INCLUSIVE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION: STORIES OF SEVEN STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ATTENDING COLLEGE IN ONTARIO, CANADA

by

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Abstract

Post-secondary education is an aspiration for many students; however, students with intellectual disabilities are provided few opportunities to pursue this dream. Current practices in the Ontario system of education frequently segregate and exclude students with intellectual disabilities from participation in the educational opportunities that are provided to non-disabled students. These educational practices ultimately limit opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, and as such, fail to provide sufficient credentials to these students so they can participate in post-secondary education or employment. In recent years, alternative routes through post-secondary education across Canada, and in Ontario, have been emerging for students with intellectual disabilities. Yet, these opportunities are not enshrined in government policies or post-secondary practice, and are only provided at the discretion of a handful of post-secondary institutions across Ontario. The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of the inclusive post-secondary education experience from the perspectives of students who were participating in inclusive college programs in Ontario. Seven participants were recruited from two colleges in Ontario that provide an inclusive post-secondary experience for students with intellectual disabilities. Through a disability studies framework, a qualitative phenomenological methodology was employed in this study to empower the participants to share their stories and hear their voices. Three in-depth individual interviews using photo-elicitation were used to invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences in inclusive post-secondary education. Each participant’s unique story of their college experience is highlighted as a Student Portrait. The main themes that emerged from the participants combined
experiences were academic growth and development, interpersonal relationships and social networks, career development and employment potential, and self-determination. Findings from this study provide evidence of the positive outcomes of participation in post-secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities, including an anticipated positive impact that would extend well into the futures of each participant. This study highlights the need for post-secondary education reform to increase such opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter introduces the context for this study, and then presents key terms, a statement of the problem, researcher standpoint, a statement of purpose and research questions, the rationale for this study, and organization of this thesis.

People with intellectual disabilities often do not share the same freedoms as other people in today’s society; they are frequently denied access to the rights and privileges enjoyed by others. Socially constructed as deviant in society, people labeled with an intellectual disability are classified as different, cast into negative social roles, and are routinely excluded from full participation in society. This inequality is entrenched in societal attitudes, the daily practices of how people with intellectual disabilities are treated, and the effects of government policy and legislation on this group.

The Canadian education system contributes to the maintenance and perpetuation of inequality towards people with intellectual disabilities. In Ontario, current educational practices frequently segregate and exclude students with intellectual disabilities from participation in the educational opportunities that are provided to non-disabled students. These educational practices ultimately limit opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, and as such, fail to provide sufficient credentials to these students so they can participate in post-secondary education or employment. Consequently, students with intellectual disabilities are excluded from accessing typical transitions into the world of adulthood and community participation after high school.
Key Terms

**Intellectual disability.** The term intellectual disability can refer to a wide range of diagnostic labels, but is characterized as a mental impairment discerned before adulthood that affects cognitive functioning generally (Bennett, Dworet, & Weber, 2008). Crawford (2005) described intellectual disability as involving significant limitations in intellectual functions and behaviours required for everyday social life and in practical skills that most people perform without major difficulty. Intellectual disability is usually assessed and diagnosed through intelligence tests and adaptive skills measurements (Hallahan, Kauffman, McIntyre, & Mykota, 2010). Students who have an intellectual disability may typically require significant curriculum modifications to access educational content (Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez, & Will, 2006), as they may master academic and social skills at a slower rate than the average student (Roeher Institute, 1996). While other terms and labels are also commonly used to describe this group, such as developmental disability and mental or developmental handicaps, the term intellectual disability is widely recognized internationally (Brown, 2007; Crawford 2005).

According to Crawford, approximately 1-3 percent of the Canadian population has an intellectual disability.

**Special education.** In Ontario, typical approaches to the education of students with intellectual disabilities are commonly delivered through a special education model. The special education model, according to Crawford (2005), is based on the belief that differences between students with and without disabilities are of such significance that
separate educational provisions are necessary. According to Hallahan et al. (2010), special education refers to “specifically designed instruction that meets the unusual needs of the exceptional student” (p. 8). Special education measures can include special learning materials, instructional techniques or equipment, and/or separate classes, and curriculum designed to focus on the presumed needs of unique learners (Bennett, Dworet, & Weber, 2008).

**Inclusive post-secondary education.** Inclusive post-secondary education is not a clearly defined concept, and can have a range of different meanings. Inclusive educational practices support students with a diverse range of abilities and different ways of learning in typical educational settings (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005). For the purpose of this study, inclusive post-secondary education refers to opportunities for students labeled with an intellectual disability to participate in post-secondary education generally, whereby students with intellectual disabilities participate alongside their non-disabled peers in normative and typical post-secondary experiences (Bowman & Weinkauf, 2004; Mosoff, Greenholtz, & Hurtado, 2009). In Ontario, the most common approach to inclusive post-secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities is provided through a Community Integration Through Cooperative Education (CICE) program which is currently delivered at a handful of colleges in Ontario. This program, approved by the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, provides alternative admission requirements, modified curriculum, and academic supports for students with intellectual disabilities to participate in college.
Disability studies. Through a disability studies perspective, disability is understood as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon. Contrary to dominant individual and medical perspectives, disability studies focuses on how disability is defined and epitomized in society. This perspective rejects the notion of disability as a functional impairment that limits a person’s activities, and instead, recognizes that the discrimination, marginalization, and oppression imposed upon people with disabilities serve as substantial barriers in their lives (Barton, 2003; Oliver, 1990; Prilleltensky, 2009). As such, through a disability studies perspective, disability is not a characteristic or problem of a person that must be fixed or cured, but rather, is a construct that acquires meaning within social and cultural contexts.

Statement of the Problem

After high school, there are few social or economic opportunities available for an adult with an intellectual disability. Of all groups, people with intellectual disabilities have the poorest post-school outcomes (Hart et al. 2006), with the lowest rates of engagement in post-secondary education, work, or preparation for work (Crawford, 2005; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). According to Crawford (2012), only 34 percent of Canadians with intellectual disabilities have achieved some type of educational certification, including a high school certificate or diploma, and only 25 percent were employed. Post high school outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities are frequently limited to separate adult day-programs (Ochs & Roessler,
2001) or dependency on welfare provision (Erevelles, 2009). While post-secondary education is a goal and aspiration for many students, students with intellectual disabilities are provided few opportunities to pursue this dream. Crawford (2012) reported that only 15 percent of Canadians with intellectual disabilities have achieved some type of post-secondary education, compared to 55 percent of the population without disabilities.

In Ontario, students with intellectual disabilities face many barriers to participation in post-secondary education. College and university admission criteria are based on standard entrance requirements, which is typically at minimum an Ontario Secondary School diploma. Yet, as Crawford (2012) reported, less than 20 percent of Canadian students with an intellectual disability have achieved a high school diploma or equivalent. Further, students with intellectual disabilities may not be protected under Ontario legislation that guarantees equal treatment in education. The *Ontario Human Rights Code* guarantees the right to equal treatment in education for all students, without discrimination on the ground of disability. However, for students to be protected under this legislation in post-secondary education, they must be able to meet the essential requirements of the program, including course requirements and standards (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2002). Students with intellectual disabilities who require significant curriculum modifications to access educational content are deemed as unable to meet the essential requirements of post-secondary education. Therefore, they do not qualify for services and supports under the legal duty for post-secondary education institutions to accommodate students with disabilities. These factors have contributed to
the systemic exclusion of students with intellectual disabilities from participation in post-secondary education.

Weinkauf (2002) argued that rather than considering going to college or university after high school, students with intellectual disabilities are moving into an adult life of limited choices and isolated opportunities. The options available to young adults with intellectual disabilities after high school are generally limited to segregated skills-based training, segregated work programs, and day programs (Hart et al., 2006; Mosoff et al., 2009). When opportunities available for people with intellectual disabilities revolve around supported employment, vocational rehabilitation, and sheltered workshops, argued Morrison and Polloway (1995), they remain separate and excluded from the typical experiences of their non-disabled peers into adulthood.

In recent years, alternative routes through post-secondary education across Canada, including Ontario, have been emerging for students with an intellectual disability. Yet, these opportunities are not enshrined in government policies or post-secondary practice, and are only provided at the discretion of a handful of post-secondary institutions in Ontario. As a relatively new and growing phenomenon in Ontario, evidence-based research is needed to understand and uncover the possibilities of inclusive post-secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities.
**Researcher Standpoint**

My experience with people who are labeled with an intellectual disability began almost twenty years ago when I was employed at a local residential institution for people with intellectual disabilities. It was through this experience that the marginalization and routine exclusion of people with intellectual disabilities from society became vividly apparent to me. This residential institution was located on the outskirts of the town, noticeably distant from the community and any neighbours. The people who lived in this institution had few opportunities to participate in community activities, and there were little or no expectations for them to do so. Often residents would spend their entire day confined within a single activity room with up to 25 other residents. This activity room was cold and bare, with dull gray walls, orange plastic furniture, and a small black and white television that hung from a chain in the corner of the ceiling. These people were essentially constrained within the walls of this hospital ward-type setting that they called home. A small number of residents were permitted an opportunity to attend an isolated day-school program designed to teach basic life skills to people who lived in this institution. However, this program actually had few learning objectives, and did not prominently foster educational growth or development. I often found myself wondering what the people who lived in this institution could accomplish if given an opportunity.

Due to the closure of this institution in the late 1990s, I obtained employment as an Educational Assistant at a local school board. During this time, I had the opportunity to work in a variety of classroom settings, including both integrated and special education
classes. Throughout this experience, there was one student in particular who made a significant impact on me. Having worked closely with this student in Grade 6, I maintained a close relationship with him and his family over the years. When it was time for this student and his family to make educational decisions for high school, the administration at his neighbourhood high school pushed to place him in a special education stream to focus on developing life skills. His family was vehemently opposed to this idea and requested that he be placed in regular high school classes. However, the administrators of educational placements felt so strongly that this student should be placed in the segregated, special education stream, that they asked me to speak to this family to help them understand that this was the best option for this student. The logic provided for this decision was that this student would not be successful in regular classes, and therefore should not be set up for failure. Because I disagreed with the school’s perspective, I never talked to his family about it. I often think about this experience and reflect upon the low educational expectations prevalent for students with intellectual disabilities, and the power schools hold over individuals that can serve to negatively impact an individual’s self-determination and life course.

In 2002, I began my undergraduate degree in Disability Studies. This program introduced me to a disability studies perspective; that is, an awareness of the power that social and cultural norms hold over people with disabilities, and how their lives are routinely affected by discriminatory ideologies and practices, marginalization, and oppression. My experience in the Disability Studies program was transformative; it was
through this program that I developed a deeper understanding and apprehension toward the social forces and processes that contribute to habitual injustices experienced by people with disabilities. My undergraduate experience provided a perspective through which I could take a more affirmative approach in challenging these assumptions, fallacies, and practices with regard to understanding the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities.

During the same time that I began my undergraduate studies, I accepted a position with my local school board to develop a pilot Transition Program focused on adult learning, employment, and community living for high school students with intellectual disabilities over the age of 18. Prior to this program, students who were in the special education stream would begin high school at the age of fourteen, and often stay with the same group of students until they were eligible to graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Certificate at the age of 21. These special education classes were mainly focused on the development of basic literacy and functional life skills. Even though the Transition Program was a segregated program in the special education stream, I felt that I was making a positive and meaningful contribution for these students by developing and facilitating age-appropriate and relevant curriculum, where students had input into the types of things they wanted to learn based on what was important to them. In my first year facilitating this program, several students expressed an interest in continuing their education in some capacity after high school. After talking to these students about their hopes and dreams for post-secondary education, I contacted the local college to inquire
about their participation in a college initiative that enabled prospective students to shadow current college students during a school day to see what the college experience was like. When I explained that I was inquiring on behalf of students labeled with an intellectual disability, this request was flatly denied. The college personnel to whom I spoke felt that, because these students would not meet the entrance requirements for a college program, they should not be provided any false hopes that they would go to college. I witnessed first-hand the hurt, disappointment, and negative self-esteem these students experienced due to such exclusionary practices. This moment defined for me the extent of exclusion people with intellectual disabilities still face when trying to access certain segments of society, and the impact such exclusion can have on a person.

Five years later, I first learned about the CICE Program that was offered at two Ontario colleges at that time. I thought about those students in the Transition Program and how they would have cherished an opportunity to explore post-secondary options. It has been exciting over the past several years to see opportunities at other colleges in Ontario emerging for students with intellectual disabilities. I consider myself to be an ally and advocate for people with intellectual disabilities. Having an awareness of the grave injustices experienced by people with intellectual disabilities compels me to make a positive contribution in this field; contributions based on values of inclusion and participation.
Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the inclusive post-secondary education experience of students with intellectual disabilities from the perspective of the student. This study documents the personal stories of seven young adults with intellectual disabilities who were participating in a CICE program in Ontario. The objectives of this study were to explore and describe: (a) their college experience in developing and pursuing their interests; (b) how they contribute to and interact in their learning environment; (c) how they develop friendships and social networks; (d) their participation in recreational, social, and cultural activities of the college environment; and (e) the meaning derived from these experiences.

This study was informed by the following overarching research question:

- From the perspective of the student, what are the experiences of students with intellectual disabilities who are participating in inclusive college programs?

Further, a combination of descriptive, implementation, and impact questions guided the study’s purpose, including:

- What are the opportunities for academic and social learning, growth, and development in inclusive post-secondary environments as perceived by these students?
- What are the successes of students who are participating in inclusive post-secondary education?
- What barriers may hinder these students’ post-secondary experiences?
• What is the anticipated impact of participation in post-secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities on levels of community participation and citizenship?

• What do students with intellectual disabilities hope to gain from their post-secondary experiences?

Rationale

Currently, in order to be admitted into a post-secondary program in Ontario, students must meet general program eligibility and applicant selection criteria, and also must be able to perform the essential requirements of the post-secondary curriculum. As previously discussed, these factors systemically exclude most students with intellectual disabilities from attending college or university. Consequently, students with intellectual disabilities often require an alternative pathway to participate in post-secondary education (Grigal, Hart, & Paiewonsky, 2010).

Over the past 25 years, inclusive post-secondary education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities have been gradually emerging across Canada (Mosoff et al., 2009) to support students with intellectual disabilities in continuing their education beyond high school (Weinkauf, 2003). These opportunities support students with intellectual disabilities to participate alongside their non-disabled peers in normative and typical post-secondary experiences (Bowman & Weinkauf, 2004; Mosoff et al., 2009). In Ontario, the most common path of inclusive post-secondary education for
students with intellectual disabilities is the Community Integration Through Cooperative Education (CICE) program. This college program is designed for individuals with intellectual disabilities or other significant learning challenges to experience college life and enhance their academic and vocational skills by taking college courses, which are modified to suit their academic abilities. Students with intellectual disabilities are supported in CICE programs through curriculum modification, note-taking, tutoring, and the provision of other related supports as required. Additional information about the CICE program is found in Chapter 4, Context: CICE Programs in Ontario.

Grigal et al. (2010) described inclusive post-secondary education as unchartered territory and the next frontier for students with intellectual disabilities. As inclusive post-secondary education continues to be a growing phenomenon in Ontario, evidence-based research is needed to provide an understanding of the experience of students who are participating in such programs. Currently, there is limited research on inclusive post-secondary education (Mosoff et al., 2009), especially within a Canadian context. One perspective that is largely missing from the literature is that of the voice of the students who are participating in inclusive post-secondary educational opportunities. As Johnson (2010) attested, few studies have examined the experiences or outcomes of youth with significant disabilities in inclusive educational environments. Timmons (2008) also acknowledged that the voice of students with disabilities is absent from the literature, and called for research from the perspective of people with disabilities, in order to understand the impact of inclusive education policy and practices in their lives. As Timmons further
explained, “we need to provide an opportunity to hear the voices of adults and children with disabilities, to value their opinions and views, and to learn from their experiences” (p. 143). As such, this research contributes to the literature on inclusive post-secondary education from the perspective of students who are participating in such opportunities in Ontario.

