing to research in this field. I completed a thorough, systematic policy scan to survey existing accommodation policies, and examined them in conjunction with institutional discourses around inclusion and accommodation, bearing in mind the historical and political contexts as outlines in the literature. Data collection took place from June until August 2020. During this period, I gathered relevant public policies and data from the three identified institutions: Simon Fraser University (34,000+ students), University of Victoria (21,000+ students), and the University of British Columbia (60,000+ students).

The University of British Columbia (UBC) and Simon Fraser University (SFU) are multi-campus universities with their main campuses located in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, whereas the University of Victoria (UVIC) is located on Vancouver Island, and has only one main campus. I chose to examine data from the largest three in British Columbia because each of these institutions is publicly funded, have accommodation policies, and presumably are interacting with the largest numbers of students with disabilities given their larger enrollment sizes. Each of their policies are publicly available on their respective websites.

3.1.1. Policies Included in Study

1. University of British Columbia (2019): Policy #73 "Accommodation for Students with Disabilities (Joint Senate and Board Policy)" , and Policy 73 FAQ. (10 pages)
2. Simon Fraser University (2003). Policy GP26 "Accessibility for Students with Disabilities Policy". (2-3 pages).
3. University of Victoria: Policy (2017): AC1205"Accommodations and Access for Students with Disabilities". (36 pages).

I also looked at each institution's strategic planning documents (see **Appendix**) to better situate the critical discourse analysis with what the institutions were professing as their intentions around disability, inclusion, and equity.

3.2. Data Analysis

Step 1: I first searched for, identified, and downloaded each of the policies directly from the searchable websites of the institutions. I scanned each of their respective websites to see if themes from the literature review, such as access, inclusion, accommodation problems, cripping, barriers, or radical inclusion came up, or were noted visibly/immediately.

Step 2: I did a close initial reading of each of the accommodations policies to orient myself to their content and length. This entailed approaching each document with curiosity and trying to limit any preconceived notions or biases that I might have.

Step 3: I re-read each of the policies with a more critical eye and used a colour coding system to highlight patterns and key emergent themes, or connections to issues that had come up in the literature review that other scholars identified. This resulted in the following theme or code words emerging as patterns: legislation, responsibility of student, responsibility of institution, resources or supports available, mention of inclusion, diversity, accommodation, and/or universal design, and finally, outliers.

Step 4: I re-read each of the policies several times to note these themes and emergent issues, and highlighted sections to help me see patterns, and any clear outliers or interesting pieces of data.

Step 5: Bacchi's (2012) model asks six questions to determine what the problem is represented to be, as these questions can help uncover the problem, and its representation. I closely re-read the policies with through the questions outlined in her framework to approach my first research question.

Step 6: I pulled the three respective strategic planning documents (see Appendixes) directly from the searchable websites of the institutions. I scanned each of their websites to see if these themes came up or were noted visibly/immediately. I read each closely, keeping in mind my themes, but also scanning for divergences in data. I particularly looked at available strategic plans from each to see if issue pertaining to students with disabilities, accommodation, or inclusion are mentioned or discussed therein, and compared them with the online information on each of their Centres for accommodations in my data analysis.

Step 7: Because the data all came from public sources that are available online, I spent time on each of the institutions' websites to note what rhetoric and discourses they use around welcoming, attracting, serving, and/or *accommodating* disabled students, if any. I particularly looked for themes indicated in the literature review on *accommodations*, *inclusion*, *disability*, and *diversity*.

Step 8: I reread each of the policies to check my notes, and re-view the data before data analysis. As I did my data analysis work, I also often referred to specific section of policy for clarification, or to capture particular pieces of data in my analysis notes. I also re-examined the strategic planning documents several times to ensure I had correctly noted key pieces and themes.

Step 9: Following this procedure, and as my final step in analysis, I used critical discourse analysis (CDA) strategies to identify and synthesize the dominant inclusion and accommodation discourses embedded in each of the policies with particular attention to my second research question.

3.3. Trustworthiness

My role in this study was to investigate the policies, discourses, and institutional rhetoric, and use theory, literature, and scholarly insight to better understand and examine these policies. As the sole researcher on this project, I am aware of the potentiality for bias, and confirmation bias. As a chronically ill, queer, disabled researcher attending one of the institutions in this study, there is also potential benefit in that I provide an insider perspective that assists the analysis and assessments of these policies, and their impacts. I am aware of this potential bias and will take care to be reflexive in this work. I am also aware that my experiences are not the same as many others, and as a white settler, I receive many privileges and benefits that other disabled people may not, including racialized, Indigenous, or non-gender conforming people who may also be disabled. Potts and Brown (2015) write that “anti-oppressive researchers are constantly negotiating their position along a continuum of insider/outsider relations” and that “in practice, negotiating and positioning ourselves as researchers is seldom as simple as declaring which position, we hold” (p. 22). They write that “power lurks in all of our reflections and decisions. Just figuring out who gets the privilege of meaning-making is laden with issues of power” (p. 30). As a researcher with disabled experience, my positionality is important.

However, I am also limited in my insider status. I am white, cisgender, and have many privileges and supports that others from historically marginalized communities may not. I also can read, speak, write, hear, and am mobile, which narrows the scope of my insider access. I do not sign, read lips, and am not immersed in deaf culture for instance in a way that offers me any credibility in that community. I have a very privileged experience of disability in many ways because of my status in society as a white, educated, working individual. I employed several strategies to bring in an outsider perspective. In addition to a careful, and rigorous scan of these policies, I cross referenced with the existing literature to inform themes look for, and where gaps or issues may exist.

Chapter 4. Findings

Below are my findings, organized by research question, and broken into five findings per question, followed by outlier data.

4.1. Research Question 1

What inclusion and accommodation policies are currently in place for students with disabilities at the three largest public institutions of higher education British Columbia?

Research Question 1: Summary of Findings

My review showed that at least in terms of policy language, a paradigm shift, and transformative action is called for to address the barriers still inherent. Though policy is not the only marker to address in terms of this kind of transformative action or shift, it is a good place to start investigating how language is being used. Certainly, practices, cultures, and full campus scans would be interested data to get a more complete picture of these issues. However, policy language is a great starting point to look at how things are legislated at each institution and provides a good baseline for future studies.

My data as analyzed through Bacchi's questions show that though each of the policies does meet the minimum legislated requirements, all three institutions have a long way to go to reduce ableism, and transform themselves into the supportive, welcoming, and inclusive campuses they describe. These institutions could do more to support, include, and humanize disabled students, and need to provide meaningful policy changes if they wish to move beyond an antiquated biomedical understanding and perceptions of disability. As Liasidou (2014) writes, this would require "an informed understanding of the intersectional nature of disability experience and the ways in which accessibility in higher education is primarily a social justice and human rights issue that calls for transformative structural and ideological action" (p. 131). None of the institutions in this study appear to embody these understandings, structures, or actions in their policy languages. If institutions wish to reduce barriers for disabled students, and to provide legitimate supports, transformative thinking, and a paradigm shift around the very nature of disability, is necessary. If "we understand disability as a socially created barrier … responsibility and accountability shifts to the larger community” (Devlin, 2006, p. 12) rather than the individual student.

4.1.1. Carol Bacchi’s Framework

As outlined in my methodologies section, I chose Carol Bacchi’s (2012) model of policy analysis to do critical work on this question. Carol Bacchi came up with what is often referred to as the WPR approach (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016), which asks how a problem is represented to make visible the politics. This tool “offers seven interrelated forms of questioning and analysis to critically scrutinize problematizations (the ways in which “problems” are produced and represented) in governmental policies and practices, understood in broad terms” (p. 13). It is used by many policy analysts to uncover, disrupt, and re-problematize policy issues in a wide variety of subjects. It is fitting in this case as a tool to disrupt, re-problematize, and reframe a problem as frameworks of thought regarding disability have transformed.

The questions Bacchi poses in the model are as follows:

1. What’s the ‘problem’ (for example, of ‘problem gamblers’, ‘drug use/abuse’, ‘gender inequality’, ‘domestic violence’, ‘global warming’, ‘sexual harassment’, etc.) represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?
3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?
6. How/where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?

-from Beasley, C., & Bletsas, A. (2012).
Engaging with Carol Bacchi. Strategic Interventions and Exchanges.

For the below table, Bacchi's questions are in the left-hand column, and institutional policy language is including in their respective column. The quotes in each column are pulled directly from the associated policy listed at the top of the columns.

Bacchi's adapted framework	**SFU, 2003**	**UVIC, 2017**	**UBC, 2019**
How is disability represented in the policy/policy proposal?	This policy open with "The University must provide reasonable accommodation" and immediately follow it with "up to the point of undue hardship" (para 1). This presents the problem as the necessity of having to provide reasonable accommodation…up to a point, anyways. Though the problem is framed as such, the language itself implies the disabled students are a problem for the university.	The policy "aims to make the University as accessible as possible so that students with disabilities can participate in the activities of the University as equal members of the university community" (para 1). However, language such as "the university has a legal duty to accommodation students' needs to the point of undue hardship (para 2.1), and "the diagnosis of a disability does not guarantee accommodations" (para 5.2) is in contrast.	Like UVIC, this document represents the policy as intending to "to create an accessible learning environment that enables all Students to meet the essential requirements of UBC's courses, programs and activities (p. 1). However, the policy demands documentation, and writes that "Failure to comply with the above responsibilities may result in delays in providing the Accommodation or the appropriate Accommodation not being provided" (para 4.2), and despite stated intent, puts the burden to comply on individuals.
What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of disability?	Student needs extra or special, individualized supports and accommodations that are different than the "norm", at the institution. Further, student is assumed to be aware of their disability, have it documented, and to understand and be able to advocate for the supports they need in order to participate as a non-disabled student would I.e., Students seeking academic accommodation for a disability must bring the request to the attention of the Centre for Accessible Learning in a timely manner, normally with one semester's notice, and must provide appropriate documentation of their disability (para 5).	Policy commits to "reducing prejudice towards disabled people" and acknowledges that "Many barriers to full participation reside in the environment" (p. 5). and yet does not seem to dismantle or challenge those barriers. It takes an individual approach based on individual accommodations. I.e., Students with disabilities seeking academic accommodation are expected to contact the CAL to initiate the process of determining and arranging the appropriate academic accommodation in individual situations (para 3.2)	The policy still assumed that the burden of responsibility falls on the student to meet the requirements of the University, rather than the University to meet the needs of the disabled student. The policy impact relies on a biomedical model approach to disability, despite the intentions to acknowledge a social model of disability in the language used. I.e., section on "undue hardship" (UBC, 2019, p. 6) on the University, which is up to the institution to decide in terms of what it is a fair access request

Bacchi's adapted framework	**SFU, 2003**	**UVIC, 2017**	**UBC, 2019**
How has this representation of disability come about as?	Statements such as that accommodations "may be provided (Para. 3)", only with "documented need", imply the bare minimum will be done, but not that the University is interested in making their programs more equitable for disabled students.	Despite suggesting Universal Design, and Social models of disability are important, there are still statements such as "A diagnosis of Disability along does not guarantee accommodations" (p. 9) and that instructors can decide that making materials available create "undue hardship" (p. 12) on themselves etc.	Language such as "Failure to comply with the above responsibilities may result in delays in providing the Accommodation or the appropriate Accommodation not being provided" (p. 4). Like the other two policies, emphasis is still placed on the student being responsible for advocating, documenting, financially supporting, and disclosing/complying.
Can disability be thought of differently/reimagined differently?	There is silence in the policy around any movement towards celebrating, welcoming, or even wanting disabled students. Aside from the brief acknowledgement that disabled students "May experience attitudinal and/or environmental barriers that hamper their full and self-directed participation in life" (para 2), there is little language to indicate that the institution care or is willing to adapt or act to help remove them.	Many of the assumptions on what is reasonable to ask of the student are unquestioned, though what is reasonable to ask of the institution is critiqued. I.e., "Students with disabilities seeking academic accommodation are expected to contact the CAL to initiate the process of determining and arranging the appropriate academic accommodation in individual situations" (p. 6)	As with the other two, the problem could be thought of as "what can the university do to accommodate disabled students" rather than "what does a student have to do and prove in order to get their bare minimum legally required rights"? Despite being willing to accept partial responsibility with the tasks of accommodating, the actuality of the policy does not meet its own stated intentions or principals by which it claims to be written.