**Organization of Thesis**

Following this chapter, Chapter 2 presents a literature review that examines the social construction of disability, disability in the educational system, and inclusive post-secondary education practices. This literature review also introduces disability studies as a conceptual framework for the current study and offers important tenets about disability inquiry as a disability research paradigm aligned within a disability studies framework. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodological approaches and methods utilized in the process of data collection and analysis in this study, specifically, a qualitative phenomenological approach using multiple individual semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews. In Chapter 4 I present the context for the participants’ inclusive post-secondary education experiences through a description of Community Integration Programs in Ontario. Chapter 5 highlights the unique story of each of the seven participants: Belle, Caleb, Wolfie, Jeff, Gabe, Shannon, and James. Chapter 6 provides an overview of the participants’ combined experiences presented thematically; the main themes that emerged from the data were academic growth and development, interpersonal
relationships and social networks, career development and employment potential, and self-determination. Finally, in Chapter 7 I discuss the data and situate it within relevant literature, make recommendations for further study, and provide a conclusion about this study.
Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

This literature review begins with a provision regarding the grouping of disability used in this literature review. It then examines perspectives on disability, including the social construction of disability, and how the social construction of disability has contributed to the marginalization of students with disabilities in the education system. At this point, the literature review moves from reporting typical, oppressive practices towards students with disabilities in the education system, to literature on inclusive educational ideology, culminating with an examination of inclusive post-secondary education and the current status of inclusive post-secondary education in Ontario. This literature review concludes with a description of the conceptual framework used for this study, a disability studies perspective, and offers important tenets about disability inquiry as a disability research paradigm aligned within a disability studies framework.

A Provision Regarding the Grouping of Disability in the Literature

Literature regarding historical conceptual perspectives of disability tend to group people with various disabilities together into one broad category. In early history worldwide, the classification of intellectual disability was not conceptualized in a clear or distinct way. As Brown and Radford (2007) attested, detailed and relevant recorded documentation of disability in early history is a rare commodity. Historically, there has been no societal need to separate disability into distinctive categories. Brown (2007)
claimed that the need to describe and classify people in any comprehensive way is only a recent phenomenon that is done primarily to identify those who are deemed to require special learning or lifestyle supports. Much of the literature reviewed for this study reported results for people with disabilities as a general grouping; authors did not distinguish between categories of disability. As such, in this literature review I use the general term of disability to refer to those who have any general body function—physical, intellectual, or mental—that deviates from established cultural standards; people with intellectual disabilities are included in this general grouping. In specific contexts, where available by authors cited, this literature review narrows the focus to people with intellectual disabilities, the focus population of this study.

**Historical Perceptions of Disability**

In cultural precursors to today’s society, there is evidence of a consistent bias against disability and disabled people (Barnes, 2010). Historically, the tribulations of disabled people have been conceptualized in terms of divine punishment, karma, or moral failings, and more recently in terms of biological defects (Shakespeare, 2010). As such, people with disabilities have been conceived throughout history as a spectacle, and an object of fear, hatred, and pity (Braddock & Parish, 2001). Consequently, reactions to disability have ranged between fascination, repulsion, and fright (Braddock & Parish), and resulting social responses have included benevolence, charity, segregation, and medical interventions (Oliver, 1990). The origins of these dominant ideologies of
disability are rooted in the ways that society understands and responds to difference and
deviance during a given time.

**The Social Construction of Disability**

Perceptions of disability are socially constructed. Social constructions are formed through ideologies, standards, and practices that are operative within society. They define the realities of the world, including the assignment of value to objects, people, and events. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained, social constructions are formed through interactions between persons and groups, whereby a social system is formed, along with resulting concepts and representations of such actions. Social constructions are largely shaped by the dominant group in a given society, which, through its political and economic power, is able to impose its values, language, ways of behaving, and interpretation of behavior in a given society (Steckley & Kirby-Letts, 2010). Culture, as a “construct that attributes shared identity, language, tacit rules, symbols, rituals, and expectations to all members of a specific group” (Depoy & French-Gibson, 2003, p. 62), provides a common reference point from which people are evaluated and judged in society. Thus, as Whalley-Hammell (2006) explained, the dominant group in society has the power to define people through legitimating their own values, portraying them as neutral, natural, and objective, while determining which differences are considered to be abnormal and inferior.
Social constructions inform a commonly accepted set of values and beliefs that directly influence perceptions of individuals and groups. This process results in the establishment of individuals as objects of particular types of knowledge. Over time, social constructions become ingrained in society as common knowledge; that is, people come to accept social constructions as the natural order, or way of doing things. As a result, authority and legitimacy of the social construction is gained through the creation of what becomes accepted as common knowledge. This knowledge provides, in advance, basic rules through which ideas and values are formed (Barnes, 2010), and eventually becomes embedded in the reciprocal roles occupied by individuals in relation to others. Berger and Luckmann (1966) asserted that meanings are created, learned, and shared by people and then become reflected in their behaviour, attitudes, and language.

Norms, developed through shared attributes of culture, are the rules or standards expected of a group or society (Steckley & Kirby-Letts, 2006), and are considered to be the typical or standard way of being or doing things. The concept of the norm is derived from defining a mean, or average of what is most frequently observed, and deviance is then established through a comparison of departure from this mean. As Brown (2007) explained, in all social orders, a general understanding emerges about what constitutes typical development and what things almost all people should be able to do at a given age. Depoy and French-Gibson (2003) contended that determination of the atypical is made if body appearance or function deviates from what is most frequently observed. Notions of disability as human deviance are derived from standards and ideals about
specific body parts and functions, including ideas about typical growth and biological functioning. Deviance from established norms represents disability as a problem of the body gone wrong (Titchkosky, 2009).

Graham and Slee (2008) asserted that, because norms attribute value to culturally specific performances, particular ways of being are ultimately privileged. Norms encompass the rules or standards for what is acceptable in social life and are therefore associated with ideas about what is right, appropriate, and what belongs. Barnes and Mercer (2001) argued that the consequence of failure to conform to normality, whether in appearance, or in control over minds and bodies, is that people with disabilities are set apart as different, and defined as outcasts. As such, disabled people who do not conform to societal norms are susceptible to marginalization. Ableism is the belief that people with disabilities are inferior because they are not typical to the non-disabled majority. Ableism has contributed to the devaluation of people with disabilities, and resulted in segregation, social isolation, and social policies that limit opportunities for full societal participation, discussed later in this chapter. Mackelprang and Salsgiver (2009) argued that ableism precipitates oppression, and the resulting exclusion and ostracism experienced by people with disabilities reinforces the attitudes, actions, policies of those who oppress.

Steckley and Kirby-Letts (2010) posited that social constructions encompass the idea that certain elements of social life, including deviance, are not natural but rather artificial, and are directly created by society or culture. Therefore, social constructions of
individuals, groups, and objects are not static, but change over time based on prevailing notions and dominant ideologies. Disability can be viewed as a social construct because its meaning is not stable across time and place, rather, the meaning of disability emerges from a variety of social and environmental factors that are present in particular places and time (Brown & Radford, 2007).

Historical social constructions of disability have been broadly conceptualized through the economic, political, and social contexts of society in a given time. The social process of disabling was exacerbated through progression in industrialization (Davis, 2010), whereby resulting economic and social changes expedited the institutionalization of discrimination within core institutions of society (Barnes, 2010). Steckley and Kirby-Letts (2010) explained that as industry became increasingly complex, a more disciplined, trainable, and literate workforce was required to be economically productive. Those who could not keep up with this increasingly intensified pace were essentially removed from society and excused from obligations to participate. People with disabilities were included within the grouping of meritorious poor, which included all those who were excused from expectations to contribute to the labour market (Rauvaud & Stiker, 2001). Those who were considered to be legitimately exempt from work required alternate assistance in order to take care of their basic human needs. Hence, a vast range of specialized institutions evolved over the years to contain those who were considered to be economically unproductive, including workhouses, asylums, prisons, hospitals, industrial schools, and colonies (Oliver 1990). Consequently, as Barnes and Mercer (2003) argued,
a large number of disabled people were isolated in these institutions to prevent them from being a burden on society, based on notions that it was for their own good. According to Oliver (1990), these institutions served a dual purpose: repression as forced removal from the community for anyone who could not, or would not, keep up with the new order and pace, and also as an ideological deterrent to the fate of those who did not conform.

The social construction of disability in current Western society is derived from dominant capitalist ideologies of individualism that are informed by notions of normality, able-bodiedness, and medicalization (Oliver, 1996). These prevailing ideologies contribute to what Oliver (1990) referred to as a personal tragedy theory of disability, which locates the problem of disability solely in the individual with an impairment. This personal tragedy perspective, as described by Barnes and Mercer (2003), encompasses a largely medicalized approach to disability at the individual level that focuses on functional limitations and medical knowledge and practices. These perspectives of disability are established through an impairment or medical diagnosis focused on what is considered to be atypical characteristics in the individual (Altman, 2001). Through this perspective, the impairment is blamed for a person’s inability to function within established societal norms.

The medicalization of disability has emerged from humanitarian views and scientific progress, which are generally considered to be progressive and helpful within popular knowledge. However, when disability is understood as an individual pathology, people with disabilities become deemed to have special needs that require fixing in order
to bring them closer to established norms (Oliver, 1990), as previously described in this chapter. Through this perspective, disability is considered to be an undesirable condition, and therefore people with disabilities are expected to want to be cured or fixed of their impairment, and take all possible measures to minimize any difference in order to become closer to the norm. Rauvaud and Stiker (2001) affirmed that the key concepts and focus of rehabilitation are to reduce deviations from established norms. Mackelprang and Salsgiver (2009) argued that through medical perspectives, attempts are made to mold people with disabilities to conform to dominant cultural definitions of normal, whether or not this can even be achieved. Hence, treatment of an individual’s impairment and rehabilitation often become a major focus of the life of a person with a disability (Shakespeare, 2006).

Consequences of medical labels can be negative or harmful to a person with a disability. According to Barnes and Mercer (2003), people with disabilities often become professionally known in terms of their disabilities or functional limitations, instead of who they are as a human being. Medical discourse is patriarchal and dismisses disabled people under a single metaphysical category, which buries personalities and individual characteristics (Allan, 1999). This leads to generalizations about people with disabilities as being sick or ill, with accompanying preconceived notions and stereotypes about their abilities. When stereotyping occurs, people tend to overlook all other characteristics of the group and focus on the characteristics of the stereotype, whether it is accurate or not (Goffman, 1963).
Social policy with regard to education, employment, health, and social welfare are determined based on dominant conceptualizations of disability. Informed by medical rationales and underlying beliefs, the social construction of disability is reflected in assumptions about the social responsibility towards people with disabilities, which are subsequently reinforced through public policies (Oliver, 1990; Sneider & Sidney, 2009). Where an individual or medical perspective which focuses on individual impairment and functional limitations is dominant, societal response is based on welfare solutions of care, concern, and compensation (Beauchamp-Pryor, 2007). As Prince (2009) asserted, most public policy on disability focuses on a person’s functional limitations as a rationalization for low levels of educational attainment, employment, and income. Based on these assumptions, dependency and need become a dominant paradigm of disability policy. According to Oliver (1990), “dependency implies the inability to do things for oneself and consequently the reliance upon others to carry out some or all of the tasks of everyday life” (p. 84). As a result, expectations for the participation of people with disabilities in society becomes reduced or non-existent. Mackelprang and Salsgiver (2009) argued that the extensive subjugation of people with disabilities through reinforcement of their dependency on medical providers and on society assumes that people with disabilities need not work because others will care for them and shelter them from harm. Assistance, as a form of protection based on values of charity, results in economic exclusion and introduces a relationship of subordination and dependence between persons helped and their benefactors (Rauvaud & Stiker, 2001). The individual
receiving aid is excused from typical responsibilities, such as expectations for education or work, and relegated to a status of dependency. This surrender of obligations is a significant source of marginalization experienced by people with disabilities.

Based on perceived needs, the welfare state has established systems of paternalistic care for people with intellectual disabilities including residential facilities, special schools, and sheltered employment. According to Stone (2002), society accepts paternalism for certain categories of people, including those who have an intellectual disability, because through popular knowledge they are considered to be proper objects of paternalistic care. Morris (2005) explained that because people with disabilities are commonly considered to be in need of care, they are not considered to be autonomous people. As a result of these dominant paternalistic attitudes and practices, people with intellectual disabilities are routinely denied ordinary liberties and forced to do things that are considered to be for their own good. Consequently, people with intellectual disabilities are frequently denied the opportunity to live their lives according to their own interests and preferences (Ward & Stewart, 2008). Mackelprang and Salsgiver (2009) argued that these manifestations of oppression limit the choices, exposure, and life experiences of people with disabilities, as well as their opportunities to fully participate in society.
The Education of Students With Intellectual Disabilities

The organizational structure of education in Canadian society creates, maintains, and reinforces dominant ideologies about people with disabilities. The social construction of disability is enacted through the policies and practices that govern education opportunities for students with disabilities. Historically, these students have been frequently excluded from opportunities to be educated alongside their non-disabled peers, denied access to the general education curriculum, and educated in programs that do not provide credentials to participate in the labour market, or prepare for the expectations of adult living (Oliver, 1996).

In Canada, students are largely categorized in education based on the economic and social forces of capitalism. Education systems are arranged to maximize the competitive performance of the individual student and their ability to function as producers in society. Erevelles (2009) explained that in a context where the capitalist market is governed by laws of the extraction of maximum surplus, individuals are required to demonstrate their capacity to be productive, efficient, and competitive participants in the workforce in order to meet rigorous demands of the market. A focus of the education system, then, is to create individuals to function in this market, and as such, students are sorted and streamed based on their presumed capabilities and assumed potential for the workforce.

Educational expectations for students with intellectual disabilities are directly influenced by these conceptualizations of cultural norms, expectations, and standards.
An implicit premise of the system of schooling, according to Solis and Connor (2008), is the expectation that students will perform academically and behaviourally at a certain role, in a certain way, by a certain age. Educational institutions are designed to foster the concept of a homogeneous community of learners, working towards a notion of academic merit defined according to standardized levels of progress and achievement (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). As Ferri and Connor (2007) explained, schools function as key sites for creating and maintaining students who look and act in accordance with established norms; the removal or exclusion of students who deviate from these standards is common practice to maintain the classroom as a normalized space. Thus, schools and classrooms teach both explicit and implicit lessons about normalcy, including who belongs and who does not.

Exclusionary educational practices towards students with disabilities are manifested through the discourse of difference and deviance in educational policy rhetoric. Students whose educational experiences are situated outside the domain of normal are largely assigned to special education provision (Solis & Connor, 2008). Disability is considered to be a fixed category of deviance, and is used as justification for the provision of special education provisions for students who do not fit conveniently into the existing schooling structure (Oliver, 1996). This special education model, according to Crawford (2005), is based on the belief that academic and social differences between students with and without disabilities are of such significance that separate educational provisions are required. According to Hallahan et al. (2010), special education is defined
as “specifically designed instruction that meets the unusual needs of the exceptional student” (p. 8). Crawford (2005) described that within the special education model, students are clustered according to type and degree of disability, and are often set apart from other students through special settings, special teachers, and special pedagogical approaches through formal identification and categorization.

The individual, deficit construct, according to Danforth & Gabel (2008), is the cornerstone of special education ideology, policy, and practice. Within the school system, disability is commonly equated with dominant social constructions based on deficit and dysfunction emphasized through medicalized discourses (Barnes & Mercer, 2003; Crawford, 2005; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare, 2006). From this deficit construct, the student with a disability is perceived as having an inadequacy, failure, or illness. Special education measures are then focused on the individual student to address any deviation they have from established standards. These measures can include special learning materials, instructional techniques or equipment, and/or separate classes and curriculum (Bennett, Dworet, & Weber, 2008). Andrews and Lupart (2000) identified several educational services for students with disabilities, including individual education programs, curriculum modifications, special devices, special classroom arrangements, social services, medical services, and various therapies. The types of special education services that an individual student receives depend on how much the student differs from established norms, as well as available resources. In other words, the more deviant a student is perceived to be, the more likely they will experience segregation and
marginalization in the school system. A problem of this approach, as Mackelprang and Salsgiver (2009) contended, is that when the focus of education relies exclusively on problems and incapacities, the acknowledgement and cultivation of a student’s inherent and potential strengths are neglected.

In order to qualify for special education services, students must usually obtain proof of their disability through medical documentation. This method of conferring of labels in schools is a common practice whereby students are officially placed into categories, sorted, and streamed based on an impairment diagnosis (Ferri & Connor, 2007; Gallagher, 2008). This categorization of students based on an impairment diagnosis actually serves to reinforce the marginalization of students with disabilities. As Brown (2007) explained, the use of special terms to refer to people with disabilities reinforces the cycle of devaluation, because terms that classify people as different are embedded with notions of inferiority, and ultimately lead others to treat such individuals as different. As such, Brown contended that terms and labels can be harmful, and might best be abandoned where possible.