Bacchi's adapted framework	**SFU, 2003**	**UVIC, 2017**	**UBC, 2019**
What effects are produced by this representation of disability?	It is a stated agreed policy between the institution (who is represented by the centre for accommodations) and the disabled student, who is presumed to represent themselves, and to have agreed to the stated terms of the agreement in order to "participate". However, little agency is available to the student who must agree to this strict framing of the problem and disclose a disability. I.e. Students seeking academic accommodation for a disability must bring the request to the attention of the Centre for Accessible Learning in a timely manner, normally with one semester's notice, and must provide appropriate documentation of their disability (para 4.2).	The effect of this policy is conflicting, wherein they are saying their intention is one thing, but then acting in a way fully in contract to their own stated goals. For example, they are saying that "There is a variety of learning assistance services available at the CAL"; however, the reality is that there is "a fee associated with these services" (p. 22), and many of the services listed are just outsourced referrals to other organizations, and not guaranteed.	Much like the UVIC policy, the effect, or impact of the document is that is claims itself to be one thing but does another. Though it uses more progressive language, and theory in the framing, the impact of the policy itself fails to meet this framing. It treats disabled individual students as a problem, while also "recognizing" (p. 1) Universal Design Principles. It recognizes but does not implement, effectively also disabling students from opting in.
How has this representation of disability been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been questioned, disrupted, and replaced?	The language of "affirming rights" does not equate supporting, or actively promoting or enabling those rights. Further no mention beyond basic rights is made; what about dignity, equity, diversity etc.? Very little attention is paid to thinking about disability as anything except burdensome, which lends this policy to a bio-medical framing of disability. I.e. "Questions of interpretation or application of this policy shall be referred to the President, whose decision shall be final" (para 6).	There is a section that offers "guidance" to instructors on how to implement accessible course. However, no recommendation that instructors use this guidance. This represents the disabled students as outside the norm, or even outside of the scope of faculties jobs; they MAY want to think about this thing, but accessibility does not seem to be built in structurally in any way to the university. I.e., "It is recommended that instructors include a statement in their Course Outline" (para 13)	There could be much more emphasis on available services and supports, accountability measures beyond legal requirements, and how disabled students might be more than justified in needing extra supports, given the extra barriers the policy is so quick to again, acknowledge, but then reproduce.

My initial scan showed that each institution has a policy on accommodations, each relying on the accommodations model and framework. Immediate clear distinctions were visible between institutions: the dates, lengths, and availability of policy revisions history was dissimilar. The University of Victoria (UVIC, 2017) and the University of British Columbia (UBC, 2019) have downloadable policy documents which were both updated recently (2017 and 2019, respectively). UBC additionally has a “frequently asked questions” document, which I also looked at in this study. Simon Fraser University (SFU, 2003) has only a webpage outlining their policy however, which is a 6-point, brief page, and has not been updated since September 25, 2003, according to the page. The following is a brief overview of each policy:

Simon Fraser University (SFU)

As mentioned, the SFU policy is much shorter than the other two at only four pages when made into a PDF document. The original date for the policy is listed as September 1995, and revision date as 2003, making it the least recent in this study as well. The policy consists of six numbered points: policy, definitions, procedures, accommodations for students, advisory committee, and interpretations. There is a *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)* section about the policy, but it is not actually linked to on the policy page. I found it by browsing the SFU Centre for Accessible Learning’s webpage. This policy was the least detailed of comprehensive of the policies. It used medical language, and largely was mobilized by the bio-medical model and framework. This policy largely focuses on outlining a barebones framework process, and limitations of accommodations at the institution. Very little focus is on methodology or practices, and little mention is made of much beyond the basics.

University of Victoria

The UVIC policy is a 36-page document. The original date listed is January 2006 and revised as of December 2017. The policy is broken into four major sections: policy purpose, policy statement, responsibilities, and reaching academic accommodation. The policy also includes links to other relevant documents, examples of accommodations available, and closes with listing relevant legislation: The University Act, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and BC Human Rights Code. This policy was more comprehensive, provided some options to students, and was interlaced with language relating to both the bio-medical and social models of disability. This policy focussed more on practices and gave more details for students and staff to work from regarding accommodations. They also focussed more on some of the values around accommodation and inclusion, and on what supports are available to students.

University of British Columbia

The UBC policy is a ten-page policy, accompanied by a Frequently Asked Questions document, which has the stated purpose to “provide information about how the University interprets and implements Policy 73 (Accommodation for Students with Disabilities). These FAQs summarize complex legal and procedural matters, and are merely intended to supplement the Policy, not to replace it” (UBC student services). This was the most comprehensive model in terms of supports for students, and the most in line with current disability frameworks. However, it does still rely on some bio-medical practices and language, in addition to incorporating social modeling language. This policy was largely focussed on the rights of the institution, and their limitations, though the accompanying FAQ document was more comprehensive in terms of addressing student needs, concerns, and questions.

4.1.2. Findings

Finding 1: Bio-medical Model of Disability informs Policies

Firstly, each of the policies rely on a bio-medical based model of disability to inform their policy; their procedures, practices and language were consistent with this model, focussing on individual student barriers. SFU’s (2003) entire policy is a clear example of a bio-medical framing, as the problem is represented continually to be that of the disabled student (See Bacchi table above). Students are immediately placed as a burden to the university that the institution is accommodating only because of legal necessity, nor desire or of its own volition. The policy then goes on to outline the bare minimum it is willing to do to meet this legal requirement, without incorporating meaningful language on disability as anything other than undesirable, and an individual problem. UVIC’s (2017) policy similarly puts the responsibility, and thus burden of access, back on the disabled student, over and over, even though they state their intention that for students with disabilities to be included “as equal members of the

University Community” (p. 1). This intention is not matched with meaningful language on how this looks, what commitments they make, or how they measure or mark this.

UBC’s (2019) policy is paradoxical in that the policy represents the problem to be both the University’s failure to accommodate, while simultaneously implying the failure of the disabled individual. The policy states that “UBC recognizes the benefits of the application of Universal Instructional Design principles to the built and learning environments at UBC. These principles are a comprehensive approach to classroom interaction and evaluation and include flexibility of delivery systems and evaluation methods” (p. 1), however, their actual policy does not in fact uphold those principles if examined closely. The policy still assumed that the burden of responsibility falls on the student to meet the requirements of the University, rather than the University to meet the needs of the disabled student. Again, the policy impact relies on a biomedical model approach to disability that located the problem as in the disabled institution, despite the intentions to acknowledge a social model of disability in the language used, and of “taking a holistic and intersectional point of view” (p. 5). This principle is not enacted in the document however, as we can see by looking through the Bacchi table above. Further, despite suggesting that Universal Design, and Social models of disability are important, and that they want to do whatever they can to include these students, there are still statements such as “A diagnosis of Disability along does not guarantee accommodations” (UBC, 2019, p. 9), and that instructors can decide that making materials available create “undue hardship” (UBC, 2019, p. 12) on themselves and the University throughout the document, leaving it very much within a biomedical understanding, and framing of the problem. Though the policies do acknowledge the legal huma rights obligations to students, this acknowledgement is limited, and is framed as obligatory.

In fact, all three policies, upon close read, primarily frame the disabled individual as the problem, and place much burden of responsibility on them as individuals, rather than addressing structural, institutional, or social barriers to participation. Hibbs and Pothier (2016) also analyzed UVIC’s (2017) policy and found that the language implies “disabled students are expected to conform as much as possible to what is considered “normal” by the universities’ standards” (p. 204). They also write to the absence of recognition of structural barriers, or systemic issue, and that “particularly in the reactive environment of the university, where the responsibility for the amelioration of difference lies with the disabled student. And, even in those post-secondary institutions that have adopted a social/political definition of disability, the onus remains with the student to bring a human right (or similar complaint) should he or she experience barriers to access" (Hibbs and Pothier, 205). This framing, or positioning the student, or disabled individual as the problem is seen across each of the policies, as Bacchi's (2012) analysis highlights.

There are silences in all three policies around celebrating, welcoming, or desiring disabled students as part of the university community. This is important to look at, as representation, visibility, and disabled community on campus can be an important part of helping students feel not alone, valued, and part of the campus or institution life and culture. Aside from brief acknowledgement that disabled students "May experience attitudinal and/or environmental barriers that hamper their full and self-directed participation in life", (SFU, 2003, para. 2) there is little language to indicate that the institutions care or are willing to adapt or act to help remove these barriers; rather the document seems intent on building more barriers. Little is made of what other recourse students might have if they are not interested in coming up against these barriers, and the stated, narrow processes available for accessing services. If the problem were in fact, making the campus and institution more accessible, it seems reasonable to assume the policy might approach dismantling barriers, instead of creating more of them for students to face. Part of that would mean allocating resources, so that the burden of seeking support was not on the individual student. For instance, if the University needs documentation, why does the student need to pay, given that they have already paid the same tuition as non-disabled peers? It effectively creates a sort of "disability tax", which further limits resources and access. The again highlights the neoliberal ideologies in our current educational context. Also, why could a student not just explain their situation and ask for what they need, given that disabled folks often have a much better idea about what their daily lives and needs are like than a doctor that they might see every six months or every year. Many of the assumptions on what is reasonable to ask of the student are unquestioned, though what is reasonable to ask of the institution is critiqued.