Of all classifications of disability, students with intellectual disabilities face increased marginalization in the system of education. Being socially constructed as incompetent, an assumption is often made that students with intellectual disabilities do not need to be provided opportunities to acquire and advance their skills. Jaegar and Bowman (2005) claimed that the social construction of intellectual disability is so powerful that a person with an intellectual disability is not expected to engage in any
activities that evidence personal empowerment or self-sufficiency. As previously explained in this chapter, when ableism is operationalized into policy and practice, especially within the educational system, professionals underestimate capabilities, limit self-determination, and behave oppressively towards those people (Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 2009). As such, the education of students with intellectual disabilities has typically focused on functional literacy or life skills to manage personal affairs, as opposed to the same or similar curriculum as their non-disabled peers.

The common practice of segregating students through special education processes often leads to the creation of a considerable number of students who are denied common educational experiences and expectations. Special education programs habitually result in unequal outcomes for students with disabilities, particularly with regard to employment and access to post-secondary education. According to Erevelles (2009), the educational emphasis on developing life skills have enabled only a few people with intellectual disabilities to be employed, while most become permanently unemployed or dependent on the welfare state for their daily survival. Mutua and Smith (2010) explained that special education processes slot students with disabilities into an inferior social position, thereby reproducing the larger social order in which disabled people are cast as objects of charity, rather than producers of goods and services. Oliver (1996) claimed that the education system has failed disabled children in that it has neither equipped them to exercise their rights as citizens, nor to accept their responsibilities. Instead, special education has functioned to exclude disabled people, not just from
educational process, but also from mainstream social life, thereby reifying the status quo in larger society.

**Inclusive Educational Ideology**

Trends in educational and social policy in Canada over the past three decades have attempted to reduce exclusionary practices for people with disabilities through integration and inclusion. These trends have been largely influenced by the disability rights movement, whereby people with disabilities, allies, and advocates recognize and are demanding eradication of the marginalization that people with disabilities have had imposed upon them. They advocate for the creation of social policies and practices that foster and promote the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of society. In other words, as Chouinard (2012) discussed, disabled Canadians are struggling to advance and assert their rights to be included and participate in the same spaces of life as other citizens. Goals of inclusion aspire for people with disabilities to belong within the larger culture of society, and to form part of it (Brown, Buell, Birkan, & Percy, 2007).

Educational policy-makers in provinces across Canada have adopted a philosophy of inclusion to provide education to students with disabilities in regular classrooms (Bennett, Dworet, & Weber, 2008). Inclusion, described by Hallahan et al. (2010), is a term that is often used to describe teaching students with exceptionalities in the same environments with their age peers who do not have exceptionalities. Reiser (2006)
defined inclusion as “the child’s right to belong to her/his local mainstream school, to be valued for who s/he is and to be provided all the support s/he needs to thrive” (p. 168). According to Crawford (2005), the inclusive education model challenges the cornerstones of the special education model, especially with regard to the notion that differences in achievement between students with and without disabilities are too difficult to be accommodated in regular educational settings. It challenges the assumptions that special education settings are more effective than regular classroom environments for students with disabilities, and that labeling is essential to the provision of appropriate service. In other words, inclusion means working towards a culture where all children are accommodated in mainstream education, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions.

Crawford (2005) noted the difficulties in moving inclusive education forward within the special education policy and program framework that continues to prevail widely in Canada. Inclusion policies are appended to existing educational policies and are therefore often considered to be an addition to special education policies. In this context, inclusion practices remain a separate educational philosophy for students with disabilities, and notions of inclusion fail to challenge restrictive practices in schools that are embedded in existing organizational arrangements, curriculum, and pedagogy (Vlachou, 2004). Because inclusion remains an elusive concept, many students with disabilities continue to be accommodated in specialized programs, and consequently,
segregated educational placements for students with disabilities remain likely (Bennett, Dworet, & Weber, 2008).

Inclusion involves the identification and minimizing of barriers to learning and participation, and the maximizing of resources to support learning and participation of all students in typical education settings. As Carrington (1999) asserted, the goal of inclusion in schools should not just focus on the needs of students with disabilities, but should be embedded in the broader context of difference and similarity. Inclusion, then, is not just about disability but concerns a school culture that welcomes and celebrates difference while also recognizing individual needs (Corbett, 2001).

As Carrington (1999) explained, educational equity requires a system that eliminates categorical special needs and the historical distinction between regular and special education. Thus, in an idealized model of education, differences between pupils in terms of learning abilities would reflect random individual differences, not systemic, group-based pedagogical needs (Norwich & Lewis, 2001). An inclusive philosophy fosters the premise that all students should be provided with opportunities to realize their potential, and contribute to the life of the school. Crawford (2005) claimed that if properly implemented, education programs that include students with disabilities in regular classrooms and schools can more effectively deliver positive social and economic outcomes than arrangements that label, segregate, and stigmatize students.
**Inclusive Post-Secondary Education**

Hart et al. (2006) claimed that an increasing interest in inclusive post-secondary education is largely due to a practice of inclusion of students with disabilities at the elementary and secondary levels that has been somewhat implemented over the last two decades. Generally speaking, inclusive post-secondary education supports students with intellectual disabilities to participate alongside their non-disabled peers in normative and typical post-secondary experiences (Bowman & Weinkauf, 2004; Mosoff et al., 2009). Inclusive post-secondary education provides an opportunity for students with intellectual disabilities to pursue a vocational area of interest, access the campus learning environment, attend classes with peers, complete assignments, tests and other learning activities, and engage in the same extra-curricular activities as any other post-secondary student. In their research, Grigal, Neubert, and Moon (2002) identified several goals for students who participate in inclusive post-secondary education, including:

- partaking in the college experience;
- increased mobility in the community;
- improved social and communication skills;
- increased self-determination;
- developing friendships;
- age-appropriate leisure and recreation pursuits; and
- obtaining employment.
Research has confirmed the advantages of participation in post-secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities. Hart et al. (2006) reported that students with intellectual disabilities can benefit in the same ways as non-disabled students from post-secondary education with regard to academic and personal skill-building, employment, independence, self-advocacy, and self-confidence. In their research, Carroll, Petroff, and Blumberg (2009) found that with varying levels of support, students with intellectual disabilities were successfully completing specialized and inclusive coursework, and participating in campus organizations, clubs, and activities. Carroll et al. also reported that students with intellectual disabilities evolved socially and academically during participation in post-secondary education, as evidenced by increased class participation and the assumption of greater roles within group work. Mosoff et al. (2009) conducted interviews with eight students with intellectual disabilities who were participating in inclusive post-secondary education and identified increased self-esteem as an important outcome of participation:

For all of the students, the most important benefit of inclusive post-secondary education was an increase in self-esteem. Every student mentioned an increase in his or her confidence and a brighter outlook for the future. Students told us that they had gained enough confidence to believe they would get good jobs after completing college or university. As well, students told us that making friends with typical students in elite institutions enhanced their own social status. (p.27)
Hughson, Moodie, and Uditsky (2006) reported that graduates, and their families, found that inclusive post-secondary education had significantly improved graduates’ prospects for employment, community involvement, and living arrangements. They concluded that students with intellectual disabilities who participated in inclusive post-secondary education reported increased satisfaction across several life domains, including emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, personal development, self-determination, and social inclusion. Mosoff et al. (2009) contended that participation in post-secondary education in a setting where the “bar is raised” (p. 41) produces confidence to follow newly elevated aspirations, thereby improving the quality of life for persons with intellectual disabilities. Students with intellectual disabilities also benefit from achieving a valued status, and a place in the community (Hart & Grigal, 2010; Oliver, 1996) from which they have been historically marginalized.

**Disability Studies as a Conceptual Framework for Research**

In recent decades, people with disabilities, advocates, and activists have demanded a re-conceptualization of disability that exposes the oppressive practices imposed upon people with disabilities and emphasizes the experience and meaning of disability. Barnes and Mercer (2001) claimed that a key underpinning of disability studies is to counter the individualism and medicalization of disability, essentialist definitions of disability, the moral-laden character of normalcy, and negative stereotyping of disabled people resulting in social exclusion and lack of agency. Through a disability
studies perspective, the experience of disability is situated within the wider social and cultural contexts of society. According to Gallagher (2008), disability studies has emerged from a position that recognizes the moral and political nature of all knowledge, and acknowledges the constructed, rather than presumed objective nature of disability. Linton (1998) asserted that a disability studies perspective exposes the ways that disability has been made exceptional, and demands a reconceptualization of disabled people as full citizens with rights and privileges, and whose history and contributions are recorded and represented in all aspects of society.

Disability studies is closely linked to the social model of disability, which focuses attention to the oppression and discrimination imposed upon people with disabilities as the primary barriers in their lives (Barton, 2003; Oliver, 1990; Prilleltensky, 2009). The social model of disability challenges individualistic conceptualizations of disability through the perspective that disability does not stem from individual limitations, but from the failure of social environments to adjust to the needs of people with different abilities (Jongbloed, 2003; Oliver, 1990). According to Prilleltensky (2009), the social model represents a paradigm shift that increasingly emphasizes the social, cultural, and economic determinants of disability through which unaccommodating societal structures systemically exclude people with disabilities from active participation in society.

Shakespeare (2010) explained that the social model demonstrates the problems that disabled people face are the result of social oppression and exclusion, not individual
deficits. This perspective places the onus on society to remove imposed barriers to enable people with disabilities to participate fully in the life of the community.

The social model of disability provides a compelling perspective through which disability can be explained in terms of socio-economic conditions and relations, where oppressive practices are acknowledged and challenged, and where people with disabilities can voice their experiences. The fundamental significance of the social model is that it goes beyond the issue of disablement and is concerned with the establishment and maintenance of a social world in which all people experience the realities of inclusive values and relationships (Barton, 2003). Principles of social justice, empowerment, and human agency inform the broader struggle for people with disabilities to be included in all aspects of society, rather than excluded.

A disability studies perspective provides a lens through which to view how the dichotomy between ability and disability is socially constructed, and made to appear fixed and natural through social, economic, and legal discourses. Disability studies, as an interdisciplinary investigation of how social, political, and economic factors interact to construct the phenomenon of disability (Prilleltensky, 2009), finds meaning in social and cultural contexts (Taylor, 2008), and is an expression of the wider socio-economic, political, and cultural arrangements that establish explicit forms of exclusion (Goodley, 2007). Through a disability studies perspective, disability is critically examined as a constructed category related to all aspects of identity and culture (Ferri, 2008) with focus
on the cultural discourse, social oppression, and environmental barriers that contribute to how disability is conceived and responded to in society.

Disability studies contrasts prevailing negative and derogatory perspectives of disability to focus on how disadvantage is defined and represented in society (Taylor, 2008). A critical lens is turned towards the representational and institutional structures (Linton, 1998) to explore deep-rooted systemic ideological and material barriers within society (Barton, 2000). This perspective challenges prevailing conceptualizations of disability as a tragedy that constricts the lives of individuals exposes them as an exclusionary and oppressive system rather than the natural and appropriate order of things (Garland-Thompson, 2004).

The general goal of disability studies in education is to deepen understandings of the daily experiences of people with disabilities in schools. This perspective provides a lens to critically examine the educational experiences of students with disabilities, and provides a view of pedagogy that recognizes those who are marginalized by typical or normative educational contexts. The ultimate goal of disability studies in education is to create and sustain inclusive and accessible schools, where all students have the opportunity to grow and develop to their fullest potential and participate in typical educational activities and expectations. A key tenet underpinning this perspective is to presume competence and capability in the examination of the possibilities for participation in all aspects of society. A disability studies framework provides alternative, empowering conceptualizations of intellectual disability in contrast to the
dominant social constructions that have supported and legitimated segregation in educational policy development and practice. A disability studies framework in education promotes understandings of disability that challenge medical, scientific, and psychological models of disability as they relate to education (Connor, Gabel, Gallagher, & Morton, 2008). As Mackelprang and Salsgiver (2009) argued, this strengths-based approach focuses on capabilities, capacities, and opportunities rather than limitations. In direct contrast to typical special education models, a disability studies framework critically examines disability in social and cultural contexts, where constructions of disability are questioned and special education assumptions and practices are challenged (Taylor, 2008).

Limited post-secondary educational opportunities have contributed to conditions of injustice for students with intellectual disabilities, including marginalization and oppression. Oliver (1996) contended that “institutional discrimination is evident when the policies and activities of public or private organizations, social groups and all other organizational forms result in unequal treatment or unequal outcomes between disabled and non-disabled people” (p. 76). As argued by Barnes and Mercer (2003), restrictions imposed upon disabled people prevent them from engaging in everyday activities, and, as a result, disabled people have fewer possibilities to advance and defend their interests within society. Inadequate educational opportunities produce other forms of societal exclusion, including citizenship. Oppressive educational practices raise fundamental issues of social justice concerning the availability of opportunities for participation in the
productive activities of society and access to the means of consumption. Therefore, a key philosophical discourse of disability studies is social justice (Rice, 2008), whereby an understanding of disability as oppression is established in order to address the exclusionary practices that people with disabilities routinely face in society.

Social justice demands the transformation of institutions that systemically oppress people. According to Young (2002), "social justice requires not only the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group difference without oppression” (p. 39). A socially just system of education fosters the growth, development, and self-determination of all students. A social justice perspective reduces systemic forms of oppression that restrict access to opportunities for developing and advancing capabilities and capacities for living a life of personal choice. Equal opportunities in education provide students with disabilities the plethora of prospects available to non-disabled students. According to Barton (2000), notions of social justice and equality are central to the idea of inclusion and participation in society.

In conducting research on the possibilities of inclusive post-secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities, a disability studies framework is appropriate as a conceptual framework to examine the social, rather than physical or psychological determinants of the experience of disability. Consistent with this framework, this study is informed by principles of inclusion and concepts of social justice in the critical examination of opportunities available to students with intellectual disabilities in the post-secondary education system. Here, disability is considered to be a subjective,
socially derived concept, and a disability studies framework was utilized to separate impairments from the ideology and social constructions that influence educational practice and policy. A significant goal of conducting research through this perspective is to create and sustain inclusive and accessible education, which involves the identification and minimization of barriers to learning and participation.

**Disability Inquiry**

Disability inquiry has emerged from dissatisfaction with the way disability research has traditionally been carried out, and the role that people with disabilities had within such research. Historically, the disability research agenda has been predominantly subject to the interests and impulses of politicians, policy makers, and professional academics (Barnes, 2003). Approaches to disability research have been driven by experts and professionals, conducted on people with disabilities, excluded people with disabilities from the research process, and treated them only as research subjects (Barnes & Mercer, 2003). According to French (2001), because disabled people are rarely involved in disability research, inappropriate questions have been asked which in turn has resulted in the development of inappropriate policies and practices. Aligned with an individual or medical model of disability, typical research on disability has produced a lack of findings and outcomes relevant to the lived experiences of people with disabilities. Such research, according to Barnes (2003), has failed to produce any real action, with a consequent lack of positive change in the lives or situations of people with disabilities.
According to Oliver (1992), disability inquiry should not be seen as a set of technical, objective procedures carried out by experts. Rather, such inquiry should be part of the struggle by disabled people to challenge the oppression they currently experience in their daily lives. Turmusani (2004) contended that disability inquiry supports a move away from traditional methods of studying disabled people as respondents only, and moves towards ensuring respondents have more participation and control of the research process and its production. This is highlighted in the emphasis on reciprocity in the relationship between researcher and researched as an attempt to give due recognition to those being researched as the expert-knower (Barnes & Mercer, 2003).

The foundational underpinning of a disability research paradigm is the production of research that has meaningful practical outcomes for disabled people (Barnes, 2003). A disability research paradigm emphasizes how the data collection will benefit the community, the appropriateness of communication methods, and how the data will be reported in a way that is respectful of power relationships (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 1998). Grounded in a disability studies framework, a disabilities research paradigm ensures that research remains focused on the issues and concerns of greatest importance to people with disabilities.

Summary

In this chapter, I have examined various perspectives on disability, including the social construction of disability, and how the social construction of disability has
contributed to the marginalization of students with disabilities in the education system. I have presented literature on special education, inclusive educational ideology, and provided an examination of inclusive post-secondary education. I concluded with a description of the conceptual framework used for this study, a disability studies perspective, and provided important tenets about disability inquiry as a disability research paradigm aligned within a disability studies framework.