If we use Bacchi's (2012) tool, and ask her questions, the problem could be thought of as what the university can do to accommodate disabled students rather than on what a student must do or prove to get their bare minimum legally required rights. Despite being willing to accept partial responsibility with the tasks of accommodating, the actuality of the policies do not meet its own stated intentions or principals. The UVIC (2017) policy is a good example of this. The effect of this policy is somewhat of a conflicting experience wherein they are saying their intention is one thing, but then acting in a way fully in contract to their own stated goals. For example, they are saying that "There is a variety of learning assistance services available at the CAL"; however, the reality is that there is "a fee associated with these services" (UVIC, 2017 p. 22), and many of the services listed are just outsourced referrals to other organizations, and not guaranteed. Further, presumably the student must again, do the work of intake forms, making appointments, and spending their personal time on self-advocacy for basic services they may require. The financial, emotional, labour burden is directly firmly onto the disabled individual, rather than the well-resourced educational institution. It is effectively a disabling policy, and this could be said of each of the policies in this study.

Similarly, much like the UVIC (2017) policy, the effect, or impact of the UBC (2019) policy document is that is claims itself to be one thing but does another. Though it uses more progressive language, and theory in the framing, the impact of the policy itself fails to meet this framing. It treats disabled individual students as a problem to be fixed??, while also apparently "recognizing" (UBC, p. 1) Universal Design Principles. It claims to recognize, but does not implement these principles, effectively also disabling students from opting in. SFU (2003) in contrast, is effectively entirely a bio-medical framing. Its policy language of "affirming rights" (SFU, para.1) does not equate supporting, or actively promoting or enabling those rights. Further no mention beyond basic rights is made; what about dignity, equity, diversity etc.? Very little attention is paid to thinking about disability as anything except burdensome, which lends this policy to a bio-medical framing of disability. The biomedical assumptions the policy made are never questioned throughout the document. As a disabled student reading the documents, they do not give the sense that in fact, disabled students are welcome, or desired. The policy language creates the effect that disability is perceived as burdensome, undesirable, and something that must be tolerated, but only because it is the law.

Finding 2: Forced Disclosure for Access

Each of the three policies rely on the accommodations model and did require individual disclosure, as well as ongoing documentation of need. Each explicitly state disclosure and documentation as a prerequisite to any accommodation. As consistently revealed in the literature, there are clear problems with this model, as it places a great responsibility and burden on the disabled individual to meet the requirements of the institution to access services and supports, they require to participate.

Another issue to note in the policies is that not only must the student disclose and document with the centre, they also must disclose and negotiate with professors and instructors in most cases this involved repeated disclosures, “to all of one’s instructors of other university officials who have a role in the accommodation’s process”, all of which can manifest in scrutiny, discrimination, surveillance etc. (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006). The scrutiny and discrimination, whether perceived or real, is a direct consequence or requiring students to disclose personal health information to people in positions of power in their lives, and often several times. This can lead to challenging situations for students who may find themselves in difficult or complex conversations about their personal medical situations with professors, instructors, and staff, putting them at even further disadvantage in comparison with their non-disabled peers.

For instance, the SFU (2003) document becomes in effect, a stated agreed policy between the institution (who is represented by the Centre for Accommodations) and the disabled student, who is presumed to represent themselves, and to have agreed to the stated terms of the agreement to participate. However, little agency is afforded to the student who either must agree to this strict framing of the problem, and disclose a disability, which then creates more barriers; “Students requiring accommodation of a disability must register with the Centre for Students with Disabilities” (SFU, 2003, para 4.1). The word “fair” in the opening lines of the policy are rendered paradoxical given no policy statements are made to uphold that claim throughout the document. All the accommodations are based on the institution terms. This policy effectively discourages students from access rather than encouraging it.

Further, the expected negotiations rely on “the capacities and strengths of the individuals involved and takes place only if the student initiates the process” (SFU, 2003, para. 4), which assumes that “both parties are starting from a place of equal strength and capacity. This is not to say that disabled students do not have the capacity to act on their own behalf; it is the assumption that they are in equal bargaining position, and that is problematic” (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006, p. 212). This power issue resonates at all levels of the institutions. Both the accommodations centre, an institutional organization and instructors have direct authoritative power over students and expecting a disabled student to negotiate their rights is problematic. Additionally, the language we see in the policies “casts them in the role of adversaries of their instructors and the university” (Hibbs & Pothier, p. 215). Much of the language and processes outlined are on how professors might choose to decide the student needs are too much (i.e., Undue hardship), and outlining what the professor is not responsible for, rather than what the instructor or university is responsible, again squarely assuring the student is the responsible agent in the relationship, and if the student needs are not met, it is the fault of the student, who is the “problem” in the situation. Several scholars also point to the issue of students being perceived as “not disabled enough” to be granted access (Kattari et al, 2018, p. 477), which comes from ableism being firmly rooted and embedded into normative or dominant thinking about disability. If a student has an invisible illness for instance, it might not be immediately clear to people that they are in medical distress. However, it should not be up to individual professors to decide how sick a person might look, for instance.

Ableism is alive and well in each of these policies, as the accommodation model is inherently reliant on ableist ideologies that were explored in the literature review. The accommodations model relies upon a framework of disability, and it is difficult to move beyond that framework, when legislated into institutional practice. Moira Carroll Miranda (2017) writes that “The institutional policies become an instrument to further determine who qualifies to be protected under the established legal terms” (p. 281). She writes that students need to present evidence and that institutions “do not respond to particular needs” (p. 281) because institutions have “determined a priori the needs of students living with a disability and how to address them” regardless of how they “describe needs to the institution’s representative” (p. 282). The accommodations model appears to be essentially a legally required base-minimum list of supports that students need to disclose to access and does not actually carefully assess and secure students’ access needs, and we see this in each of the policies. Nor do the policies address the broader, campus-wide, or systemic barriers that disabled students may encounter, though they half-heartedly acknowledge those barriers in the UBC and UVIC documents.

As Price, Salzer, O'Shea, and Kerschbaum (2017) write, “Possible accommodations available don’t fit actual needs (p. 318), and further, little “imagination of the possibilities of accommodations for mental disabilities” is explored” (p. 317).

Though a list of accommodations is presented, it is not clear what would be possible for a student whose needs feel outside of that list, or who imagined different supports for themselves. For instance, the UVIC (2017) policy states that “There is a variety of learning assistance services available at the CAL” (p. 22); however, the reality is that there is “a fee associated with these services” (p. 22), and many of the services listed are just outsourced referrals to other organizations, and not guaranteed. Further, presumably the student must again, do the work of intake forms, making appointments, and spending their personal time on self-advocacy for basic services they may require. The financial, emotional, labour burden is directly firmly onto the disabled individual, rather than the well-resourced educational institution.

Disability is also such a subjective experience. My experience of my chronic illness will be very different from someone else, even if our diagnosis is the same, as each body is different, and every human is uniquely placed with our positionality, life experiences, support networks, access to medication, technology, etc. It is difficult to imagine how a list of pre-determined offerings would fit every individuals’ needs. That is not usually something an accommodations centre can provide easily. Over the course of a several year degrees, people with chronic conditions may have ongoing flare-ups, bad pain days, extreme fatigue, or other issues that impact their day-to-day ability to participate in class. It is very difficult to match accommodations with these cases with the current accommodations model set-up. For those with mental disabilities, different issues may come up at different times, and disability may not be presenting in consistent ways that are easy to document, assess, or monitor. The subjective, and inconstant nature of disability makes it hard to fit into the rigid notions of accommodations available.

Finding 3: Accommodating framed as too hard and costly

Each of the policies outlined “undue hardship” as a part of the language to indicate that if the accommodation requested is too hard, costly, or poses risk to the university, they will refuse to offer or honour it. Through my analysis with Bacchi, and in thinking what the problem is framed as, this issue of the problem came to light. This issue of hardship effectively works into the policies that institutions can withhold responsibility, aside from bare minimum legislated requirements, framing it as hardship for the institution to do anything beyond. The language prioritized this hardship without acknowledging the hardship on students, or disabled individual. They also all used the term “reasonable accommodations”, which is up to the institution’s discretion to determine. Though internal recourse options for students are outlined, the ultimate message received as a disabled reader is that the university decides what is appropriate and in their institutional interests, and the disabled student might ask for too much, and if that is the case, the power is with the university to determine it so, and act accordingly.

This a disempowering way to frame access needs; the tone, and messaging in each of the policies were that they don’t really want to accommodate, but must, and will only do so when required, and if they do not like what is being asked of them, they can refuse. The reality is more complex, as students do have the right to make human rights complaints or take routes of recourse external to the University; however, the overt implication that disabled students are not welcome, and that institutions are not keen to make their study paths better and contrasted with much of the discourse. Further, UBC (2019) was the only policy to suggest that recourse externally to the student is available in the form of a Human Rights Complaint. I extrapolate that many disabled students would be unlikely to have the resources to take the necessary steps to become involved in a human rights complaint, given that they are likely navigating their disability in addition to student, work, and personal lives.

Finding 4: Burden forced on Students to Comply

The issue of “essential requirements” was present in each policy: the language implies again, that if the student is unable to meet the requirements of the course, the student fails. It is not seen as a reflection of the accommodation centre to provide the student with what they need, or a failure of the instructor to prepare the student, or a failure of the university to eliminate barriers; the sole fault and responsibility is places directly on the student.

The SFU (2003) policy states “These accommodations should enable the student to demonstrate their knowledge and skill without diluting curriculum or credentials or detracting from the responsibility of the student to achieve individual results consistent with course/program requirements and objectives” (SFU, 2003, para. 2). The policy makes it clear that if the student does not like or accept what they are offered on the terms of the university, they are not really welcome. Further, the very specific ways in which the students are expected to comply do not make it easy on the student. Aside for brief acknowledgement that disabled students “May experience attitudinal and/or environmental barriers that hamper their full and self-directed participation in life” (SFU, 2003, para. 2), there is little language to indicate that the institution is interested in dismantling these barriers; rather the document seems intent on building more by continuing to demand doctors’ notes, proof of disability, the emotional labour of disabled students etc. Little is made of what other recourse students might have if they are not interested in coming up against these barriers, and the stated processes available for accessing services.

There is a section of the UVIC (2017) policy that offers “guidance” (p. 2) to instructors on how to implement accessible course content. However, there is no recommendation that instructors use this guidance, nor formalized training in this are mentioned. This represents the disabled students as outside the norm, or even outside of the scope of faculties jobs; they may want to think about this thing, but accessibility does not seem to be built in structurally in any way to the university. There are little embedded or structural notions of disabled inclusion in any of the policies. Aside from language that implies “shared responsibility” (UVIC, 2017, p.2) of the university community, there is no indication on how this might be achieved, what the responsibilities of the entire community might therefore be, or how the university community might be accountable.

This is consistent with the UBC (2019) policy language as well, which writes that “Once Accommodated, Students are responsible for following Accommodation procedures in order to meet the essential requirements of their course, program or activity” (SFU, 2019, p. 1), which places the burden of responsibility on the student to comply. Further, language such as “failure to comply” leads to consequences (p. 4), that “students are expected to…” (p. 6), the “undue hardship” on the university further burdens students. Further, statements like “UBC is not required to provide or assume the costs of diagnostic services” (UBC, 2019, p. 7) reinforce and defend the problem as the disabled student, not the university for failing to meet the universities requirements, as it frames this as something the individual is responsible for, rather than access a collective responsibility. As with the other policies, there could be much more emphasis on available services and supports, accountability measures to disabled students beyond the legal requirements, and how disabled students might be more than justified in needing extra supports, given the extra barriers the policy is so quick to again, acknowledge, but then reproduce. In asking the question “what could this institution do to be more responsive to, and responsible for disabled students” one could disrupt the representation of this problem by eliminating internal barriers, providing scholarships or financial supports, providing training to staff and faculty, or allowing students more agency and freedom in the accommodations process, for instance.

Another theme that emerged in the policy data across all institutions in the study is that the financial burden is on the student to access the requirements to accommodations, and for many available services. We see this functioning in all three of the policies, despite attempts to deflect this reality through the language the institutions use. As Dolmage (2017) writes,

> while the discourse or discussion about disability was about welcoming and including, the back end was being built to construct disability purely under what might be called a medical and a liability model: define disability medically, treat it in a legalistic, minimalistic manner designed to avoid getting sued. This can force accommodation to happen, but it also tends to force— always and only—the legal minimum accommodation (p. 27).

This was exemplified with all three policies, each of which did what was required of them to meet legislation requirements, but without examining their own roles, or responsibility beyond a legal framework to disabled individuals.

Finding 5: Naturalized processes of active exclusion seen as common sense

The final thing to note that came up in each policy was that in each case, the biomedical framing, the burden of responsibility on students, and the entire process and model of accommodations was framed as common sense, and left entirely unquestioned, aside from several statements of seeming support that were not in fact, backed up in the policy document or language itself. As Bacchi’s (2012) model helps to reveal, the way the problem is framed, and represented, is perhaps a root cause of some of the unwanted implications we see. The assumptions about disabled individuals made in the documents, across the board, were unquestioned. If we look to Carol Bacchi’s questions, these institutions have seemingly built their policies around an unclear, or misdirected understanding of the problem, as what it is represented to be does not meet their own discourse or rhetoric around inclusion. The policies assume the individual is the problem, even though the language understands systemic and structural barriers are at play. Unfortunately, the policies use an individualized and bio-medical based framing of the problem to address the issue, rather addressing, or looking to the structural barriers at play. Then, because these barriers have been normalized, and this approach to disability is seen as common sense, seemingly the meaningful strategies to include student with disabilities are not adequate, or appropriate implemented.

Roxanne Ng's (1993) article describes how injustices are constructed as "common sense", when, simplistic notions often fail to encompass or resonate with lived experiences of violence that populations are vulnerable too and fail to account for the power hierarchies that play out in complex ways. This is relevant, as the idea that the student must meet the university requirements as they set out is posited as common sense, and it never comes up that the university might consider supporting disabled students as beyond their legally required duties, at the risk of "undue hardship" on the institution. The problem with naturalizing practices of exclusions is that they become a "taken for granted reaction and interaction to bodily difference, perpetuating the notion that human beings are excludable from social participation because of their corporeality" (Carroll-Miranda, 2017, p. 288). These bureaucratic policies and protocols become the assumed and normalized processes that an individual should face when seeking access to participation. In other words, they become mechanisms of inclusion that naturalize processes of exclusion while further institutionalizing acts of discrimination (Longmore, 2003, Titchkosky, 2011), which is normalized as unproblematic. So, it is then seen as common sense that the student would have to go through hours of paperwork, see a doctor, pay money, apply through a centre, and put extra work into getting their access needs met so as to participate in the "welcoming environment" alluded to (UBC policy, p. 3). These policies are good examples of institutions, which as the literature points to, are built, and have been upheld on unjust, violence systems of oppression often exiting on stolen Indigenous lands (Kim Tallbear, 2020) and histories of injustices towards specific body minds, and yet the framing, is that these policies are offering adequate services and supports in that they exist and comply with Human Rights Laws, while, they effectively evade responsibility or accountability.

Oppression in this sense is structural rather than the result of people's choices. Its causes are embedded in "unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules" (Iris Marion Young, 1990, p. 41). Paradoxically students "not only face challenges related to limitations inherent in the disability itself but feel further disabled because of the educational system” (Mullins & Preyde, 2013, p. 156), which is “disturbing, and ironic, that a system intended to equalize the playing field can actually create such inequalities and injustices” (Rocco & Collins, 2017, p. 329). However, there is data suggesting many students do not opt-in, and that only a small percentage of Canadian students seeks accommodations. Dolmage (2019) writes that at least 100,000 and probably more like 200,000 Canadian postsecondary students need accommodations but never seek them” (p. 22).

Further, students choosing to pass, or not register for accommodations renders disability as invisible on campuses, which further marginalizes this population of students, and can be associated with internalized ableism: “People with disabilities must navigate structures of privilege, definitions of normalcy, and the internalized superiority of the able-bodied every day. Their development is profoundly shaped by this navigation” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 72). There is little notion of how student with multiple disabilities, or temporary disabilities, or mental health/cognitive disabilities might navigate these documents, and the resources provided. Nor is there much available for student applying to post-secondary to support with applications processes, new student orienting, etc. Thought little qualitative research on disabled student experiences of accommodations processes has been done, that which has indicates that whether students choose to pass or disclose, they face work, challenges, and barriers that non-disabled students do not. These policies, the ways that the information is presented, and their ultimate messaging to already disadvantaged students poses challenges, and frames these challenges as common sense, normalizing ableism, and bio-medical framings as the only way to think about how access might work in higher education. This “further normalizes violence and pathologizes people” while continuing to ignore the wider problems: the “individual becomes the one with the problem [...] viewed as abnormal rather than the systems and people who perpetuate the violence” (Cote Meek, 2014, p. 42). The policies themselves continue to perpetuate and build upon a framing of disability that normalized its pathology, exclusion, and essentialism.

4.2. Research Question 2

What ideologies are embedded in institutional discourses pertaining to these policies?

Research Question 2: Summary of Findings

The focus of this section is to looks at some of the specific ways in which the institutions speak about disability, and how that related to the policy documents, and the findings from the first section. I was interested in if they are synched up, or if there are discrepancies between discourse and the policy language itself.

All three policies were implemented and supported a bio-medical model of disability, which associates disability with deficit, negativity, and something undesirable. They also present this biomedical model as natural, normal, and common sensical. However, at the same time, each of the universities' discourses, rhetoric, and public facing statements on inclusion, diversity, and respect gestured towards principles in contrast with the actualities of the biomedical policies in place. Further institutional work is needed to update and ground the policies in their stated principles to provide any meaningful inclusion or access to disabled students.

I also was interested in what kind of values, ideologies, and what models of disability are at play in the institutional discourse around disability and accommodation. As unpacked in the literature review, eugenics thought, neoliberalism, and colonization, are powerful ideological forces that have shaped much of the institutional policies, public perceptions, and government institutions in the western world, and these ideologies live on today via institutions, including public education. These ideologies actively stigmatize, exclude, dehumanize, and fail to accurately represent marginalized groups such as Indigenous peoples, disabled people, racialized people, poor people, trans, queer and gender diverse folks, women, etc., so they are important pieces of data to look at.

Robin DiAngelo (2012) writes that the dominant group justified oppression based on effects of having been oppressed. This victim blaming strategy has been incredibly successful in undermining disabled voices and experiences. Government, Institutions, and media have a large role to play in these matters, especially when it comes to minoritized groups. Yasmin Jiwani (2006) writes that “media discourses can and do exert a form of symbolic violence” (p. 37) largely in the interests of “asserting dominance” (p.

37). Further, she writes that “lack of representation constitutes a symbolic annihilation” and is a form of violence, meaning that the invisibility disability, and of ableism, is violence. These issues of representation, visibility, and rhetoric have real-world implications for disability, which is why they are so important to look at and engage with.

I found that despite optimistic discourses, strategic plans, and rhetoric around inclusion, valuing diversity, and wanting to make their institutions more accessible (in the case of UVIC and UBC), the accommodations policies, structures, and models in practice did not support these ends, and outdated ideological frameworks (such as biomedical, and eugenicism) have been embedded into education policy and structure to the detriment of disabled students, or would-be students in both K-12, and post-secondary contexts. Critical disability studies, crip theory, and radical inclusion tactics could support institutional change to meet these priorities, if put into policy with accountability measures, timelines, and sufficient resources.

However, the policies themselves do not embody or uphold the values, intentions, or ideologies the universities each claim. There was a gap in each case in terms of policy language and rhetoric, and the policy documents are far behind where the rhetoric and discourse are in terms of disability issues, representation, and framing. Below are the findings in detail for my second research question.

4.2.1. Findings

Finding 1: Discrepancies between policies and discourses on disability

As noted above, each of the institutions in question had a discrepancy between the principles they upheld in their rhetoric, and the framing and treatment of the issue of accommodations in policy and practice. The way the university speaks to wanting to be, or wanting to see itself, is not reflected in policies regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. Each uses discourses and rhetoric around inclusion, diversity, and even at times, universal design. However, none of their actual policies are in line with, or recreate, these discourses. What do we make of this apparent conflict, using critical discourse analysis as an analytic tool?

According to my data on the rhetorical SFU is using, SFU wants to see itself in terms such as limitless, engaged, best practices, supportive, rewarding, enjoyable, dynamic, cutting edge, community engaged, welcoming, belonging (SFU Strategic Plan, see appendixes) and though disability and inclusion is not specifically named or noted, importance and commitment is placed on diversity and inclusion as important parts of SFU's values, mandate, and principles it seeks to uphold. The public facing documents, and discourse around how SFU sees itself are in clear contrast with the policy documents, as analyzed above.

Further, I looked at SFU's Centre for Accessible Learnings' (CAL) website and found that despite the broad university commitment and apparent support of diversity and inclusion, there is a deep divide between the stated values, and the reality of their commitments. Overall, the CAL messaging to students was much more in line with the bio-medical model thinking and understanding of disability, and with their accommodations policy practices, despite their own discourses around their mission and values.