In the following Chapter, I provide an overview of the methodological approaches and methods utilized in the process of data collection and analysis in this study. I describe the applicability of a qualitative phenomenological research methodology. I then outline the context and criteria for recruitment of participants, the research design of multiple individual in-depth semi-structured interviews using photo-elicitation, qualitative design validity, data analysis as an inductive process, the role of the researcher, and ethical considerations employed in this study.
Chapter 3
Methodology and Methods

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological approaches and methods utilized in the process of data collection and analysis in this study. Specifically, this chapter describes the applicability of a qualitative phenomenological research methodology, and outlines the context and criteria for recruitment of participants, the research design of multiple in-depth semi-structured interviews using photo-elicitation, qualitative design validity, data analysis as an inductive process, the role of the researcher, and ethical considerations employed in this study.

Research Methodology

In order to explore the lived experiences of students with intellectual disabilities participating in inclusive post-secondary education, a qualitative phenomenological methodology was employed in this study. Qualitative research investigates the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007), and therefore, this approach is most suitable to explore and describe individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), qualitative research is first concerned with understanding a social phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. In this study, this understanding was acquired by analyzing the various contexts of the participants’ college experiences, including their feelings, thoughts, and actions, and then
narrating the meanings ascribed to these experiences. Consistent with a disability studies framework, the use of a qualitative methodology was used in this study to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative phenomenological methodology provided the participants freedom to express themselves on their own terms, and provided the insider perspective (Silverman, 2004) required for disability inquiry.

Phenomenology

A phenomenological approach to inquiry explores how human beings make sense of a particular experience and transform this experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). As such, this approach was ideally suited for this study to provide a rich description and understanding of the inclusive college experience from the perspective of the participants. More specifically, this approach was employed in order to explore, understand, and describe the meanings of the lived experience of students participating in inclusive post-secondary education.

In a discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenological methodology, Creswell (2007) identified two major approaches as transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology, as described by Creswell, is focused primarily on the subjective experience of the participants involved in a
particular phenomenon. Creswell differentiated this approach from hermeneutic phenomenology; hermeneutic phenomenology is more focused on an interpretation of the overall essence of the experience under study. In other words, as Van Manen (1990) explained, hermeneutical phenomenology incorporates an overall interpretation of the experience from the standpoint of the researcher. Transcendental and hermeneutic approaches to phenomenology are often considered distinct and separate approaches, however, as Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2010) contended, combining phenomenological perspectives can lead to a mature, multifaceted, and holistic phenomenology.

Smith et al. (2010) described an approach to phenomenology that they have termed interpretative phenomenological analysis, which unifies various phenomenological perspectives. Interpretive phenomenological analysis situates participants in their individual contexts, explores their personal perspectives, and is also an interpretative process. This approach begins with a detailed examination of each individual circumstance before moving to more general, interpretive claims. An interpretive phenomenological analysis approach was utilized in this study to provide the necessary methodological framework for focusing on participant stories and their unique experiences in post-secondary education, while also providing an interpretive perspective to capture the overall essence of the inclusive post-secondary experience.

A phenomenological approach to research is naturalistic in the sense that the research unfolds in authentic settings, with no manipulations to the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). As Smith et al. (2010) explained, the founding principle of
phenomenological inquiry is that experience should be examined in the way that it occurs, and in its own terms. Therefore, the detailed examination of lived experience in this study was conducted to empower the participants to express their experiences in their own terms, rather than according to predefined conditions established by the researcher. The use of semi-structured interviews using photo-elicitation methods used in this study, discussed later in this chapter, provided the opportunity for the stories to unfold naturally from the perspective of each participant.

**Site Selection and Gaining Entry**

Seven participants were recruited from two colleges in Ontario that provide an inclusive post-secondary experience for students with intellectual disabilities through a CICE program. An initial mapping of the field was conducted through informal networking. Attendance at a CICE conference in May, 2010 provided me with an opportunity to connect with several Coordinators of CICE programs in Ontario, where I informally inquired whether they would support the recruitment of participants from their site for this study. I selected colleges that were within a reasonable commuting distance for me as the researcher. After appropriate Ethics clearance was obtained from Queen’s University, I formally approached the Deans of three colleges in order to proceed with participant recruitment. Two colleges ultimately agreed to provide access to recruit participants. The third college declined to participate, as the students in their CICE
program were already involved in another study. For the purposes of this study, I now refer to the participating colleges as College A and College B.

College A was a relatively small college, with a student population of just over 3000 students. This college boasted small class sizes and a personal atmosphere for its students. There were approximately 40 CICE students enrolled at College A. College B was a considerably larger college, reporting an overall student population of almost 8500. The class sizes described by the participants ranged from small classes to large lectures. There were approximately 50 students enrolled in the CICE program at College B.

I was required to go through the formal Ethics approval process at each college site in order to recruit participants and to obtain permission to take photographs on site. College A approved the students taking their own pictures to share with the researcher, under the stipulation that any identifying information would be blurred out. College B expressed concerns about the participants’ use of cameras and photographs, and did not grant approval for the participants to take their own photographs for this study. After explanation of the intended photo-elicitation methods, College B granted permission for the researcher to take the photographs for the interviews, with the condition of avoiding photographing people when possible, and to blur out any identifying information in the photographs.
Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is based on research goals of discovery, understanding, and insight, and therefore, a sample was selected from which the most would be learned (Merriam, 2009). Patton (2002) claimed that the logic and power of purposeful sampling is derived from an emphasis on acquiring an in-depth understanding. Purposeful sampling also increases the utility of information obtained from small samples (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Purposeful sampling was used in this study to select information-rich cases to provide in-depth information (Mertens, 1998) about the inclusive post-secondary experience. For inclusion in this study, participants met the following eligibility criteria.

Participants:

(1) were over the age of 18 years;
(2) self-identified as having intellectual disability or other significant learning challenge, and were participating in an inclusive post-secondary program;
(3) were willing to take pictures and answer interview questions about their post-secondary experiences;
(4) agreed to write a diary or journal in some format such as reflection, bulleted list or images; and
(5) preference was given to students who had completed a year of their program so that they were more familiar with their learning environment and had greater experience to draw from.
Once Ethics approval was obtained at each college, I made arrangements with the Coordinator of the CICE program at each college for me to talk to the second year students in their seminar class to explain the study and recruit participants. After I provided an explanation of the study to the students in class, students who were interested in obtaining additional information about the study met with me after class. I provided more detailed information to the students, including what was involved in the study, explained the Letter of Information and Informed Consent documents, and answered any questions the students had. Students were provided with the Letter of Information and Informed Consent documents, and instructions about how to return the documents to me if they wished to participate in the study.

At College A, four students initially expressed an interest in participating in the study and returned their Consent forms to me. After email communication to make arrangements for the first interview, one participant declined participation due to health reasons. This left three participants who were recruited from College A: Shannon, Wolfie, and Jeff. Shannon had been out of high school for several years before deciding to go back to college. She had an interest in working with children, and was taking Early Childhood Education as her program area of concentration. Wolfie also had an interest in working with children. She took an extra year to finish her high school, then began college directly afterwards. Wolfie was also taking courses in Early Childhood Education as her program area of concentration. Jeff, the third participant from College
A, had a very strong interest in security and policing. His program area of concentration was in Police Foundations. He also began college directly after high school.

At College B, seven students initially expressed an interest in participating in the study and returned their signed Consent forms to me. Through initial email communication, three students did not follow through with making arrangements for their first interview, which left four participants who were recruited from College B: Belle, Caleb, Gabe, and James. Belle had a strong interest in animals, and was taking courses in General Science and Veterinary Assistant as her program area of concentration. She began college directly after high school. During the thirteen years that Gabe had been out of high school, he had a variety of jobs, and even tried a culinary college program at the encouragement from his friends and family. However, he was passionate about working with people, so he decided to go back to college and take courses in Child and Youth Worker as his program area of concentration. James had been out of high school for a few years before deciding to go to college. He was very interested in media and technology, and was taking courses in Print Media as his program area of concentration. Caleb also had a strong interest in media subjects. After being out of school for four years, he decided to attend college with the encouragement of his family and friends to explore his interests through taking media-related courses as his program area of concentration.

Seven participants in total were recruited to participate in this study. All met the eligibility criteria to take part in this study. This number of participants for a
phenomenological study was suggested by Smith et al. (2010) as being appropriate to provide sufficient cases for the development of meaningful points of similarity and difference between participants, but not too large to risk being overwhelmed by the amount of data generated.

Detailed demographic information regarding the participants’ specific diagnoses or impairment labels was not collected for this study. There were many reasons for this. First, and foremost, the use of labels and categorization has historically had negative consequences for people with disabilities, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. Because of this understanding, I intentionally chose not to attach diagnostic labels to the participants who were involved with this study. However, descriptive information is provided from the perspective of the participants regarding their strengths and what they perceived to be their learning needs. This information is presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The second reason I avoided specific diagnostic labels in this study was to avoid preconceived notions about limitations and abilities that stem from such labels. Important to this study was that participants met the eligibility requirements for participating in a modified college program and this study’s eligibility criteria. Table 3.1 represents a summary of demographic information gathered about the participants in this study.
Table 3.1

Summary of Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>College Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20-24 24-29 30-35 L R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfie</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabe</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M=Male, F=Female; L=Local, R=Relocated to attend college

Research Design

The main rationale for employing a qualitative methodology in this study was to learn about the inclusive post-secondary education experience from the perspective of those who are participating in it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As Van Manen (1990) explained, phenomenology uncovers the "lived experience," which requires going directly "to the things themselves” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). As such, the primary methods of data collection came directly from the participants. Participants were invited to take photographs, to participate in three individual, semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews, and to keep personal diaries of their post-secondary experience. These
approaches were selected in order to obtain a first-hand perspective of how the participants conceived their world and made sense of their post-secondary experience. In order to facilitate the elicitation of stories, thoughts, and feelings, in-depth interviews using photo-elicitation were used to invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences in inclusive post-secondary education. Smith et al. (2010) contended that in-depth interviews may be the best means of accessing such accounts in an interpretive phenomenological analysis approach to research. The in-depth interview provided an opportunity for participants to tell their stories, speak freely and reflectively, develop their ideas, and express their concerns at length (Smith et al., 2010).

In phenomenological research, data collection typically involves several interviews with participants (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006). In this study, the use of multiple interviews provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on their experiences between interviews, and add to what they said in earlier interviews. Conducting multiple in-depth interviews with participants also allowed for responsiveness to pursue new paths of discovery as they emerged, and the opportunity to adapt inquiry as understandings developed and deepened (Patton, 2002). Three in-depth interviews with participants served as the primary source of data generation for this study.

In order to facilitate travel involved with conducting interviews at sites at great distance from where I live, I attempted to arrange interviews with participants from each
location on the same day. Participants were asked where they would like to have their interviews conducted. As no participant expressed any location preference, all but two interviews were conducted at each college site, in a study room booked by the researcher. These rooms were comfortable, safe, quiet, and free from interruptions. Alternate arrangements were required for two participants’ interviews. In order to accommodate these two participants’ availability and schedules, the final interview with Belle was conducted at a local coffee shop, and the final interview with Shannon was conducted over the phone. Interviews were approximately thirty to sixty minutes in length. Because phenomenological research requires a semantic record of the words spoken by the participants in the interview (Smith et al., 2010), all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Interviews with participants were conducted between November 11, 2011 and March 20, 2012. Originally, I had planned to interview participants at one month intervals to provide sufficient time between interviews for participants to think about their experience as it was occurring. Because of a delay in obtaining Ethics approval from College B, the time span between interviews with participants from College B was reduced to two or three weeks between interviews in order to facilitate conducting the interviews prior to the end of the participants’ college studies.

In addition to interviews with the participants, an administrator from each site was interviewed in order to provide context regarding how the CICE program is delivered at each college. At College A, I interviewed the CICE Program Coordinator who had held
this position for two years. At College B, I also interviewed the CICE Coordinator. This individual also held this position for two years. Table 3.2 summarizes the interview schedule and length of interview for each participant.

Table 3.2

*Interview Schedule and Length of Interview for Each Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>November 11, 2011</td>
<td>December 9, 2011</td>
<td>April 2, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24:54</td>
<td>43:09</td>
<td>26:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfie</td>
<td>November 11, 2011</td>
<td>December 9, 2011</td>
<td>March 5, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46:51</td>
<td>94:35</td>
<td>63:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>November 11, 2011</td>
<td>December 9, 2011</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29:29</td>
<td>45:06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>February 14, 2012</td>
<td>March 6, 2012</td>
<td>March 31, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42:56</td>
<td>52:56</td>
<td>50:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>February 14, 2011</td>
<td>March 6, 2012</td>
<td>March 20, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33:07</td>
<td>44:53</td>
<td>32:31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>February 14, 2012</td>
<td>March 6, 2012</td>
<td>March 20, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28:29</td>
<td>51:48</td>
<td>33:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabe</td>
<td>February 14, 2012</td>
<td>March 6, 2012</td>
<td>March 20, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40:12</td>
<td>64:12</td>
<td>50:04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator,</td>
<td>December 9, 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College A</td>
<td>27:55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College B</td>
<td>March 20, 2012</td>
<td>22:53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Time is recorded in minutes. N/A=Participant chose not participate in a third interview.
Photo-elicitation. In photo-elicitation, photographs are inserted into the research interview in order to stimulate discussion of the topic and serve as the main focus of the interview (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Harper, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Photographs provide an in-depth understanding of the interplay between people and their environments (Van Auken, Frisvoll, & Stewart, 2010) and provide rich descriptive insight into how participants see their world and understand the subjective (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Photo-elicitation provides a unique opportunity for participants to become meaningfully involved in data generation and stimulates reflective thought in the participant. Participants contemplate the significance of content as they think about the photo-taking process, the images they produce, and the images they choose to discuss at the interview. Harper (2002) asserted that images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words. Thus, employing this process yields well-informed participants and generates the stimuli for deep interviews that are effective in getting below the surface (Van Auken et al., 2010). As a result, as Clark-Ibanez (2004) contended, photographs induce meaning that otherwise might not surface during a traditional interview. Photographs were also used by the researcher as a tool to expand on interview questions (Clark-Ibanez, 2004).

The use of photographs in interviews can address some challenges that arise in conventional interviews. Van Auken et al. (2010) claimed that a salient attribute of photo-elicitation is that it helps to bridge gaps between the researcher and the subject by placing the participant at the center of the interview in a distinct way vital for the research. In addition, photographs provide a focus for the interview, and therefore ease
rapport between interviewer and interviewee to lessen potential awkwardness of an interview (Clark-Ibanez, 2004).

The Ethics review process at College A approved photograph-taking by the student participants. For participants from College A, I provided a digital camera and asked participants to take pictures that represented their experience in post-secondary education. I provided individual participant training on how to use the camera at each participant’s first interview. Participant-generated photos were used as the foundation for subsequent interviews. Photograph selection for discussion at each interview was participant driven. Participants were asked to select five to eight photographs for discussion. Participant photographs were transferred to the researcher’s laptop and viewed on screen during the interview.

As previously stated, the Ethics review process at College B did not approve photograph-taking by the participants; permission to take photographs on site was only granted with the condition that the photographs would be generated by the researcher. Therefore, participants from College B were asked to take me on a tour of the college to show me what they considered to be important places and spaces that were meaningful to them on campus. On this tour, I took pictures of what the participants were showing me. For the second and third interviews, five to eight of these researcher-generated photographs were selected by the participants and displayed on my laptop during each interview. Participants were shown each photograph individually and asked whether they would like to talk about what the image represented. If the participant chose not to
discuss a particular image, we moved on to the next photograph. Table 3.3 summarizes the photograph generation schedule.

Table 3.3
Schedule of Photo-Elicitation Use and Who Generated Photographs for Each Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>NP/PCT</td>
<td>PGP</td>
<td>NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfie</td>
<td>NP/PCT</td>
<td>PGP</td>
<td>PGP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>NP/PCT</td>
<td>PGP</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>NP/CTP</td>
<td>RGP</td>
<td>RGP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabe</td>
<td>NP/CTP</td>
<td>RGP</td>
<td>RGP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>NP/CTP</td>
<td>RGP</td>
<td>RGP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>NP/CTP</td>
<td>RGP</td>
<td>RGP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
NP=No pictures/Interview Guide only
PCT=Photograph and Camera Training
CTP=Campus Tour, Photographs Taken by Researcher With Participant Input
PGP=Participant Generated Photographs used in interview
RGP=Researcher Generated Photographs used in interview
NP=No pictures used in interview
NA=Participant did not participate in interview

**Interview guides.** To obtain some consistent information from all the participants, an interview guide was prepared using a semi-structured interview approach. The interview guide helped to prepare for possible topics of the interview, setting out questions to be asked, and the order that might be most appropriate for the participant. Smith et al. (2010) contended the interview guide helps to prepare for what the interview
might cover and plan for any difficulties that might arise, including the phrasing of complex questions and introduction of potentially sensitive topics. This format provided the flexibility for response to the situation at hand, emerging views of the participant, and new ideas about the topic (Merriam, 2009). The semi-structured interview approach also helped to prepare for more reserved participants who might have been less forthcoming and may have preferred a slightly more structured interview approach.