For instance, the CAL outlines reasons for which they had updated their name:

> The Centre for Students with Disabilities name change to Centre for Accessible Learning: To better reflect contemporary best practice, The Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD) has changed its name to the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL), effective November 2018. This new title reflects the current programing, services, and supports the Centre offers, and acknowledges the significant paradigm shift in the way disabilities are conceptualized (CAL website, 2020).

Despite this, there is no evidence I could come across on how this paradigm shift has been embraced or put into practice, aside for in the re-naming of the Centre. The actions and policies of the institution were not in alignment with the platitudes and optics they claim. They go on to write that the word accessible was chosen "to better recognizes the role of systemic barriers or influences on the production of impairment; conversely, "disability" focuses primarily on the individual" (CAL website, accessed 2020). However, these individual barriers are the only ones addressed in the policy language itself, and not in meaningful ways to support the student. In directing the focus away from the student and toward the challenge, "accessible" enhances recognition of the shared responsibility to make the curricular, informational, physical, and social environments at the university more accessible to an increasingly diverse community of learners. Again, there is little evidence in their policies to suggest that these claims are being upheld in policy, as we see in the policy table, and Bacchi's (2012) analytical tool.

The UVIC CAL website (accessed 2020) was also steeped in language about their commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion. Further, access was built into their plans in much more embedded, and diverse ways than SFU. For instance, access is built into some of the specifically goals and strategies outlined: "Over the next five years we will: Develop integrated and accessible structures and processes across the university to promote more effective interactions with local and global communities and patterns". (UVIC, 6.2)

UVIC also has a specific plan outlined in terms of recruiting diverse members of the university community. UVIC launched a strategic enrolment management plan in April 2019. The plan intends to guide retention and recruitment of students for 5-10 years and aims to diversify the student body. The key equity pieces of this plan involve increasing Indigenous, and "increasingly under-represented populations on our campus". They also write to their commitment to a "safe and inclusive campus" and commits to implementing "concrete actions that engage with intersectional understandings of inequity, discrimination, and exclusion" (..) Though UVIC acknowledges institutional, and structural issues to inclusion and equity, their specific policy for students with disabilities does not meaningfully address these barriers. Further, there is not much available in the UIVC policies or supplemental data to suggest meaningful commitments, measurements, of accountability mechanisms in place towards these intentions. It appeared with several institutions that the faming of equity and inclusion often did not often explicitly include disability as one of the groups seeking equity.

As with the other institutions, I spent time on the UVIC CAL website looking for more information on students with disabilities. The UVIC CAL describes itself as consultants that work with the university community to "create a more accessible learning environment". They also say they "support the principles of universal design", and that applying these principles "minimizes the need for individual adaptations of accommodations" (UVIC CAL Website, 2020). What this might look like in practice remains unclear. This description of how the Centre for Accessible Learning poses Universal Design as a part of the UVIC access staff's mandate. However, the policy data suggests this becomes a paradoxical task, given that they use a model that relies on a different design: the accommodations model. This unfortunately certainly puts staff at a disadvantage, as they are trying to implement universal design qualities in the accommodations model, which relies on bio-medical principles for disability. Without adjusting those principles in a meaningful way, the “principles of universal design” will not actually be possible in the environment. The policy does not appear to meet its own stated principles, and that is the case with each of the institutions in the study. This is consistent across each of the institutions in the study. Aside from here, Universal Design comes up in several more places on the UVIC website. It is described as “an approach to teaching that consists of the proactive design and use of inclusive instructional and evaluation strategies” (UVIC CAL website, 2020).

UVIC also has more information available about Universal Design Learning for instructors, though this information would only really be helpful to an instructor who happened to be looking for this information, as it is housed in the accessibility centre, not in broader places around the website. There is also a sample accessibility statement that instructors are offered to use on their course materials if they wish. However, as we saw with SFU (2003), despite positing Universal Learning design as an important tool, embedding more disability and access issues into wiser university policy, and having some optional recommendations for professors, the actual accommodation policy and practices still do not embrace Universal Learning Design thought or practices on accessibility options for disabled students, or members of the UVIC community.

In terms of the UBC policy, inclusion and diversity are forefronted in the UBC Strategic Plan. One of the major three thematic identified by the plan is inclusion. Disability is named in this strategic plan, but not remarked upon. However, Indigenous Peoples, Sustainability, and anti-sexual violence work are specifically emphasized as priorities. The UBC plan writes that

> As a public institution, UBC has the responsibility to ensure inclusion across students, faculty, staff, and alumni, and through all interactions beyond the university. Inclusion is a commitment to access, success, and representation of historically underserved, marginalized or excluded populations. Given the long-lasting legacy of colonization of Indigenous peoples, we will continue to prioritize our partnerships with Indigenous peoples and communities. Education is an enabler of social development and mobility, and UBC is intent on advancing the inclusion of all those who have been excluded historically based on gender, race, religion, sexuality, age, physical ability, or economic circumstance (UBC, Appendix).

This language of including historically marginalized populations, disability, and access comes up in their strategies section of the plan as well. Here are relevant strategies to this study, with key language pertaining to this study in bold:

> Strategy 1: Great People Attract, engage, and retain a diverse global community of outstanding students, faculty, and staff: Through recruitment, advising and mentorship, professional development, and support, we will build and sustain a global university community, representative of all, **including historically excluded populations. Consistent with our intention to be a leader in diversity and equity**, we will recruit more expansively, including Indigenous students, faculty, and staff (UBC Strategic Plan. 48,). Emphasis added.
>
> Strategy 2: Inspiring Spaces Create welcoming physical and virtual spaces to advance collaboration, innovation, and community development: We will establish dedicated, **accessible,** and inspiring spaces, indoor and outdoor, that provide forums for interdisciplinary interaction and that showcase the impact of our work more broadly. **We will also make our locations more accessible to persons with mobility challenges and those otherwise differently abled[2].** All of this will improve the daily experience of many at UBC (p. 42). Emphasis added.
>
> Strategy 4: Inclusive Excellence Cultivate a diverse community that creates and sustains equitable and inclusive campuses: **We will review and revise policies, practices, and services to reflect our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion**. We will expand learning opportunities for staff and faculty to maximize awareness and understanding of these principles. We will assess the UBC landscape to identify areas needing focused attention, including systems, structures and processes that can be improved to facilitate better access and success. Enhanced diversity in leadership is a core enabler of effective university governance, and we will seek to create equitable opportunities for advancement and selection**. We will promote continued research on issues connected with diversity, equity, and inclusion, including disability studies. And we will establish and implement visible, system-wide accountability mechanisms and metrics that help us assess and manage our progress towards Inclusive Excellence** (p. 60). Emphasis added.

These are encouraging, bold statements about the changes UBC intends to make, and their specific strategies. The UBC planning document goes beyond the others in terms of disability representation and consideration. Certainly, we see the institutions embracing a self-image of inclusivity, diversity, and leadership in accommodating space,

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[2] "differently abled" is the term UBC uses; however, many disabled communities do not prefer this language, or use it to describe themselves.

though the current reality of the accommodation policy and practices conflict with these discourses in each case. Further, the plans do not provide much on what this will look like how these pieces will be measured, or what it would mean to offer more meaningful inclusion in terms of actual policy and procedures. It would be interesting to look at what the praxis of these plans includes, and how they are being measured.

UBC, much like the other institutions, has not met its own stated priorities, goals, or discourses in terms of access, or in terms of welcoming and providing supports for disabled students. As with the others, I noticed a similar pattern of the University using their FAQ document on accommodation's to effectively negate responsibility for their role in inclusion and put the burden of that responsibility back onto the disabled individual. Here are some examples of the language used:

> As a matter of principle, UBC is committed to promoting human rights, equity, and diversity, and it also has a legal duty under the BC Human Rights Code to make its goods and services available in a manner that does not discriminate. The Centre identifies a range of accommodations based on the documentation provided by the student, the history of accommodation, and any other information provided by the student. In determining accommodations, the Centre must consider the unique circumstances of each case. The implementation of specific accommodations depends on the nature of the activity and is determined in collaboration with the student and the appropriate University administrators and/or faculty members. **Reasonable and appropriate accommodations will be provided to students as long as they do not create an undue hardship for the University" (UBC Website, 2020)** Emphasis added.

This paragraph is exemplary of some of the paradoxical messaging the institution is putting out. They commit "on principle" to values, but then backtrack with the last sentence, which, as discussed in Finding 2, places the issue of hardship by the institution at the centre of their core values. Another example of UBC language follows:

> Universities are required by law to accommodate their students with disabilities if they can do so without "**undue hardship**." Section 3 of the Procedures to Policy LR7 provides more information about the meaning of "undue hardship" in the University context. The threshold of what is undue hardship for the University is quite high. However, once the University reaches that point, **its legal duty to accommodate will be discharged.** Emphasis added.
>
> Section 3.1 of the Procedures to Policy LR7 lists the factors that are used by UBC to assess what is **"undue hardship".** These factors include health

> and safety risks; **failure of the student** to meet an essential requirement of the course, program, or activity; and/or **financial or logistical challenges**. These factors mirror the legal test that has been established in British Columbia for determining what is undue hardship. In addition, **if students do not reasonably participate in or cooperate with UBC's efforts to accommodate them, UBC's duty to accommodate may come to an end.** Emphasis added.

Again, these outline the expectations that the university has on the student to no request or need too much and seem to defer responsibility on the student. The failure in cases where the university does not want to provide students with their access needs, is squarely framed as belonging to the student. The student is then expected to cooperate (read: comply) with the University, otherwise it may withhold services. This is important to read with the power dynamics in mind. As a disabled student, I read this as a demand to comply, otherwise nothing will be offered, and as vaguely threatening. If I do not comply or cooperate with the university's decisions and suggestions, I risk losing services that I might need. For students who rely on these services, and for those that have a hard time self-advocating, this is a difficult power dynamic to confront, especially while being in a potentially vulnerable position of having to ask for support, and access.

As uncovered in the literature, ableist, eugenics-based ideas about disabled people have been built into the public narrative, and intentionally leveraged by government, media, and institutions, and now is firmly embedded into policies, which it then supports via leveraging false narratives to justify their structural exclusion as common sense. We see these institutions embracing the idea of themselves as innovative, inclusive, and community leaders, and yet we see the disabled community being largely omitted, the resources needed to fulfil these claims not provided, and the specific policy language and supports designed to fail at creating the welcoming and belonging-based environments that they self-describe. Beyond just the failure of inclusion, the contrast in rhetoric verses practice creates a discord, and tension which is unaccounted for.

Finding 2: Absence of Representation of disability

One of the key notes I made in looking at the data was that in terms of the institutional websites, planning documents, and discourses on inclusion and diversity, disability was rarely even mentioned or made, though general statements about inclusion abound. When disability was present, it was never addressed directly as an important piece of the fabric of the university. Further, the language was unclear, such as “differently abled”, which as mentioned above, is problematic, and comes across as hesitant or uncertain to me, as a disabled researcher. I speculate that perhaps the people writing the polices and documents are not thinking of disabled people as part of the university, or perhaps they have not had much education, support, or access to resources around disability because of the historical marginalization or disability addressed in the literature review. Further, this finding is important to address, because ideologies can be observed by what is absent, as well as what is present, in the case of marginalization as a form of oppression. Visibility in of itself does not necessarily mean ableism does not exist on campus, however it is one potential marker of inclusion that might code belonging to disabled folks. Therefore, the total absence of representation is important to note, particularly given the general emphasis on inclusion and diversity.

“Diversity would seem naturally to fall under the rubric of diversity. Yet much of the time, when one sees lists of those included under the diversity banner, disability is either left off, and comes along as the caboose on the diversity train” (Adams, 2015, p. 61), which indicates that the problem is structural in nature. Silence, and denial “are key political tools” (McIntosh, 1998). Couette and Taylor (2017) state that “Marginalized communities are not appropriately considered by the public eye, and then often blamed for their own oppression, in instances where the “moral responsibility is placed on the wrong agent”. This analysis also applies to disabled students, who are seen as burdens, or at fault for wanting their access needs met. Moreover, this process is not accidental or happenstance, it is a direct result of constructed dehumanizing representations of that have formed the underpinning ideologies of important policies. Without intentional and direct conversations about these issues in post-secondary institutions, it is hard to see how these perceptions and understandings might change.

These issues impact disabled students; there was no visibility of disabled research, experiences, etc. on their websites. There is one exception to this: the page that highlighted disabled stories SFU also has a “Student Stories page” on their CAL website page. Most of the stories has headlines such as “student bucks to odds,” “grad beats profound hearing loss,” and “surmounting challenges,” all which frame disability as something to fight against, cure, or “overcome” (SFU). These narratives reinforce a biomedical understanding of disability and does not disrupt any of the biomedical norms, or stereotypes that have been constructed historically about disabled people. Though the intention might be to highlight or support disabled stories, the impact of these narratives risk reinforcing stereotypes, narratives, and discourses that are harmful.

Language is powerful. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2011) write that language is “how we construct reality” (p. 48). Armstrong (2005) agrees: “Humans construct the world through language” (p. 182), and that language “deeply influences all human action and interaction” (p. 182). Stories, discourses, and rhetoric influence public perception, inform policy, and are the basis for many value systems, and their corresponding ideologies. Further, representational violence is not a separate issue from tangible violence. Stuart Hall (2007) describes representation as “the way in which meaning is given to the thing depicted”, that “the process of representation has entered into the event itself, becoming constitutive of the event”. Humans use representation to make meaning to map out our worlds. Thus, the way in which anything is constructed has tangible results in how we interpret, understand, and interact with it. Ideological constructions, rhetoric around particular students, and systemic discourse and representation on minoritized experiences are important themes scholars suggests looking at in order to better understand oppression, and exclusion from educational spaces. As Phillip Turcotte (2018) writes, “any analysis of contemporary social issues and injustices must include a thorough historical examination of the problem’s origins and the ways in which past events may still be influencing current discourses and policies” (p. 192). If these policies continue to maintain a biomedical understanding of, and a victim-blaming approach to disability, their discourses on inclusion remain performative, and designed to fail disabled students, faculty, and staff from having thoughtful engagement and supports, visibility and acceptance on campus, or contribution to campus life.

Relatedly, another issue that arose in that data, is that ideally, campus life should build a “sense of community beyond the academic experience” (Freedman, 2017, p. 200); social ties, self-esteem, retention, opportunities for social relationships, increase independence etc. should be part of institutional life. Disability should therefore be built into campus life at many levels and access points, not just through the lens of accommodation via the centre for accessibility. As Christy Oslund (2015) writes, “Campus life has also reflected the larger social response to people with disabilities. When societies are reluctant to create accessible processes and places then too are their colleges, which are often small mirrors of larger social attitudes” (p. 96). Disability risks being segregated to a small, niche part of campus life that mimics the segregation and historical separation that hides, closets, and supresses disabled life as part of the university community. Though this study does not have the scope to address these issues fully, the lack of representation of disability within the strategic plan, and other documents reviewed gives cause for concern in this area, so I wanted to make note of it.

Finding 3: Accountability and Resourcing Missing

None of the institutions appear to have actual existing mechanisms of accountability regarding students with disabilities, or even their own strategic hopes. None appear to be accountable to the marginalized groups they claim to want to uphold or include, nor do they explicitly direct funding, resources, or power to those groups. In any case, none of the policies have any of these measures written in. Further, none address the complex intersectionality, or enmeshment of how exclusion has worked historically and currently in higher education. Little to no space is given to Indigenous, disabled, racialized, queer, or otherwise marginalized voices or experiences.

Jay Dolmage (2017) writes that the point is to find ways to get the stakeholders in higher education to

> engage with, understand, and take action to address racism, classism, sexism, transphobia, ableism, and other structural inequalities, biases, and the range of harmful practices they allow. Saying "of course the university is ableist" is a first step that necessitates further action. It should not be a disaffected claim that releases one from responsibility (p. 39).

Acknowledging marginalized people be a part of the fabric of the university is an important step in inclusion work, but this work needs to go far beyond representation; it needs to challenge the existing norms that higher education has made about knowledge, diversity, human experience, and what is considered normal. Structural problems also require structural level solutions that integrate every level of the university culture, and participation and buy in from many of the institutions'' people, spaces, systems, and resources. Except for UVIC (2017), which will be addressed in the outlier data section, the data did not indicate the institutions were aware of or had clear intentions to address the issues of structural, or multiple marginalization, and how this impacts the university cultural, practices, policies, or campus community.

Little information around how much support and financial resources are available to the actual services that are for disabled students. None of the institutions offering financial information, clear commitment to their centres as pivotal services. None of the institutions mention having disabled staff prioritized or make mention of what accommodations support staff might offer as support. The vagueness allows the institutions to continue to evade accountability or responsibility. As Oslund (2015) points out, “from a practical point of view though, some offices have so few resources in both human-hours and financial support that they are already stretched too thin. *Educating the campus* is one area where collaboration with disability studies could prove beneficial to all parties” (p. 61). Educating the campus, not just expecting the accessibility centre to be the point on all disability related issues is also one of Harbours’ (2019) recommendations. I did look at SFU’s financial reporting, in hopes of on covering what financial support is available for this resource to do the inclusion work the university claims to want to do. I was unable to find information directly on how much funding the centre itself gets, though did come across a letter (Macdonald, 2020) critiquing SFU for their lack of financial transparency. Future research that looks what financial commitments look like for accommodations offices, staff etc. is recommended. More monitoring, oversight, and data collection regarding how students with disabilities fare financially could also be an interesting area to look at in terms of institutional accountability.

Though several optional instructor resources are available for those instructors who looks, instructors and professors are set up almost as adversaries, and no comprehensive trainings, supports, or awareness campaigns were evident online, or in the public sphere. Oslund (2015) notes that “it is worth mentioning that the interests of the institutions that disability services specialists are employed by may at times be in conflict with the interests of individual students with disabilities” (p. 62). Given the University’s discourse around inclusion, but not apparently the resources and supports available to support and uphold these values in tangible ways, the centre staff may find themselves conflicted. The university itself may also be reluctant to implement and changes that disrupt the status quo. More research is recommended in this area. Further, public institution transparency around financial priorities would be interesting to compare with their stated priorities to see how financially these universities could better tangibly support their goals in this area.

Finding 4: Absence of Radical Inclusion Markers

There was almost zero sign of the radical inclusion suggestions and recommendations to meaningfully bring disability into campuses for inclusion and access support. The NSSCD (2017) brief recommends that institutions improve the campus climate through the following strategies, with input from members of the campus community who have disabilities:

> Conduct evaluations of existing disability practices, through campus climate surveys, assessments of disability services and supports, and assessments of campus accessibility.
>
> Create diverse ways for the campus community to get information about disability, by developing faculty and staff training programs, including disability in student orientation programming, and creating multiple centers of disability expertise on campus.
>
> Support campus-wide engagement with disability, creating opportunities for disability community and engagement, including faculty and staff with disabilities in recruitment and retention initiatives, streamlining funding mechanisms for accommodations, and encouraging inclusive pedagogies.

All three institutions in this study could implement clear recommendations as part of their inclusion strategies but have not. Perhaps the institutions have not given much thought to disability issues on their campuses, perhaps they do not know how to better support disabled folks, or perhaps it is not a major priority in their inclusion plans.

Other strategies such as supporting campus-wide trainings, campaigns, and awareness around disability, mandatory faculty and staff training and programming, disabled student clubs and events, opportunities for disabled events and expertise to be showcased, increased visibility and celebration on campus, encouraging and supporting inclusive pedagogies, streamlining funding for accommodation centers, etc. are recommended for campuses to do for direct disabled inclusion in the report. Wendy Harbour’s (2019) radical inclusion ideas also include scholarships and bursaries specifically for disabled students, cripping campuses, and consulting and integrating disabled knowledge and voice into the systems that area meant to support them. Further tactics that she, and other scholars recommend is creating critical disability studies programs on campus, hiring, retaining, and attracting disabled faculty and staff to do research related to disability. Some of the institutions may enact these practices already, though if they do, evidence is not readily apparent. We do not see these strategies being embraced or implemented at these institutions as far as can be seen from my data.

Many scholars, and this study agree that critical disability studies are necessary, and that "Programs should illustrate a commitment to disability in course offerings, programming, and pedagogical instruction" (Carter, 2017, p. 110). None of the institutions in this study have critical disability studies departments. Michael Prince (2016) writes that:

> Disability studies scholars and students are producing, critiquing, and disseminating artistic, comparative, historical, and theoretical forms of knowledge on disability and normalcy. Academe evaluates policies and practices as well as assists in bringing to wider audiences the narratives of people and communities, at times joining community-based activism and academic-based research (p. 7).

The literature also suggests disability departments and studies "can enrich campus life, college or university curricula, and the diverse composition of the student body" (Taylor, 2011, p. 98), support students with disabilities "understand their personal experiences in social, cultural, and political context" (Taylor, 2011, p. 98), and serve as complements to "disability services and help to make campus culture more inclusive and accepting of students with disabilities. Accommodations provided in compliance with the law are important but cannot change attitudinal barriers that an isolate and marginalize students with disabilities" (Taylor, p. 95). Critical research, programs, courses, and connection with wider communities for disabled folks are important for institutions to take up, and each of the institutions in this study would benefit from such additions. Universities and higher education institutions have incredible potential in terms of promoting, embracing, and celebrating disabled life, experiences, knowledge; but have a very long way to go to do so, and must acknowledge the harmful histories they have been a part of, the harmful and false ideologies and dehumanizing constructions that underpin their policies, and be accountable to the marginalized populations they have for so long, excluded.