For Interview 1, a semi-structured interview guide was prepared to gain general information and context about each participant’s experience (see Appendix A). For Interview 2, I developed two interview guides. The first interview guide, developed after the first set of interviews, was created to expand upon, clarify, and verify the participant’s information, as well as solicit new information from the participants. In addition, I developed questions for individual participants if I required clarification or elaboration from information they presented at the previous interview (see Appendix B). The second interview guide I prepared for Interview 2 outlined probing questions for reviewing the photographs. This second interview guide was intended to generate discussion about the photographs participants were reviewing (see Appendix C). I followed a similar procedure for developing the interview guide for Interview 3 (see Appendix D) and used the same photograph probing interview guide for Interview 3 that was developed for Interview 2. Finally, an interview guide was developed for my interview with the college administrators to generate data about the CICE program at each college (see Appendix E).
Interview guides were used in iterative ways during the interviews, depending on the participant (Smith et al., 2010). Participants were asked questions from the interview guides according to the content of the images they were discussing. For example, if a participant was discussing a photograph of the classroom, I would select questions from the interview guide regarding classroom activities. Therefore, it should be noted that questions from the interview guides were not asked sequentially. In addition, questions were not asked from the interview guides if a participant had already responded to a similar topic during the interview.

**Diaries.** As an additional source of data, participants in this study were invited to write a diary or journal about their post-secondary experiences. These diaries were intended to provide a tangible manifestation that would describe the participant’s experience, knowledge, actions, and beliefs (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Diaries can serve as a source of rich description of how the people who produced the materials think about their world. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) asserted that personal documents such as diaries can be used in connection with, or in support of, interviews.

Participants in this study were provided with a diary and asked to record their key experiences at college. Participants were asked to write in any format of their choice, including reflection, point form, key words, images, or any other written expression. I planned to collect the participant’s diary at each interview session in order to reflect on the information they provided and to generate any questions that arose for the next interview. At each interview, I asked the participant if they had written in their diary
about their post-secondary experience. However, only two of the participants, Belle and Caleb, chose to write a diary. They each wrote one diary and shared it at their second interview. Each participant was asked at the final interview, Interview 3, why they chose to write, or not write, a diary about their experiences. The most common response among the participants who did not write a diary was that their school schedule was too busy.

**Ethical Considerations**

The principle of informed consent requires that people should know what they are getting into when they agree to participate in a study (Smith et al., 2010). Informed consent was obtained from all the participants in this study. Participants were informed about what to expect from the interviews, the types of topics to be covered, and that verbatim accounts of their interviews and photographs would be included in the dissemination of results of this study. Participants were informed that they might withdraw their participation from this study at any time with no adverse consequences (Smith et al., 2010). These explanations were provided through the Letter of Information, Consent Forms, and verbally to the students prior to participation in this study.

An explanation of the likelihood or magnitude of harm and any possible inconvenience or discomfort to the participants was also explained (Smith et al., 2010). Risk of harm was minimized in this study because participants selected the main topics they wished to discuss at the interviews through the process of photo-elicitation as
described previously in this chapter. Participants were also informed that they could choose not to answer a question if they did not want to, or if it made them feel uncomfortable in any way.

Confidentiality was assured to all participants. Confidentiality requires sensitivity and care in the management of data collection events (Smith et al., 2010). All transcripts, notes, and audiotapes were stored in a lockable file cabinet at the researcher’s home office. Pictures that the participants consented to use in this study were downloaded on the researcher’s computer and blurred immediately after the interview to protect confidentiality. Participant’s names and sites remain anonymous, and no uniquely identifying information was attached to the data (Mertens, 1998). The names of people are represented as pseudonyms, and sites are coded to disguise features of settings in such a way as to make them appear similar to several possible sites. All identifying information in photographs, whether site or individual, is blurred out.

Role of Researcher

Adopting a phenomenological methodology to research involves and requires a reflexive move on the part of the researcher, as the focus shifts from the individual experiences of participants towards perception of those experiences (Smith et al., 2010). Epoche is a process in phenomenological inquiry whereby the researcher brackets out, or sets aside, the taken-for-granted world in order to focus on a participant’s perception of that world with a fresh perspective. The first step in this process, according to Creswell
(2007), is for the researcher to describe their personal experiences with the phenomenon under study. To accomplish this, I began this study by writing a description of my own experience, interests, and entry into the field of inclusive post-secondary education. I have included my researcher standpoint in Chapter 1. This was an attempt to set aside my own personal experiences and to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions, so that the focus could be directed to the participants in the study (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (2009) explained that when prior beliefs about a phenomenon of interest are temporarily put aside, consciousness then becomes heightened and can be examined in the same way that an object of consciousness can be examined.

**Qualitative Design Validity**

Qualitative design validity addresses questions about whether emerging interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings from both the participants’ and the researcher’s perspectives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Design validity in this study was enhanced through prolonged and persistent fieldwork (Mertens, 1998) achieved through multiple in-depth interviews conducted over a span of several months, as previously described in this chapter. This extended data collection period provided opportunities for interim data analyses, preliminary comparisons, and corroboration to refine ideas and ensure a match between emerging themes and participant reality (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The use of recorded data in this study, including photographs and audio-taped interviews, enhanced validity by providing an accurate and
relatively complete record of the data generated (Merriam, 2009). Verbatim accounts of conversations, transcripts, and direct quotes from the interviews are presented in the following two chapters to authentically illustrate the participants’ individual experiences and the meaning they ascribe to them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Member checking was used within each interview as I probed and rephrased topics to confirm my understandings of what the participants were telling me.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process that establishes patterns or themes as they emerge during the data collection process (Mertens, 1998). The inductive data analysis process employed in this study allowed for immersion in the details and specifics of the data as it was discovered, while concurrently synthesizing emerging patterns, themes, and interrelationships (Patton, 2002). Data analysis began with the first set of data gathered, and ran parallel to the entire data collection period because each activity informed and drove subsequent activities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Data analysis was an iterative process, weaving through a range of different ways of thinking about the data as they emerged (Smith et al., 2010). Throughout the fieldwork process, I employed this inductive approach by maintaining a receptive and responsive attitude to emerging discovery. As the data revealed prominent patterns and dimensions of interest, I began to focus on elucidating and authenticating concepts and themes with participants. The multiple-interview approach provided an opportunity to verify what was being
discovered by returning to the participants and examining the extent to which the emerging analysis fit their perceptions of the inclusive post-secondary experience.

Patton (2002) contended that the first level of analysis in a phenomenological study is to respect and capture the details of the individual cases being studied, as the initial focus is on developing a full understanding of individual cases before these unique cases are aggregated thematically. The information collected from each participant’s interviews was compiled into a synopsis of each participant’s college experience. These stories provide descriptions of the individual participants’ experiences and are presented as Student Portraits in Chapter 5.

Cross-case analysis then followed the individual case attributes. The purpose of the cross-case analysis was to identify patterns and themes that extended across individual experiences (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2007) explained that significant statements and themes are then used to write a description of what the participants collectively experienced, and also provide the context or setting that influenced how participants experienced the phenomenon. Statements and quotes from individual participants were sorted and combined into significant cross-case themes and sub-themes. Appendix F contains a transcript excerpt and initial coding of the data. From the themes and sub-themes, a combined description of the experiences of participants was developed. This included a combination of the textural and structural descriptions in order to convey an overall essence of participants’ inclusive post-secondary experiences. From these descriptions, I then wrote a thematic portrayal to
represent the essence of the inclusive post-secondary experience, focused on the common understandings and occurrences of the participants. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through the phenomenon commonly experienced, and are presented in Chapter 6.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I presented details of this study’s methodology and methods used to select sites and participants, gain entry, collect data, and analyze data. In the following chapter, Chapter 4, I provide the context for the participant’s experiences through a description of the CICE program in Ontario.
Chapter 4

Context: The Community Integration through Cooperative Education Program

In this chapter, I provide a description of Community Integration Through Cooperative Education (CICE) programs in Ontario. It is important to understand these programs because they represent the context for the participants’ stories and findings in following chapters. To obtain information about CICE programs: (a) an interview was conducted with Morgan, the Coordinator of the CICE program at College A, and Blake, the Coordinator of the CICE program at College B; (b) the web site of each CICE program in Ontario was examined to provide general information about CICE program policies and practices; and (c) documents were reviewed from the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU), and Credentials Validation Services (CVS), the agency that provides credential validation and quality assurance processes for the public college system in Ontario.

CICE programs are two-year Ontario College Certificate programs that provide students with intellectual disabilities and other significant learning challenges access to post-secondary education through tailored admission policies and the provision of required supports for learning. Upon admission to the CICE program, students select a program area of concentration from which they take up to three courses each semester. CICE students complete an individualized program of study with courses that are modified to suit their academic abilities. Students are also provided with required
learning supports to successfully complete their college program. In CICE programs, students also develop vocational skills through participation in a variety of career-related co-op placement experiences.

In Ontario, before a new program is introduced at a college, the program proposal must be reviewed by CVS to ensure that established MTCU Program Standards and Vocational Learning Outcomes (VLOs) will be met. At the time of this writing, there was no published Provincial Program Standards document for the CICE programs in Ontario. In the absence of such a document, Program Description documents are maintained by CVS that specify the program description and approved vocational learning outcomes. Appendix G is the most current CICE Program Description approved by CVS, which was updated in 2011. For colleges to initiate a new program, they must map any proposed program outcomes to those that have already been established and approved in order to demonstrate the similarities and differences between existing college program outcomes and proposed program outcomes. The most recent set of outcomes is then kept on file with CVS as the Program Description. All colleges must at minimum propose outcomes that meet or exceed the ones provided by these descriptions (Private Communications, Director, Ontario College Quality Assurance Service). Therefore, a college interested in proposing a CICE program would contact CVS to request the current CICE Program Description, and map any proposed vocational learning outcomes to those already established by existing college CICE programs. As such, colleges base their CICE program proposal on the program description and vocational learning outcomes.
that have already been established by previous colleges. Once a college receives approval to offer a MTCU approved program, it is up to each individual institution to assume responsibility for implementing the program according to the established standards (OCED, 2003).

When asked in Interview 1 to describe the goals for students in the CICE program at College B, Blake claimed that a goal for most college programs is high employment rates after graduation, which is also a consideration for CICE programs and graduates. However, Blake clarified that not every student who enrolls in the CICE program is solely employment focused. Blake explained that, for some students, building self-esteem, independence, developing a comfort level with themselves, and personal maturity could be main personal goals for participation in post-secondary education; some CICE students may have a goal just to participate in the post-secondary experience. In Interview 1, Morgan reported goals for participation in the CICE program at College A can vary for each student. Morgan identified many goals for students who participate in the CICE program including improving skills to gain successful employment, social aspects such as gaining friendships, and independence. Morgan stated, “I think many [CICE students] are here because they believed they could never be here. They develop confidence and all those things, and their journeys take them to study on their own” (Interview 1). Morgan explained that some graduates who were successful in the CICE program at College A have chosen to go on to mainstream college programs after graduation.
For most CICE programs in Ontario, there are many admission requirements and steps in the admission process. Applicants to the CICE program must have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or Certificate (OSSC), or be at least 19 years of age at the start of the program, and also demonstrate academic needs that require curriculum modification. In order to evaluate suitability for the CICE program, most colleges also require a reference from a professional who knows the student in an educational or employment capacity, and require applicants to attend a personal interview. Some colleges also require that CICE applicants provide a letter in their own words describing their goals for the CICE program and why they feel that they require a modified program to participate in college.

Blake and Morgan both reported that applicants are not required to submit verification or documentation of their disability for entrance into the CICE program at their colleges. Blake explained that students are not required to verify a specific diagnosis, or be at a certain academic level, to be admitted into the CICE program at College B. However, Blake clarified that applicants are encouraged to share this information if they have it available in order to help the CICE program team understand their strengths and abilities. Morgan explained that applicants to the CICE program self-identify as requiring modifications for their course work, and are not required to present disability documentation; it is up to the CICE program team to get to know students and their educational needs.
Morgan and Blake both indicated that an individualized program plan is developed at the onset of a student’s CICE program, based on the student’s interests and strengths. Upon admission to the CICE programs at Colleges A and B, students choose an area of concentration to pursue from the college’s full-time program offerings. Each semester, CICE students take up to three courses within their chosen area of concentration. Morgan described the process of developing an individualized program map for each CICE student, and how course selection is determined:

Morgan: I would say the majority of our students are pretty clear about what they want to study. When they apply to college, they would say, for example, “I really want to work with young children. So, I am interested in Early Childhood Education.” In terms of an individual program, in terms of what they need, we encourage the students to tell us as much as they can about how they learn best. That’s an ongoing thing. Some [students] are much better about that than others. (Interview 1)

Morgan explained that staff at College A build relationships with the students to find out how they learn best in order to provide academic supports. Blake described a similar process for getting to know the students on an individual level in order to understand their learning needs. Blake explained that Learning Facilitators at College B get to know the CICE students through class and tutorial time to learn what works best with each student. Blake also acknowledged that the first semester of a CICE student’s
program is always somewhat problematic because the CICE program team does not know
the students or their learning styles and needs.

Blake and Morgan both identified program staff involved with the CICE program
including a Coordinator, Placement Liaison, and Learning Facilitators. Morgan
explained that the Placement Liaison was responsible to secure placements for the CICE
students, build relationships in the community with employers and potential placement
sites, and provide some job coaching. Learning Facilitators are primarily responsible for
providing academic support in the classroom. While each college uses a different title for
the Learning Facilitator role, I chose to use Learning Facilitator to represent this role at
both colleges. Morgan elaborated on the role of the Learning Facilitator:

Morgan: The Learning Facilitators would be the front line support for people in
terms of their academic and overall well-being at college. They go to class with
students and write down all the notes. They modify tests and assignments in
partnership with the instructor. During tutoring, which is the one-on-one teaching
piece, they create materials or study sheets for students. They keep on top of
students to make sure they're handing things in. Students get quite close to them,
and come to them with issues that are outside of the academic piece. So that they
do the best they can to help them problem solve those things as well. (Interview 1)

In order to meet the learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities, the use of
modifications is an essential element of the CICE program. Modifications enable the
CICE program staff to alter or reduce learning outcomes and adapt learning materials,
assignments, exams, and other related learning activities to the capabilities of each student to ensure a successful learning experience (Weinkauf, 2003). Blake explained that because course work is modified, new course outlines are developed. Because of the intensive supports provided to CICE students, this program receives considerable funding from MTCU in order to provide such supports.

As full-time tuition paying students, CICE students have access to the same college resources and supports available to any other college student. Morgan explained that CICE students are entitled to receive any supports that are available to all full-time college students, including access to the Wellness Center, counselling, health services, and the Accessibility Center. Morgan stated, “anything that is available to other students is available to our students—and we access it all!” (Interview 1). Blake reported that CICE students are encouraged to register with the Counselling and Disability Services at College B; this helps provide students with access to assistive technology supports such as an FM system if they are hard of hearing, or access to text reader computer programs. Blake explained that most of the computers in the CICE tutoring rooms are equipped with assistive technology such as text readers and screen magnifiers to assist students in their learning. Blake elaborated on some of the resources that CICE students have access to:

Blake: We have a Student Academic Learning support, SALS, here at College B. It is our learning support center. We recommend that our students attend the group workshops there, such as how to manage stress and time management. They do one-on-one tutoring, but we sometimes gear our students away from that
because it might confuse them because it is peer-to-peer. We have already developed some stuff in our own tutorials, but the workshops, such as how to know what is important for note taking, general level stuff like that, that is available to our students. (Interview 1)

With regard to the benefits of inclusive post-secondary education, Blake stated “it gives [CICE students] an opportunity to be just like any other student that has graduated from high school” (Interview 1). Morgan also pointed out the benefits of inclusive post-secondary education: “I don't see our program as any different from any other program. Everyone should have that right to attend post-secondary education and become involved with anything and everything that goes along with that’” (Interview 1). Morgan went on, “I think the main benefit is that it is the starting point for people for whom the doors have been closed, and who have never been given the opportunity to attend. That, to me, is the main benefit.”

**Summary**

In this chapter, I described the CICE programs in Colleges A and B. This sets the context for the participants’ stories and findings in the next chapter. In Chapter 5, I provide a Student Portrait of each of the seven participants: Belle, Caleb, Wolfie, Jeff, Gabe, Shannon, and James. These Student Portraits highlight the unique story of each participant, and provides the context for their college experiences.
Chapter 5

Student Portraits

In this chapter, I provide a Student Portrait of each of the seven participants: Belle, Caleb, Wolfie, Jeff, Gabe, Shannon, and James. These Student Portraits highlight the unique story of each participant, and provide a deep understanding of their individual college experience.

Belle

Belle always knew that she wanted to go to college. However, because she had modifications to her course work in high school, she felt that she would not be eligible to enroll in a college program. The Resource Teacher at Belle’s high school was aware of the CICE program, which could provide support and modifications to Belle’s course work, and suggested to Belle that it might be an appropriate program for her. Belle described herself as being a slow learner. She believed that a mainstream program at college would be too difficult for her to complete successfully, so she took the CICE program to determine whether she could be successful in a modified college program. When Belle first made the decision to attend college, she was excited because she felt that college was the start of her adult life and career. At the same time, she was quite nervous to begin this new adventure.

Belle was passionate about animals. She was taking Veterinary Assistant courses as her area of concentration. During the first year of her program, Belle’s course work
mainly consisted of general education classes, including sciences and biology, to help her prepare for Veterinary Assistant course work. In her second year, Belle took modified courses in the Veterinary Assistant program. She chose her own courses from an approved list of courses available to CICE students. Belle was learning about animals and animal diseases, emergency situations, hospital protocols, and CPR for dogs and cats. Belle enjoyed learning anything about animals, especially information she felt was relevant to her future career goal of working with animals. The one drawback Belle described with regard to her course work was that she did not have specific interactions with live animals. This occurred only in her placement.

Belle relocated to a new, unfamiliar city two hours away from her home town in order to attend college. During her first year of college, she lived in the college residence. In her second year, Belle found accommodations in student housing a few blocks away from campus, as most second year students do at this college. Belle’s roommate was taking the mainstream Veterinary Assistant program. Belle felt that she shared a lot in common with her roommate, and they often worked on their homework together. Most weekends, Belle would take the train home to visit her family.

On occasion, Belle’s family would visit her at college. During these visits, Belle enjoyed taking them shopping at the local mall. Sometimes she would make plans with her family to visit the larger neighbouring city to go site-seeing. When Belle won an award for achieving high grades in her program, her family attended the scholarship ceremony in support of her achievement. Belle was quite surprised to win the
scholarship and was delighted that her family was able to join her to celebrate her accomplishment.

Belle enjoyed her college schedule. In her final semester, she had classes from Tuesday to Friday. Friday was a particularly long day for Belle; she had two, three-hour lecture classes in a row. Belle had her placement on Mondays, which was arranged in her hometown at a large pet store. Because her placement was in her hometown, Belle was able to stay home for an extra day on the weekend.

Belle’s classes were mainly delivered through lectures. Belle felt comfortable participating in class activities. She enjoyed the group work involved with some of her classes, in particular learning about other student’s perspectives. She appreciated the opportunity to express herself and communicate with others in group work, and found it fun to work with others. In her classes, Belle met the challenge of taking many notes and completing all of her assignments. She often raised her hand to answer questions in class when she felt confident that she knew the answers.

When she was not attending class, Belle prepared for her course work by getting the work done that she needed to do: responding to emails, working on assignments, and preparing for her upcoming classes. Belle kept track of her own course work using her agenda; she highlighted important dates and assignments. Belle reviewed her work regularly to make sure it stayed fresh in her mind. She felt that regular review of the material helped her to be prepared for her tests. She worked on her homework for at least an hour or two on most days, depending on the number of assignments that were coming
due, and how she was feeling about the work. Belle explained that when she was feeling good about the work, she could go non-stop with her homework, and only stop to take a quick break. She usually completed her homework at home, but if she were stumped, she would email her Learning Facilitator and make an appointment to have her questions answered.

Belle had a weekly tutorial with a Learning Facilitator. These tutorials were scheduled for the end of the week. This way Belle had a good idea of what homework she needed to complete for the following week and would focus her tutorial on what she needed to do to finish her assignments. During the tutorial, Belle would review her notes with the Learning Facilitator to ensure that she had captured all the information she needed to know. Sometimes a Learning Facilitator would scribe for Belle during a test, however, most often Belle would complete her tests on her own; she read the questions, thought about the answer, and then wrote her responses.

Belle made many friends at college. She had several friends in the CICE program, and also a few friends from the Veterinary Assistant program. During her first year of college, Belle would frequently hang out with her friends during lunch breaks. The second year was very busy for Belle, and therefore she didn’t have as much of a chance to get together with her friends. Belle explained that everyone was doing their own thing in their second year and focused more on getting through their schoolwork. Belle tried to get out and meet new people when she could find the time. She tried to be
receptive to participating in activities and meeting people, and would have liked to have participated in more college activities with her friends.

Belle felt that she would not have been able to attend college without modifications to her program. She stated that if she were not attending college she would be working in a menial job. Belle felt that college was a positive experience and changed her for the better. For Belle, the best part of going to college was the learning, and the overall experience of just attending college. After she graduates from the CICE program, Belle hopes to further her education at another college taking a mainstream Veterinary Assistant program.

Caleb

For several years after Caleb completed high school, he tried unsuccessfully to get a job. He went to a local Autism Services agency for assistance, but still found it very difficult to get a job. Caleb described his expectations for himself as being very low prior to attending college; he was unsure about what he was going to do with his life. Personnel at the Autism Services Agency suggested that Caleb consider going to night school to explore his interests, which could help him figure out his career options. Through his night school courses, Caleb discovered a love for learning, so his Autism Support Worker suggested that Caleb try the CICE program full-time. At first, Caleb was a little hesitant to try college, but with a little encouragement from his parents, he decided to give it a try. Caleb described the CICE program as being intended for students with
special needs such as autism. As a student with autism, he chose the CICE program because he felt that it matched his learning needs and would provide the supports required for him to be successful.

Caleb found elements of the college application process challenging. As part of the application process, he was required to write an essay. At first, Caleb felt uncertain whether he could write the essay; however, once he began the essay, he became impressed with his writing abilities. As part of the admission process, applicants were also required to attend a formal interview with CICE program staff. Caleb felt insecure about his ability to answer the interview questions. However, he prepared himself for the interview by rehearsing sample interview questions and managed to go through the interview process on his own. He felt that he answered the interview questions well, and was confident that he would be accepted into the CICE program.

Upon admission into the CICE program, Caleb chose Print Media to explore as his program area of concentration. Each semester, Caleb took three program courses in his area of concentration. While most of his courses were within the Print Media stream, he also took a variety of general education courses that aligned with, or were related to, media. Caleb had an academic advisor who helped him determine whether particular courses might be of interest to him, and whether courses were suitable for his program. Some of the courses Caleb had taken included pop culture, film and society, media, digital presentations, print media history, and digital photography. In addition, each
semester he participated in a seminar class with his CICE cohort and completed a field placement.

Caleb selected this particular college because it was local. He didn’t want to move away from home to attend college because of the additional costs. Therefore, Caleb lived at home with his parents while he attended college. He used public transportation to get to school, as it was included in his tuition fees. Caleb liked to arrive early to school, so he often brought his breakfast to eat before class. Sometimes his mother would make homemade muffins for him to take to school. He also would bring his lunch and snacks to eat when he could fit them in his busy schedule. When Caleb had a late day of classes, he would usually bring money to buy dinner at the college cafeteria.

Caleb’s college schedule varied each day. In his final semester, Mondays were particularly light for Caleb, with one class and a tutoring session scheduled. He also volunteered at the college radio station for an hour each Monday. On Tuesdays, Caleb had a one-hour class, a one-hour break, and then a tutoring session with his Learning Facilitator. He had another tutoring session on Wednesdays in the afternoon. Thursdays were particularly heavy, where he had a full day of classes and a tutoring session. Caleb also completed a placement at a local theatre two evenings during the week.

Caleb particularly enjoyed his seminar class with his CICE cohort. He learned about resumes, cover letters, job search strategies, dealing with employment issues such as harassment and stress, and community resources such as the Ontario Disability Support Program. He explained that his resume and cover letter would come in handy
when he looked for a job after graduation. As part of the CICE seminar class, Caleb was required to participate in a mock employment interview. He felt strongly that practicing for an interview would help prepare him to get over his fear of talking during an interview. During the research interviews with Caleb, he indicated that he had completed his second mock interview and felt that he answered all the questions correctly and quickly; he stated that he nailed the interview and even enjoyed it.

Caleb described himself as hard working and motivated to do well in school. He was an A+ student on the Dean’s list. He was proud to achieve good grades in school because of the effort he put into his work. He made sure to provide good, long answers in all his assignments, and always handed his assignments in on time. Caleb worked diligently on his homework. He preferred to study on his own, and would often find a quiet place on campus to study during his breaks.

In class, Caleb felt confident contributing to group discussions. He tended to complete group work with other CICE students who were taking the same class. If there were no other CICE students in his class, he would often complete the group work on his own with the assistance of his Learning Facilitator. He used his laptop computer to take his own notes in class, and then organized his notes with headers and footers. He would print his notes after class and compare them with the notes that the Learning Facilitator took for him. Caleb enjoyed reading his materials independently. When he found material difficult, the Learning Facilitator would review concepts with him to help him understand the materials better. He managed his homework and assignments on his own,
using the sticky note feature on his laptop to keep track of it all. He prioritized his work by completing the largest assignments first, leaving the smaller ones to complete after the larger ones.

During Caleb’s tutoring sessions, the Learning Facilitator would help him to get ready for tests, or help him to complete assignments. They also reviewed the materials that were covered in class. For example, Caleb and his Learning Facilitator would go through class notes to make sure that Caleb had all of the pertinent information. Caleb enjoyed working with his Learning Facilitators and would usually sit with them in class. That way, if he had questions in class, the Learning Facilitator could answer them for him.

For Caleb, the best part about going to college was the overall campus experience, learning, and getting involved with campus activities. Because Caleb preferred to focus on his studies, he did not participate in many extra-curricular activities. However, he volunteered at the college radio station each week for one hour. Caleb’s favourite memory of his college experience to date was being part of the college radio program. He relished being in the radio studio, being in front of the microphone and channeling all his energy into the show. Caleb also enjoyed having the opportunity to meet many new friends at college. He expressed that because of college, he had many more friends than before and had even developed special bonds with some of them. Caleb reveled every minute of his college experience. He felt that his college experience helped him to grow and mature markedly. He stated that because of college, he was always smiling. Caleb
was planning to take a year or two off of school after he graduated from college and work in order to pay off his student loan. He was then planning to return to college to take another program or take classes at night school.

Wolfie

Wolfie always knew that she wanted to go to college. Since she was eight years old, it was her life passion and dream to work with children. She asked her mother how she would be able to work with children, and her mother informed her that she would need to get her Early Childhood Education Diploma. Because Wolfie was in special education classes in high school, she did not have the opportunity to take many college prerequisite courses, notably her Grade 12 English that was required to gain admittance into a regular college program. Wolfie stated that she chose to enroll in a CICE program because she had “special learning needs” (Wolfie, Interview 2), and according to Wolfie, it was the only program that accepted her. Wolfie had been in a special education stream throughout her entire education, and required the increased support and resources provided in the CICE program in order to be successful in college. When she began the CICE program, Wolfie chose Early Childhood Education as her program area of concentration. Wolfie felt that her friends and high school teachers never felt that she would be successful in a college program, but she has proved to herself and others otherwise; she felt triumphant.
Because Wolfie struggled with her course work in high school, she did not feel confident in her academic abilities when she began college. She expressed to her professors and Learning Facilitators that she might not do well with her college course work. However, her professors and Learning Facilitators were very supportive. They assured Wolfie that even though her courses would be challenging, if she were willing to put the work into her course work, she would be successful in her studies. Gradually, as Wolfie began to complete her college assignments and received positive feedback, she realized that she could do well. The more affirmative feedback she received regarding her course work and assignments, the more confident she felt in her academic ability. This motivated her to challenge herself and set higher goals for herself. Wolfie wanted to do the work that everyone else was doing. Wolfie stated that she might have required extra support, but found that she could be successful. Wolfie was extremely proud of her marks because of the dedicated effort she put into her studies. She remarked that she sometimes worried that something would go wrong with one of her classes. She wanted to do well to prove to others that she could do it.

Wolfie lived in residence while she attended college. She enjoyed the challenge of living on her own and the independence that moving away from home has afforded. She did everything for herself, including budgeting her money, purchasing groceries, paying her bills, cleaning, and doing laundry. Wolfie felt that she had an increased level of independence in college for the first time in her life. In her second year of college, her roommate in residence was a first year CICE student.
Wolfie did not do as well in her course work during her first year as she would have liked. She explained that college students are required to take on a lot of responsibilities, such as choosing whether to go to class, how much time to spend on homework, who to hang out with, and whether to go to parties. While Wolfie was trying to figure out her responsibilities, she let her marks slide in school. Wolfie felt that her first year of college was a transition year for her, and during this year she had grown and matured considerably. She realized that she needed to pull up her socks in order to successfully achieve her goals.

During her second year of college, Wolfie found a balance between completing her schoolwork and doing the fun stuff like hanging out with her friends. She prioritized her homework first and then made time for her friends. She sometimes found it difficult to manage her priorities because her friends would be doing fun things and she would have to say no in order to get her homework done. Wolfie acknowledged that she would rather get her homework done first because her main reason for attending college was to achieve her education.

Wolfie’s three-hour lectures tended to be physically strenuous for her. She found it difficult to sit through lectures without an opportunity to move around. The days she had multiple classes were particularly difficult for her. Wolfie preferred a more hands-on approach to her learning and enjoyed participating in classroom activities where she was not confined to sitting in a chair for long periods of time.
Wolfie usually sat with her Learning Facilitator in class. She explained that with her slight hearing impairment she would sometimes need to ask the Learning Facilitator what the professor had said. During her weekly tutorials, the Learning Facilitator would also help Wolfie to review the concepts that were covered in class. Wolfie explained that during her tutorials the Learning Facilitator would help her to get organized, especially with keeping track of assignment deadlines. The Learning Facilitator would help Wolfie get started on her assignments, and then it would be up to Wolfie to complete them on her own. Wolfie also claimed that the Learning Facilitator was responsible for making modifications to her course work. The Learning Facilitator would reduce the length of assignments, and bring them to the level that Wolfie was working at. Sometimes Wolfie wanted to push herself to do more, and the Learning Facilitator would adjust modifications accordingly. For example, Wolfie would sometimes request additional reading materials to read independently.

Wolfie loved interacting with the children at her co-op placement. In her placement, she was working with children from infant to school-age. She would follow the children’s lead and participate in the activities that they wanted to do. She applied the concepts that she was learning in class to her placement experience. One of her favourite activities was to play house with the children.

The college experience was paramount to Wolfie because she learned invaluable information through her course work and placements. Wolfie found learning fascinating. Accordingly, she tried to pay attention in class so that she did not miss anything. College
had also been a lot of hard work for Wolfie. Sometimes it was challenging for Wolfie to manage her workload, and sometimes she felt stress in meeting her assignment obligations. However, she enjoyed the satisfaction of knowing that she had met the challenges of the rigours of college life. She felt good because she knew that she was accomplishing something important to her personally, and her future goals. During her studies in the CICE program, Wolfie was able to achieve her Grade 12 English so that she could apply to an Early Childhood Education program at another college. After completion of her CICE education, Wolfie plans to get a job, get married, get a house, and have children.

Jeff

Jeff had always wanted to work in law enforcement or the military. His uncle, a Police Officer, was someone who Jeff admired as a positive role model and wanted to emulate. Jeff saw college as his path to reach his career aspirations. He had talked to many members of the police force, who suggested that he go through the military to make an easier transition to becoming a police officer. Jeff decided to go to college with the help, support, and encouragement of his mother and his teachers from high school. Throughout the span of his research interviews, Jeff never disclosed what his specific learning needs were, just that he required additional support to be successful in college. He felt quite positive about his decision to go to college.
Jeff chose to go to this particular college because it was local. He lived at home with his parents and his sister while he attended college. At home, he would cook for himself, and helped out with chores around the house. Because Jeff was a local student, he had a lot of friends and acquaintances from high school who were attending the same college. Even so, he did not make his social life a priority at college because he wanted to stay focused on his goals of achieving good grades. He would often hang out with his friends outside of school hours. Jeff described himself as determined, confident, inquisitive, and independent. As a student, Jeff was dependable, punctual, personable, and hard-working.