Finding 5: Problems with Universal Design Learning

The UBC policy (2019) also had an interesting outlier regarding Universal Learning Design. The policy begins by outlining the purpose of the policy, and relevant legislation it complies with. It outlines both campuses Disability Support centres and states the following in the third paragraph of the introduction:

> UBC recognizes the benefits of the application of Universal Instructional Design principles to the built and learning environments at UBC. These principles are a comprehensive approach to classroom interaction and evaluation and include flexibility of delivery systems and evaluation methods (UBC, 2019, p.1).

It is the only of the three policies that mentions Universal Learning Design. Despite the rhetoric in the policy, it is paired with language such as "Failure to comply with the above responsibilities may result in delays in providing the Accommodation or the appropriate Accommodation not being provided" (UBC, 2019, p.4). This is the only recognition of the seeming paradoxical nature of naming or promoting UDL, and yet not have policies, practices, or a culture that are aligned with the principles and philosophy of Universal Design. Many scholars suggest moving towards Universal Design as "a proactive concept of creating spaces (physical, educational, etc.) that are inclusive in as many ways as possible (no stairs, different types of seating, addressing multiple learning styles, descriptions of images, captions on videos, scent free, etc.) to be able to support a variety of different individuals and their unique needs (Burgstahler, 2001; Story, Mueller, & Mace, 1998). This movement towards universal design principles and ideas has yet to be incorporated into most policy, including that of the institutions in this study, despite the rhetoric of inclusion and diversity that we see these institutions upholding. Even if they are mentioned in policies, the benefits of UDL need work, commitment, and ongoing implementation to make a difference in institutions. The legal minimal requirements that we see upheld in the policy language does nothing to address the culture of stigmatization of disability, and reinforces the biomedical assumptions that disability is something to be feared, detested, or merely tolerated, as opposed to celebrated, accepted and useful/beneficial part of campus life.

Access is at the foundation of the design intentionality and processes, not a retrofit, or afterthought for an individual, like what we see in accommodation practices. Liasidou (2014) also suggests universal design as a potential paradigm shift of widespread inclusion and argues that this model "can benefit disabled and non-disabled students alike" (p. 127). She notes various social and economic disadvantages disabled students face, and advocates for self-determination, justice, and a lived experience informed approached to confronting ableist exclusion in higher education, making sound arguments for why this research holds emancipatory potential for disabled people.

UBC is also correct however that UDL is not a panacea for disability; as Dolmage (2017) reminds us, the philosophical underpinning of UDL, more so than the practice is what is so unique and interesting about this paradigm. The principles of UDL are more in line with a social model of disability. However, UDL on its' own isn't enough. It fails to account for intersectionality, multiple marginalization, and the complexities of historical inclusion. For instance, "in response to the interest convergence that situates UD as something that is for "all students," while overlooking specific forms of difference, as well as specific histories of disenfranchisement, a few researchers have begun to explore what might be explicitly built into UD to address the needs of African American students. (Dolmage, p. 137). Looking to models or design, inclusion, and access that are more in line with the principals of disability justice may be what we need to see changes that come closer to meeting the needs of their students, and actually "including" historically minoritized groups, not erasing them from the discourse. Dolmage (2017) also cautions that "In the neoliberal university, Universal Design may become a way of promising everything while not doing much of anything" (139), which is what seems to be happening at the BC intuitions in questions, wherein the discourse is of UDL, and yet, policies enforce biomedical models. Dolmage (2017) writes that "So long as Universal Design continues to be gift-wrapped for higher education administrators as something that is more "efficient" and "sustainable," then it will be as dangerous as it is useful" (p. 150).

4.2.2. Outliers

Outlier 1: Disabled Community Consultation?

One piece of outlier data that was not consistent with the rest of my finding was the following section of the SFU (2003) policy:

> An advisory committee made up of students, faculty, staff, and external representatives appointed by the Executive Director, Student Affairs will meet regularly to provide advice to the University and the Centre for Accessible Learning in matters related to guidelines, policies, and programs for students with disabilities (SFU, 2003, para. 5).

Relatedly, one specific piece of the UVIC (2017) policy section is also an outlier. This section outlines underlying principles of the policy, including "celebrating diversity", dispelling prejudice against students with disabilities, right for student appeals, and of note, also states that “Persons with disabilities will be involved in the development of policies and programs and in decisions that directly affect them” (UVIC, 2017, p.1). The UVIC documents also “acknowledges that responsibility is shared by all members of the university and outlines specific tasks and expectations on what the university and student are respectively responsible for” (UVIC, 2017, p.2).

Both statements contrast with the policy language, wording, and tone. Both acknowledge the role that disabled students and people have in consulting on these policies. This data is less in alignment with the bio-medical model as much of the rest of the documents. I wonder what it might look like if disabled people had supported leadership in designing policy language, and process for access in higher education? What does this consultation currently look like, and how is it being supported, upheld, and how is disabled expertise and knowledge being valued, compensated, and implemented inside and outside of these institutions? How can tokenism, and performativity be avoided in these kinds of processes, and how might these measures of accountability be built into the actual policy as processes to follow?

Though the scope of this study was not able to address these questions, or look at the centres for accommodations, the lived experiences of disabled people in these intuitions, or institutional leadership, these remain areas for further interrogation. Beyond political analysis, the “politics of transformation” (Devlin, 2006, p. 12) needs to be a part of institutional culture. Iris Marion Young (1990) also argues for “real participatory structures in which actual people, with their geographical, ethnic, gender, and occupational differences, assert their perspectives on social issues within institutions that encourage the representation of their distinct voices” (p. 116). Phillip Turcotte (2018) argues that “Academic freedom would be better utilized if exercised from apposition of accountability and ally ship, working together with various social groups to bring about positive and challenging discourses with the ultimate goal of redistributing the good within society and providing the greatest benefit to the least advantaged” (p. 193). We need to imagine, consider, and implement practices that “intervene, disturb, intensify, or provoke a heightened sense of the potentiality of the present” into higher education praxis and thought on disability (Springgay and Truman, 2016, p. 206).

Chapter 5. Conclusion

Wendy Harbour (2019) talks about deaf gain, and that how, in becoming deaf, a new set of skills or assets develop. She argues that disabled experiences are in fact valuable and diverse knowledges that contribute to intellectual diversity and have associated cultural benefits. Ableism, and policies created with ableist ideologies, interfere with disabled students' abilities to contribute their unique perspectives. Rebecca Sanchez (2017) asks "What kind of critical thinking would develop in environments where disability was perceived not merely as something to be accommodated but as something to be genuinely desired, an occasion for humour and playfulness rather than a topic that evoked fear and trepidation?" (p. 224). This is the kind of questioning that leads to more radical ideas for inclusion and disabled student participation as not just something to be tolerated, but as desirable and coveted. As Vera Chouinard (2018) writes "we need to recognize that no one's lives are untouched by ableism-we all have stakes in building a world in which all lives matter and are valued and supported" (p. 337).

This study challenges and resists the norms in how we think about disability, and the normalization of ableism. Karen Jung (2011) writes on the need for using a social, instead of medical model of disability as the basis for our social system, and policies. She also writes that legislation exists to afford individuals protection from discrimination (p. 268), however this does not currently translate to reality in practice in British Columbia in higher education. The critical policy and discourse analysis in this study indicate that the practices culture, and policies in use today at these institutions are still based off a biomedical model, despite some of their claims that they are embracing inclusion, diversity, and even universal design learning. There is a deep divide between current practices and cultures, and theoretical best practices in disabled inclusion, and universities are far from implementing inclusive policies to match their rhetorical claims. Despite legislation protecting disabled people from discrimination, and affirming disabled rights as human rights, many barriers exist to actual access to institutions for us.

Erevelles (2009) argues for "a critical pedagogy that provides the intellectual tools that can render visible the material structures and ideological discourse that have different effects [on marginalized groups], and yet at the same time have to be transformed so that all students can achieve social, economic, and political liberation" (p. 47). Further, "inclusive design efforts can benefit disabled and non-disabled students alike" (Liasidou, 2014, p. 128). This differs from the idea of asking for and being assessed for deservedness, either formally or by peers, for accommodations. Though policy reviews and updates were listed as priorities on the strategic plan for UBC (2019), little accountability beyond a basic legislated rights framework exists for institutions, and each of the institutors are far from achieving the kind of radical inclusion Harbour (2019) suggests, implementing the specific strategies recommended by the NSSDS report (2017), or looking at disability in ways necessitated for this kind of paradigm shift.

I suggest that we need to crip accommodations in higher education, and the entire foundation upon which accommodations has been built if we wish to see real, participatory, and meaningful inclusion for disabled individuals on campuses. As our ideas and understanding of disability, and the models and frameworks we use to understand these concepts evolve, and adjust, so do institutional policies, practices, and cultures. Anastasia Liasidou (2014) writes that we need a paradigm shift that takes into consideration lived experience of disability through "emancipatory, participatory research agendas" and also professional development across higher education" (p. 73). Certainly, large transformations are needed in how disability is handled on campuses. True, meaningful access would require financial access, social access, a diversity of residential and extra-curricular structures so that students can find support and acceptance on campus rather than a set of additional strictures and demands (Liasidou, 2014). Such access needs to include representational access, to provide students with critical skills to interpret the onslaught of cultural representations that makes up our post-modern digital world, to combat stigma, and to imaginatively project themselves into new forms of representation (Samuels, 2017, p.19). These accesses require ongoing assessment, monitoring, and supports if accountability to meaningful change is to be achieved. The institutions in this study are far from meeting these access practices, or broadening their thought to embrace, support, and be accountable to them. The tools, strategies, and practices of cripping are known, available, and widely agreed upon as ways to improve inclusion for disabled people on campuses. However, the political and institutional will does not yet seem to exist, or if it does, has yet to be implemented at the policy level.

5.1. Key Findings

Q1: *What inclusion and accommodation policies are currently in place for students with disabilities at the three largest public institutions of higher education British Columbia?*

- Finding 1: Bio-medical model of Disability informs Policies:
    - Regardless of how each of the institutions interacted with disability in other areas, the language and model that informed and upheld their accommodations policies were associated with a biomedical framing of disability.
- Finding 2: Forced disclosure for access
    - Students in each institution continue to be asked to disclose personal health information before being allowed to ask for assistance, access accommodations, or even interact with the accommodations processes.
- Finding 3: Accommodations framed as too hard and costly
    - Each of the policies framed and upheld disability accommodations as hard, costly, and difficult for the institutions themselves to commit to. None of the institutions meaningfully acknowledged the cost, difficulty, or potential burden on the students of living with disability in their lives.
- Finding 4: Burden on Students to Comply
    - Students at each institution are asked to comply with oftentimes difficult, complicated, and sometimes expensive processes to document, explain, and “prove” their disability to the institutions, before supports are discussed. Each of the policies worked to place the burden, and responsibility of access to the institution on the student, even if language across the institution suggested shared responsibility, or communal responsibility to accommodate/support disabled students.
- Finding 5: Naturalized processes of active exclusion seen as common sense
    - All the suggested burdens on students are established and presented as normal, natural, and unquestioned points of access. The notion accommodations as individual issues are upheld across all documents.