Jeff’s program area of interest was Police Foundations, and each semester he took up to three modified courses from this program. In the semester when he was participating in research interviews, Jeff was taking a gym course, Canadian law theory, and a course that taught him how to become active in the community. Volunteering was a significant focus of his program, and Jeff enthusiastically seized opportunities to become involved in his community. In his other courses, Jeff had learned about the Canadian court system, sentences for offences, the theory behind police work, the role of policing in the community, and evidence gathering practices. Jeff also took a gym class each semester, which was mandatory in the Police Foundations program. Jeff described the CICE seminar class that he took with other second year CICE students. Here he learned about life management, careers, resumes, and portfolios. He expressed that he was required to do a lot of studying and homework with his course work.
Jeff was happy that he did not have many early morning classes in his second year. His class schedule usually started late in the morning, or early in the afternoon. His classes were usually finished by 4:30 pm. On Wednesdays, Jeff had two, two-hour classes back-to-back. He stated that it was a particularly long day of sitting through lectures.

During his breaks and in between classes, Jeff would hang out with his friends. Sometimes he would go to the cafeteria, or sometimes he would hang out by the CICE office with other CICE students. He also enjoyed hanging out at the Student Association center, which was a lounge area where many college students would hang out. Jeff tended to hang out more with CICE students than students from the Police Foundations program.

Jeff worked with the assistance of a Learning Facilitator, who attended each of his classes with him. He had a different Learning Facilitator for each class. Jeff would usually take his own notes in class, but would review the notes provided by the Learning Facilitator after class because they were tailored to what he needed to know to meet his modified learning outcomes. Because of this process, Jeff felt he could relax in class and focus on the lecture without worry that he would miss something in his notes. Jeff also received support from his Learning Facilitators with taking his tests and completing assignments. He explained that the Learning Facilitator would clarify course information to him to make it more understandable.
Jeff expressed that it was very important to pay attention to what the professor was conveying in the lectures, as it was easy to miss important information if you didn’t. Jeff would listen intently as the professor explained what was important to know, and listen for hints with regard to completing assignments. In class, students were sometimes provided time to work on assignments and homework, otherwise he completed this work outside of class time. Jeff enjoyed attending his classes and described them as being very relaxing. He explained that his days at college were interesting and varying; he wouldn’t know what was in store with his classes until he walked in and sat down at his desk. Jeff described an example of an interesting class when his professor brought in food to share with the class in order to demonstrate healthy eating and the cost of buying healthy food.

Jeff monitored his own learning requirements, and kept track of assignment due dates and when tests were scheduled. He sometimes found this difficult to manage because, as a college student, there was a lot going on and it was easy for him to forget some things. However, he was proud that he managed to keep track of most of his academic obligations. Jeff expressed that, while he completed most of his homework, he felt like he should have been doing more. He would regularly look over his notes, rewrite them, and reflect upon them. However, he stated that sometimes he would rather concentrate his efforts on being more involved in the community, as that was a focus of the Police Foundations program.

In his second year, Jeff completed two placements in his area of concentration. He worked at the local hockey arena with the security guards, and also in the Safe Walk
program at his college. Jeff excitedly explained that an added perk of his placement at the hockey arena was that he could watch hockey games for free. He completed four hours at each placement each week. Jeff explained that he had many different types of placements throughout his college program. One placement that he did not enjoy too much was stocking shelves at a department store. He described learning goals at this placement including developing transferrable work skills, such as being punctual, following instructions, and taking initiative with tasks that needed to be completed. He explained that most students would complete similar placements at the beginning of their program. One of Jeff’s favourite placements was completed at a recycling plant. Jeff stated that this was a fun placement where he was able to learn how to drive a bobcat and sort metal into bins. Jeff expressed that he would have liked to have had a placement in the military, however, they did not allow placement students at their site.

Jeff played intramural hockey on Thursdays during college hour. Students from any college program were able to participate in these games. Jeff enjoyed meeting new people through intramural hockey. One of Jeff’s fondest memories of college is playing in the annual hockey game that the Police Foundations program plays against local police officers. He stated that the team of college students lost the game with a score of 13-8, but that he didn’t feel too bad about the outcome because the police officers won every year.

Jeff explained that his first year of college was a transition for him, during which time he would frequent the campus pub on a regular basis. In his second year, he decided
to make better decisions for himself, and stick to his goal of doing well in college. He felt that he should have made school more of a priority during his first year and put more effort into it. He claimed that most college students don’t take school as seriously as they should until they get into their second year.

Jeff felt proud to be a college student. He explained that he was in college because he wanted to be there. Jeff felt challenged by his schoolwork, but in a good way. He felt good about his accomplishments in college; the best part of college for him was the learning. He reported that if he were not attending college, he would likely be working in a dead-end job. Jeff felt that he would be a different person if he didn’t attend college and that he would have an entirely different lifestyle. He felt proud to be in college because he thought that people looked at him differently for taking on a bigger role for himself and trying to do something with his life. Jeff reported that his family was proud of him because he was the first person in his family to go to college. Jeff would highly recommend to others to go to college in order to get into a profession. In his future, Jeff would like to join the military. Until then, Jeff reported that he would work part-time or consider upgrading his education.

Gabe

In high school, Gabe was placed in a special education trade program without having much input into the decision. Gabe described himself as having a learning disability, whereby he required increased support for his learning. In his high school
trade program, he worked in a kitchen where he baked, cooked, and learned how to be a chef. After high school, Gabe went on to college for further study in a culinary program. During this program, Gabe realized that he didn’t enjoy cooking as much as he thought he did; he did not feel passionate about this as a profession. He quit college and found part-time employment at a hardware store. After 13 years of working at the hardware store, Gabe made the decision to go back to college. He considered himself to be a people person, and wanted to explore a human service program. Gabe was encouraged by his grandmother to go back to school and felt this was a significant influence on why he decided to go back to school. His grandmother passed away when Gabe started college. He wanted to succeed in college to honour his grandmother; he felt that she was looking down on him and was proud of him.

When Gabe first made the decision to attend college, he felt overwhelmed because he had been out of school for so long. He did not know what to expect, what to wear, how to act, and whether he would make friends, or fit in. However, he felt confident in his decision to go to college and knew it was the right choice for him. Gabe loved helping others. With his interest in working with people, Gabe decided to take courses in Child and Youth Worker as his program area of concentration. He felt that it was his calling to help people. In his program, he was taking modified courses in psychology, sociology, and social psychology.

Gabe lived at home in a neighbouring city with his parents while he was attending college. He used public transit to travel to school. He reported that it took
almost an hour for him to get to school. He felt lucky that the transit pass was included with his tuition fees. Gabe planned to move out of his parent’s house after he graduated from college.

Gabe disclosed that, because he had a learning disability, it was difficult for him to take in information at the same pace as other college students. Gabe reported that his assignments were modified by Learning Facilitators based on his strengths and abilities, however, they were still quite similar to the assignments that other students completed. He described the main modifications to his course materials as a reduction in the amount of information he needed to learn at once. The Learning Facilitator would break down the concepts for him in terms that he could understand. They would also modify Gabe’s tests for him so he could complete the work. Gabe felt that the CICE program fit his needs because he required additional supports in order to be successful in his studies. He felt that he would not have been successful without the support of his Learning Facilitators and modifications to his course work.

Gabe indicated that he had a busy schedule in his final semester of college, but that that he loved to keep busy. In between his classes and on his breaks, Gabe would often meet up with some of his friends and go for lunch. He believed that the friendships he made in college would last a lifetime. Sometimes he would go to the gym to work out. He admitted that it was difficult for him to find time in his schedule for the gym, but he tried to go as often as possible because it was important to him to stay healthy. Gabe loved getting involved in campus activities. Even with his busy schedule, he tried to find
time to get involved, especially in charitable events and fundraisers. He wanted to give back to the college community and help others. Gabe also joined a Gay and Lesbian group on campus. Gabe reported that being involved in campus activities made him feel connected to the college.

Gabe felt proud of who he was as a college student. He felt autonomous because he could do things for himself and he didn’t have to lean on other people for things; he described his level of independence as high. Gabe’s marks typically ranged in the 90s and he was on the honour roll. He felt that his hard work and efforts paid off with his good grades. Gabe had many strengths as a student: he considered himself to be a team player, he completed his work in a timely manner, and he liked to help his fellow students when he could. Gabe admitted that sometimes he would pull all-nighters in order to complete his schoolwork or cram for tests. While he acknowledged that this was not the best learning strategy, he stated that he did what he had to do in order to get through his study obligations. Gabe professed that it was not easy being a student; it involved a lot of work, readings, homework, and stress. But with the hard work came a strong sense of pride and accomplishment in his college achievements.

Gabe described his college experience as great. He particularly enjoyed his placements, as he valued the practical learning and interaction with people. He participated in a variety of placements including various human service agencies and primary classrooms. For Gabe, the best part of going to college was getting a good education. He felt that without his education, it would be difficult for him to get a job in
which he was interested. He expressed that his college education would make a big
difference in his life. Gabe professed that his ultimate dream was to be a schoolteacher.
He acknowledged that it might take him a long time to accomplish this goal. In the
meantime, Gabe planned to work in a homeless shelter following graduation.

Shannon

Shannon decided to go to college because she wanted to get a decent job. As a
mature student, Shannon had spent several years after high school trying to find
employment. Over the years she had many different jobs, but felt that they were beneath
her skills and abilities, and were boring to her. She applied to college in order to gain
skills and knowledge that would help her prepare for employment in her area of interest.
Shannon described herself as having a learning disability; she learned at a slower pace
than other students. Shannon’s area of concentration was Early Childhood Education. In
her CICE program, she was learning about how to play with children and understanding
their needs.

In order to attend college, Shannon moved to a new town where the college was
located. She was required to secure her own living arrangements. Shannon decided to
look for accommodations off campus, so she went online to find a place to live. She
ended up renting a shared apartment with three other students taking various college
programs.
Shannon lived at home with her parents before she came to college and felt it was a big step for her to attend college. Because of her new living arrangements, she was learning how to live independently, purchase her groceries, manage her money, and save money. She found budgeting her own money a bit challenging, but had become used to it. She paid her own rent and other bills on time and bought her groceries each week. She claimed that she managed her apartment living well, keeping it clean and organized.

Shannon reported that she was learning how to make good decisions for herself in college such as how to manage her course work and personal obligations. She elaborated that through her associations in college, she was hanging out with people who had similar interests as her, and similar priorities. She claimed that these friends kept her out of trouble.

When it came to her course work, Shannon tried to be as independent as possible. She explained that while she tried to do most things on her own, there were some things with which she needed help. Shannon reported that she relied on her Learning Facilitator to take notes for her, so she could focus on the lecture and listen closely to what the professor was saying. She also explained that when the Learning Facilitator wrote things down on a piece of paper, that she would understand it better than just being told verbally. She felt comfortable to ask her Learning Facilitator for clarification if she was not sure about something.
Shannon reported that she did not participate in many college activities. She preferred to keep to herself. She had a small group of friends that she hung out with outside of school. However, when she was at school, she preferred to do her own thing.

Shannon’s ultimate goal for going to college was to get a job in a vocation that she was interested in. At the conclusion of the interviews, and in anticipation of pending graduation, Shannon was actively submitting resumes in search of employment. She had sent her application to many local daycare centers.

James

James took a few years off after high school before he decided to go to college. During this time, he took a few computer courses at night school, through which he discovered that he had a passion for learning. James had always wanted to further his education after high school in order to provide himself with more opportunities in his life and career. He wanted to keep busy in his life doing what he loved best; he always had a strong interest in media and computers and wanted to pursue this area as a vocation. He applied to a film program at another college but he was not accepted because he did not achieve the admission requirements through high school. When James learned about the CICE program, he thought that it sounded good, fun, and exciting. James felt that a college education would look better to potential employers. Once James made the decision to attend college, he felt self-confident, successful, and on top of the world.
James described himself as an easy-going guy. He expressed that, as a student with Autism, sometimes he required support to be successful in his studies. He claimed that he did not stress too much about things, as he always had a back-up plan in the back of his mind if things did not work out for him. He stated that he liked to think a lot. He also claimed to be ambitious, energetic, and enthusiastic. As a student, James described himself as respectful, reliable, wanting to do right, and someone who made up for any mistakes he made. James felt confident about his course work. He admitted that, although he did not always agree with what the professors would say in class, he respected other people’s perspective, and valued different points of view. James enjoyed learning and doing the best that he could in all his courses. He was passionate about taking pictures and filming. He enjoyed horror movies as an interest and hobby and tried to incorporate that into his course work. He was working on a horror movie interest project with a group of his friends from both college and outside of college.

Each week, James attended five classes, tutoring sessions with his Learning Facilitator, and his placement. He had taken courses in communications, interpersonal skills, pop culture, media, advertising, films, and creative writing for screen writing. His favourite courses were his computer courses, creative design, and photography. As an assignment for one of his courses, James wrote a horror story with personal history for each character. This assignment was a lot of fun for James and he was proud of himself for receiving a good grade. James was also very proud to have won an award for being on the honour roll. At his placement, James felt quite appreciated, involved, and part of
the workplace team. He stated that his placements were a lot of fun because they were in his area of interest, and he found them relevant to his career aspirations. James described learning about transferrable skills including interpersonal skills and good work habits at a placement he completed at a local department store. During the span of his research interviews, James’ placement was at the local theatre, building sets. He claimed to be learning valuable skills to help prepare him for shooting his own movie, and about acoustics and lighting.

James felt a strong sense of belonging at the college. He claimed that his phone would ring constantly with people wanting him to help them with projects. He found it difficult to say no to some of the projects, but he had to because he was just too busy with his schoolwork. James reported that he had made a lot of good acquaintances in his program, with whom he shared common interests. He enjoyed making small talk with his fellow students in the hallways as they waited for their classes together, or when he would see them around the college. James was not interested in many extra-curricular college activities; his main priority was his course work.

James was quite independent around the college. He would memorize everything that he needed to do. He was punctual and always showed up to class on time. He tried to solve problems and figure things out on his own. James filled his spare time between classes by eating or going for coffee with his friends. Sometimes he liked to use his free time to run errands, or he would go home to rest. On his day off, he frequently took the
day to relax. He felt like he needed to take the day to refresh himself for his busy schedule, but sometimes he would try to get caught up on any outstanding homework.

Learning Facilitators helped James with his course work by taking notes for him and helping him to prepare for his tests. James enjoyed working with his Learning Facilitators. He felt that they were a lot of fun to work with and provided the necessary help to ensure his success at college. Learning Facilitators would help James to read things that he could not understand very well. They would explain things to him in terms he could understand if he was confused about something, and they would provide direction and assistance with his papers and other assignments. Because of the assistance of his Learning Facilitators, James felt that he had been more successful in college. He felt that they had taught him a lot of valuable information, and were good partners to have.

James stated that college certainly kept him busy. He reported that the best part of college for him was winning awards for his good grades, along with his sense of accomplishment and the increased self-esteem that had resulted from these experiences. Before he attended college, James never knew that he had it in him to be successful at college. He appreciated the opportunity to study the subject that he loved, and the ways he was able to use his imagination to make his ideas reality. James was also grateful to learn from his more experienced peers, and that he was able to meet a lot of people with similar interests that he would not have been able to meet anywhere else. Overall, James
was happy with his college experience. He expressed that he was able to take the courses that he wanted to take, and learn what he wanted to learn.

Attending and being successful in college had increased James’ self-esteem and motivated him to be positive about himself. James claimed that he felt like he could be more independent in his life and was confident to try new things because of his experience in college. James stated that college was perfect for him because it was a place where he felt he belonged and fit in.

James wants to be considered as a professional in his field who is respected by his peers for doing a good job. He wants to keep busy in his life by doing the things that he enjoys the most. James hopes to get a job in the advertising field working with digital presentations or advertising when he graduates. He wants to become involved in making a community service film about the city he lives in, portraying what the city is all about.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I provided seven participant stories in order to highlight who participants are as people and their individual college experiences. The following chapter, Chapter 6, presents an overview of the combined college experiences of the seven participants. These experiences are presented thematically.
Chapter 6
Presentation of Findings

This chapter presents common themes that emerged from the college experiences of Belle, Caleb, Wolfie, Jeff, Gabe, Shannon, and James. There were four main themes that emerged from the data: academic growth and development, interpersonal relationships and social networks, career development and employment potential, and self-determination. Participant quotations are used throughout this chapter to portray the voices of participants and to ensure the narratives are accurate. It is the participants’ voices, not the researcher’s interpretations, that are salient to feature when employing a disability studies methodology. Belle, Caleb, Wolfie, Gabe, Shannon, and James each participated in three interviews for this study. Two interviews were conducted with Jeff. Each participant’s quote found in the text of this chapter is referenced to indicate from which interview the quote was taken. For example, I indicate (Interview 1), (Interview 2), or (Interview 3) after each quote.