Q2: *What ideologies are embedded in institutional discourses pertaining to these policies?*

- Finding 1: Discrepancies between policies and discourses on disability
    - Policy language was quite different that the general rhetoric, discourse, and thought used on other parts of the university presentations or discussions on disability. Some institutions described themselves as referring to or relying on Universal Design, or Social Models of disability. However, the policies themselves did not always indicate their actual legislation.
- Finding 2: Absence of Disability Representation or Visibility
    - The literature uncovered the importance of representation, visibility, and radical inclusion when it comes to disability on campus. This appears to be an area for growth across institutions, as they work to become more accessible, and more reasonable to disabled students to be able to access. Part of growing a diverse, inclusive, and transformed campus culture does require including disability as an important component of campus life, and an area of value.
- Finding 3: Accountability Missing
    - Some of the discourse around inclusion, diversity, and transformation is hopeful, and encouraging. However, with these suggestions of change, there needs to be measure of how these projects are moving forward, and some form of accountability to students who are impacted. For instance, disabled input on decisions that impact them, and the power to hold institutions to their stated values are important pieces that are missing across the board.
- Finding 4: Absence of any radical inclusion markers or practices
    - Wendy Harbour’s radical inclusions practices are accessible, clear, and direct methodologies for institutions to widen inclusion and attract disabled students. These tactics have not been yet embraced on these campuses. This indicates that there is still much to be done for the institutions to meet their stated goals regarding inclusion for disabled students on campus, and in building safer, more accessible campus communities in British Colombia for disabled, and other historically marginalized communities.
- Finding 5: Problems with UDL
    - Universal Design Learning is regarded to be a model for disabled inclusion and access that focuses on a more social model of disability. However, it has problems. The ideological principles that create UDL may still offer benefit in terms of what the model can offer, and UDL may be a useful tool in some cases to address access needs from a different lens of disability.

5.2. Considerations and Limitations

Limitations emerged during the data collection process. A policy scan is a limited, brief start at investigating embedded institutional norms, and certainly there is much work to do to apply critical crip analyses to our education contexts. The scope of this study is also small, and our institutions have been built to be longstanding continuations of ideologies, including normalized ableism. This study was further limited to British Columbia, and only accounts for three institutions. Additionally, no conversations with accommodations centre staff or students were possible. Looking at other Canadian universities, the private sector, and other options for disabled students, and expanding policy analysis to staff and faculty would provide further data about the state of accommodations in higher education. Given the small scope, I was not able to bring in financial data from the institutions or look more widely at their discourse beyond their individual websites and strategic plan documents. Certainly, how they market themselves to prospective students, the rhetoric they use to describe themselves, and how they fund accommodation services, and other student services would have been extremely compelling data in this study. It would also have been interesting to speak with faculty and staff about their understandings and experiences of disability.

However, this study uncovered some immediate, and potentially impactful areas for institutions to consider. Institutions can consult with their disabled communities to update, re-imagine, and re-engage with their accommodations policies. They can also see the recommendations of this study for practices to implement that can have beneficial, research impact in terms of inclusion and diversity practices that meaningfully include disabled communities. This study also provides a baseline of material to look at more complexities in terms of how ableism impacts campus and academic life in BC at the policy level, and beyond. Rebecca Sanchez (2017) asks what kinds of conversations about human diversity might be possible if universities were designed to encourage all members of the members of the community to recognize diverse embodiment, if conversations about disability were not assumed to be the responsibility of those with disabilities to initiate, often through personal disclosures, or forced compliance with policies? These questions, among many others regarding crip and disability futures, remains to be explored and imagined.

5.3. Future Research Considerations

Much more research can be done to understand disabled experience of higher education at all levels; and should include staff, faculty, and students. Further looking at how specific disabilities make do in accommodations processes would be a key area to look at. For instance, “intellectual and/or developmental disabilities are often left out of research regarding ableism, but it is crucial to include this population and learn more about how these individuals experience ableism and ableist micro-aggressions. Intersections of identities may also change how ableism is perpetuated” (Kattari, et al, 2018, p. 488). For those with chronic conditions, like myself, we made have different access needs over time as our illnesses progress. Those with mental health disabilities also need to be included in conversations about disability in higher education, and different groups likely experience ableism in different ways, with different layers of stigmatization.

Indigenous peoples specifically, and how they interact with disability issues is under-researched: “There is need for more work that pays attention to the Aboriginal people and disability in Canada (Opini, 2016, p.77). The critical disability studies research in Canada would also benefit from multiple analytic strategies, and research led by disabled, racialized, and Indigenous scholars. Opini (2016) also writes that disability studies would benefit “from collaborations with other fields focusing on decolonising pedagogy, Indigenous epistemology and research in the academy such as Indigenous/Aboriginal Education”, and that disability studies should “borrow a leaf from Indigenous knowledges, critical race theory, antiracism and anti-colonial theories and work towards ending the suppression and domination it is engaging in” (Opini, p.78). Having more scholars with multiple marginalization experiences would diversify knowledge production and mobilization in Canada.

Finally, interviews with university staff and leadership responsible for these policies, financial information on accommodations across Canada, and how Canada compares to other countries in terms of disability would be exciting areas of research to look at to complement and built upon this data. Also, looking to staff and faculty experiences, or examining how particular forms of disability experience ableism with institutions, and how that may interact with other identity factors is reach research that does not exist in our British Columbia context. We still have much to uncover and understand about how ableism functions institutionally: “Although ableism is insidious and apparent in all aspects of society, little research has been conducted to understand the lived experiences of ableism by disabled individuals, nuanced disabled identities (such as those who have invisible/less obvious disabilities), and intersections of other marginalized identities with disability identities” (Kattari et al 2018). There are many interesting areas of research to uptake in disCrit research in British Columbia, and Canada, and these areas of research offer exciting frameworks with which to approach education issues.

5.4. Recommendations

The NCCSD Research Brief (2017) and the NEADS report (2018) puts forward clear and specific recommendations that Canadian institutions could implement to update and transform their policies, and perhaps have them more in alignment with their stated principles and values regarding these issues. In addition to a full implementation of those recommendation, this study recommends that each of these BC institutions:

- Acknowledge, uncover, publicize, and be accountable to their respective histories as they relate to the spread and support of eugenics, associated with widespread violence against disabled, racialized, and Indigenous peoples in BC.
- Consult widely and thoroughly with disabled members of their university communities at all levels to incorporate their feedback on their policies and practices related to accommodation and access. Higher education institutions should have explicit access plans, with funding commitments, and accountability mechanisms to support them.
- Provide addition financial resources for students and prospective students from historically minoritized and excluded groups.
- Hold a percentage of spots for these students, publicize widely to encourage applicants, including those who are multiply marginalized, and offer specific comprehensive supports.
- Commit additional funding to multiple access centres across each campus. These centres should not require documentation of diagnosis; rather they should exist to support whoever needs access supports or resources. This could include such supports as scholarship connections, support in applying to programs or admission to the institution, resources, food, free tutoring, etc. Widespread access supports, such as comprehensive and affordable medical student health plans, mental health supports and resources, ASL interpreters on campus, etc. be widely available and accessible to all. These centres

should be directed, run, and led by disabled staff members who are specifically recruited to work as disability advocates, leaders, and support staff.

- Create more visible, positive, and accurate representations of disability around campus that explicitly celebrate disabled achievement, experiences, and contributions, without the language or narratives of “overcoming” disability.
- Create critical disability studies programs, hire disabled faculty and staff, and offer great benefits plans to those who face medical access needs.
- Support disabled students and faculty in disability research, and support research and training on disability rights, justice, and liberation in higher education, and community.
- Free, compulsory training for members of campus communities on anti-violence, consent, colonial history, disability rights, etc. using a disability justice lens.
- Actively build Disability Justice concepts and principles into policies, practices, and structures across campuses. Update the policies to reflect stated principles.
- Use radical inclusion, cripping, and critical tactics to better attract, serve, and retain disabled and other minoritized folks. Embed them into campus culture.

I see a clear need for each of these policies to be re-addressed, with a clear consulting process with disabled leadership across campus life (staff, students, faculty, etc.) to re-approach policy with a lens to disability justice, intersectional equity, and anti-oppression. The policies should include much more in terms of supports and resources for disabled students, and use appropriate language to include, welcome, and celebrate disability culture and identity. Further, much more could be recommended at the policy level for such issues as appropriate stakeholder consultation, monitoring and tracking, funding to see supports in place, accountability measures, staff development and training, and more.

5.5. Final Thoughts

There is “considerable evidence suggesting that when disabled individuals have access to disability-related support services, they can reach the same achievement levels as their non-disabled peers” (Liasidou, 2014, p.126). However, much more needs to be done to create, support, and sustain that access in these BC institutions at the policy level (and more importantly, practical levels). Christy Oslund (2015) writes that “People with disabilities are not going away, they are going to continue to seek access to the same spaces and opportunities that other members of society are given access to” (p.111). There is great potential benefit to addressing access needs.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen how quickly institutions can pivot when necessary, to create transformative change; the paradigm changes that bringing a less antiquated way of thinking about disability could come quickly if institutions were willing to embrace transformative change. There are clearly researched steps that could be taken to amplify inclusion efforts and begin the work of tackling structural problems with structural solutions, rather than the current policy reality we see in this study of trying to address structural issues with individualized inadequate supports.

Finally, disabled, racialized, and other minoritized communities must imagine, dream up, and create the crip futures, spaces, ways of learning, and systems we want, and institutions have a role in supporting and resourcing these projects. As individuals, institutions, campuses, and collective societies, “we must design a future for higher education that acknowledges but rejects its eugenic, steep steps history, refuses to accept an ongoing series of retrofits and slapped- on accommodations, and values instead of the unpredictable times and places of disability to come” (Jay Dolmage, 2017, p.124). Though it is difficult to imagine what access might look like in spaces that have been so inaccessible, it is exciting, and potentially radically transformative work to do so, and all members of campus stand to benefit from better disabled access, support, and justice.

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Appendix. Policy Supplements

SFU Policy

- SFU Strategic Vision
- SFU Centre for Accessible Learning

UVIC Policy

- UVIC strategic plan
- UVIC Centre for Accessible Learning

UBC Policy

- UBC FAQ page
- UBC Strategic Plan 2018-28
- UBC Centre for Accessibility Services