The College Experience

To begin, I discuss generally the concept of college experience, including descriptions of the college experience from the participants in this study. The college experience generally refers to experiencing anything and everything that college life has to offer. For all college students, this can include engaging in the learning experience,
meeting new people, participating in social activities, and meeting the demands of college rigour. Jeff summed up his perspective of what constituted the college experience:

Katherine: What does the college experience mean to you?
Jeff: You meet more people, and you have more freedom to do what you want. There are more opportunities to get involved in sports, clubs, and whatever is going on around the school. (Interview 2)

In college, the participants in this study learned about course material, self and relationships, and had the opportunity to interact in an environment where growth, development, and maturation in these areas were facilitated and fostered. The participants in this study gained new independence at college, and at the same time, also learned how to balance responsibility. These facets are further explored in this chapter.

As the purpose of this study was to explore what constituted the college experience for the seven student participants with intellectual disabilities, the overall college experience was the overarching theme in this study. Interestingly, however, the college experience emerged as an entity in itself described by the participants. As Dwyre, Grigal, and Fialka (2010) contended, being part of a community represents certain status and recognition. Participants indicated that being a part of the college community, and experiencing everything it had to offer, was a reason for, or benefit of, attending college. For example, Caleb explained that the best part of college for him was “the campus experience, learning, getting involved with the campus activities, … just being out in campus and seeing what there is to do” (Interview 1). In describing what the
college experience meant to him, James thoughtfully declared, “I have learned what it's like to be a student; that is the one thing I know now” (Interview 1). Belle also described the college experience as an entity:

  Katherine: What would you say is the best thing about coming to college?
  Belle: Learning, the college experience, just a chance for college I think.

(Interview 1)

The following sections describe the four themes: academic growth and development, interpersonal relationships and social networks, career development and employment potential, and self-determination that emerged from the participants’ combined experiences.

**Academic Growth and Development**

As Wortherspoon (2012) explained, education can be generally understood as the formal learning that takes place in college through specific courses and learning activities in an organized way, and also the informal learning gained through experience. In describing their academic growth and development, participants discussed their program area of concentration, the learning environment, learning supports, and opportunities to expand upon their learning. Each is discussed below.

**Program Area of Concentration.** As Dwyre et al. (2010) claimed, post-secondary education offers students with and without disabilities the chance to take courses that are related to their interests, providing insight into a career area, and chances
to develop or expand upon skills. Attending college has provided the participants in this study with the opportunity to take a program area of concentration and courses that they were specifically interested in. When the participants began their CICE program, they chose a program area of concentration that they intended to pursue; this was previously introduced in Chapter 4. Table 6.1 summarizes each participant’s program area of concentration and year of study.

Table 6.1

*Participants’ Program Area of Concentration and Year of Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Program Area of Concentration</th>
<th>Year of Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>Veterinary Assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfie</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>Police Foundations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabe</td>
<td>Child and Youth Worker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Print Media</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each participant indicated that they were able to choose their program area of concentration based on their interests or career goals. For example, Wolfie discussed her dream of working with children:

Katherine: What made you decide to come to college?
Wolfie: I have always wanted to work with kids since I was 8 years old myself, and I’ve always had an interest to work with children. And since this was my only college to go to, I came here.

Katherine: Okay, because you wanted to take a program to work with children?

Wolfie: Yes, since I am in a learning class all through my life, I had to come here. Like, I need help on a lot of things.

Katherine: So what is the name of your college program?

Wolfie: It’s called CICE…And I am taking ECE, Early Childhood Education.

(Interview 1)

Shannon also indicated that she wanted to go to college to pursue an area of interest to her:

Katherine: How did you know you wanted to take ECE courses?

Shannon: This is the course I always wanted to take since high school.

Katherine: So, were you able to take ECE courses because of the CICE program?

Shannon: Yes. (Interview 1)

**Courses.** Participants were able to take most of their courses, attend classes, and complete modified course work from within their identified program area of concentration. Participants typically were able to take up to three courses each semester. James described in great detail some of the courses he took within his program area of concentration, Print Media:

Katherine: Excellent. Why don’t you tell me about some of your courses?
James: The courses I took for first semester...was Human Communications, which is working well with other people...I did Pop Culture and Media, and that is about advertising and movies and stuff like that. I thought it was ok and it was pretty good... And the other was Creative Writing, I like writing, screen writing. I actually wrote a horror story with background of the characters, so it was a lot of fun...That was fun and I got good marks. And then I took Computers class. And in my second semester, which was the first year, I took CICE seminar, and had a placement working in the camera department and [doing] stuff with the DVDs, and helping customers find the right products. I had the History of Western Civilization... which was a lot of fun. And I took Success Matters...In the third semester, I took intro to Mac and two Mac Computer courses. I took Creative Design, and I got really good marks and stuff like that. And Careers and Math, and how to be ahead, and how people get their foot in the door. I really enjoyed that. This year, I will look at my sheet of paper because I have trouble pronouncing the names and stuff. I took Professional Practices, Digital Presentations, and Photography...Right now my marks are pretty good and I will be graduating this year. (Interview 1)

Other participants also listed some of the courses they were taking. For example, Wolfie identified courses she had taken within her program area of concentration:

Katherine: So what courses are you taking then?
Wolfie: Ah, well last year I took Play Class, Play Class 2, Health, I took Nutrition. What’s my other ones? I took seminar class. (Interview 2)

Participants from both college sites also indicated that they were able to take general education electives outside of their program area of concentration. Some of these elective courses described by the participants were related to, or complimented, their program area of concentration. For example, Caleb described some of the courses he had taken as electives in his CICE program:

Katherine: Caleb, can you describe some of the elective courses you have taken in your program?

Caleb: I have taken some Gen Ed stuff too…I have taken Pop Culture, Films and Society, Pop Culture in the Media. I have also taken a Digital Presentation Media class. I have taken some history classes too, as part of the Print Media, Digital Photography. So I have taken different ones. I have taken an Arts and Science, one Nutrition. Lots of learning how to deal with stress in the workplace; it is really good to learn that. And I am taking Media, that was kind of within the Gen Ed. I also looked into something that was close to my area of concentration, so like History of Media. Like I was telling you before, it is all related to media so it is close enough to media too. (Interview 2)

As evidenced by the lengthy list of courses identified by Caleb, he was able to explore a variety of courses related to his interests. Belle also explained that she was able to take program concentration and elective courses in her program. Regarding her varied
course selections, she happily reported: “I like to explore my education, it is quite the opportunity!” (Interview 1).

**The Learning Environment.** When asked to describe the physical space of their college classrooms, most of the participants described a typical classroom setting, with many desks and chairs for students to sit at and a space for the teacher to stand at the front. Figure 6.1 is a researcher generated photograph from College B that was used in interviews with each participant from this site. When asked what the photograph represented, College B participants described this as being a typical classroom setting. When asked about class sizes, the participants indicated that class size could range anywhere from 20 to 100 students.

*Figure 6.1.* Researcher generated photograph of a classroom at College B.
Participants from College A produced individual photographs to depict classroom settings. These individual photographs of classroom settings were used to generate discussions about the types of things that occurred in the classroom. Figure 6.2 is a photograph that was taken by Wolfie to show me what her CICE seminar classroom looked like.

![Figure 6.2. Wolfie’s photograph of her seminar class.](image)

When reviewing photographs such as those in Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2, probing questions from the interview guides were used to generate discussion about the types of activities that occurred within the classroom, or other thoughts that came to the
participant’s minds when viewing the classroom photographs. The following sections highlight the sub-themes that emerged from such discussions.

**Lectures.** Most participants in this study indicated that lectures were the most common teaching strategy used by their professors to convey course information. Gabe reported that sometimes his lecture classes would have anywhere from 40 to 100 students in attendance. Gabe’s larger lecture classes were held in a lecture theatre. Gabe disclosed that he sometimes felt “small” when sitting in such a large room (Interview 3). When Jeff was asked to describe his lectures, he stated: “you mostly sit and listen…you really have to pay attention” (Interview 1). Belle also discussed the fact that most of her classes were lecture-based, whereby she would listen to the professor speak for the duration of the class, and take down as many notes as possible in order to try to remember everything that the professor was conveying. James explained that in class, the professor would provide time during the lectures for interaction with other students:

Katherine: How do you interact in the classroom?

James: Mostly the teacher talks and lectures, and then we work together to write stuff down. (Interview 1)

For some participants, sitting through the lectures presented a major challenge. For example, Shannon reported that she was struggling in some of her courses, in part, because it was difficult for her to sit through the lectures. Wolfie also claimed that lectures were arduous for her to sit through:

Katherine: What are some of the challenges that you face in college?
Wolfie: It’s too much for a three hour class just to sit there. The course I have now is all lecture. There is no play, and I am a hands-on type of person. I like to do activities, and sitting there in the lecture is painful, and it is so hard to pay attention…[the professor] needs to stop and realize there is people who are struggling because it is too much lecture, and if she had maybe two activities per class, people it would get. People would say this is an awesome class, instead of all lecture. (Interview 3)

**Classroom Activities.** Most of the participants conveyed that they preferred a more hands-on approach in their learning, including interactive classroom activities. In describing some of the classroom activities that she participated in, Shannon listed completing chapter questions from the textbook, working on projects, and taking down notes as a few examples she would complete in class. Jeff declared that his strength in class was participating in hands-on activities. He explained that in his courses, the professors provided a variety of activities for students, including “in-class assignments, and guest speakers; it pretty much [depends upon] what she feels like is going on that day” (Interview 1). Caleb enjoyed engaging in classroom activities. He exclaimed, “I am always interacting, I’ve always got my hand up. Every time she asks something, I am like this, with my hand up! My hand gets sore!” (Interview 1). He felt proud and knowledgeable when he was called upon by the professor. Gabe summed up his excitement about participating in classroom activities with his statement, “I love it! It just gets you so pumped! You want to be in that talk!” (Interview 3).
Shannon disclosed that one of her favourite classes was her Pottery class, as it was more interactive, whereby she was actually doing and making things. Figure 6.3 is a photograph that Shannon brought to an interview to show me her Pottery Classroom environment.

*Figure 6.3. Shannon’s photograph of her pottery class.*

With regard to Figure 6.3, Shannon eagerly discussed her Pottery Class:

Katherine: Excellent, is this your regular class?

Shannon: No, that is my Pottery Class.

Katherine: Okay, and what is this in the picture?
Shannon: Those are hand wheels. We learn to make faces and stuff like that. And then, behind there is where you do the hands-on work. That is where I have my class on Mondays.

Katherine: Excellent, so what actually do you do? Is this where you made the vase?

Shannon: Have you ever watched Ghost?

Katherine: Yes.

Shannon: Just like that. It is basically where we add the water to the clay and spin that around with the wheel. Then, in the back, we do hands-on work. We make pots, and I made a Spiderman mask, and I made a jewelry box, and I made some cups. I made an organizer, and I made some bowls.

Katherine: Wow! That is impressive! (Interview 3)

**Group Work.** Most of the participants discussed participating in group work in their classes. With regard to their group work, participants reported working with other students from the CICE program, students from their program area of concentration, and even by themselves. Belle claimed that she enjoyed working with any other student in the class, and was comfortable to initiate group formation. Caleb preferred to work with other CICE students if they were in the class with him, and often let his Learning Facilitator arrange for group meetings. Caleb explained, “if I am the only one in the class, then I will do [group work] on my own, and if there is someone else from the CICE program with me, then we work together” (Interview 1). Gabe reported that he would
work with either CICE students, or students from the mainstream program, depending on what the assignment was, and because “sometimes it is hard for us to get together with the other students” (Interview 1).

Participants also discussed some of the benefits and drawbacks of working in groups. For example, Belle discussed her feelings about working in groups:

Katherine: How do you feel about participating in classroom activities? Do you feel confident when you answer questions or do group work?

Belle: It’s ok, it is not too bad. Doing group work, you get to know what other people’s opinions are. Sometimes you get to express yourself, communication. So it is nice. I like to [participate in groups], and it is fun at times. (Interview 1)

James also enjoyed working with other students on group projects, but was quite aware of some of the pitfalls in working with others:

Katherine: Do you enjoy participating in group work in your classes?

James: It depends on the partner…I like getting with the partner, but not if the partner is one where everything you come up with is a whine and complaint. They want to get their way; that is what I don't like. Or, if they don't want to help out. (Interview 2)

Wolfie pointed out that, as part of her CICE program, she was learning specifically about interacting in groups in her seminar class:

Katherine: What type of activities do you participate within the class? Do you do group work?
Wolfie: Seminar class is teamwork. You have to work with other people, like you have to know how to be good with others. If you are not good with others, they will boot you out of the group. We are learning that in seminar class.

(Interview 1)

**Homework.** In addition to the activities that occurred inside of the classroom, participants reported that they were required to develop strategies to get through their course work and homework obligations. Wolfie described that she would often go back to her Residence room to work on her homework in between classes. Figure 6.4 is a photograph that Wolfie took to show her workspace in her Residence room and the space where she completed her homework.

![Figure 6.4](image)

*Figure 6.4. Wolfie’s photograph of her workspace in her residence room where she completed her homework.*
When discussing Figure 6.4, Wolfie disclosed that she was surprised by the amount of homework she was required to complete in college. She explained, “there was tons of challenges…there was tons of homework…and there was so much work to do!” (Interview 3). However, she was proud to discuss strategies that she developed to stay on top of her work. Wolfie described how she planned to complete her work ahead of due dates so that she wouldn’t get behind:

Katherine: And how do you manage to get all your work done?

Wolfie: I have to be ahead of everyone by at least two weeks. If I don’t, I am going to lose my information that I have in my head…and it might be three weeks in advance before it is even due! (Interview 3)

Other participants also discussed various strategies that they had developed for completing their course work. Belle reported that she worked on her homework for at least a few hours on most days:

Katherine: And how often would you say that you work on your homework?

Belle: I am always doing homework and studying. When I am not at school, I am at my place doing the stuff I need to do for school, [such as] emails, or doing the assignments that are due for the next day or next class. (Interview 2)

Belle also reviewed her notes regularly so that the information was easier for her to remember on a test. She kept track of her homework and assignments by using an agenda. She explained that she would write all of her assignments and tests in her agenda, and would also include other important dates such as reading week and
birthdays. Once the day had passed on the calendar, she would cross it off in her agenda. Figure 6.5 is a photograph of Belle’s agenda that she shared in order to demonstrate how she kept herself organized.

![Belle's agenda](image)

*Figure 6.5. Belle’s agenda that she used to organize her course work and other obligations.*

With regard to Figure 6.5, Belle explained her process for keeping herself organized:

Katherine: Do you keep track of most of that stuff yourself; do you use your planner for that?

Belle: Yup, I use a planner in my agenda. I had highlighters in my calendar, and I use my calendar a lot. I can even show you, I have it on a specific day. I have it
wrote down, like an assignment and homework to get down, and I have
highlighters to highlight the specific days. I write everything in it. I cross off
days when they are done. (Interview 2)

At a subsequent interview, Belle further elaborated on how she used her agenda:

Belle: I keep all my birthdays and assignments in my agenda so I know what day
is coming, and what is due that day if I have anything on it. Like, for example,
every Wednesday I go through and check off everything that is due for the next
day. For example, I have an assignment due that day so I would check off the day
and then just go through and see what is coming next, what days I have co-op and
times and when I have tutorials. (Interview 3)

Gabe also described using his agenda to keep himself organized:

Gabe: I use my agenda a lot. I have the school agenda. They give you a student
agenda like this every year, basically, and I put all my appointments in there, so I
am very organized.

Katherine: And am I in there?

Gabe: Yes you are! So when I do have an appointment, I write it down so that
that way I don't forget. And on my laptop too, I have little sticky note saying
what I am going to do each day. So that keeps me going. (Interview 2)

Caleb also used other planning tools to keep track of his obligations. Being a self-
professed computer geek, he preferred to use tools available on his computer. Caleb
shared his strategy for keeping organized:
Katherine: Good. How do you keep track of all your homework and assignments?

Caleb: My agenda on my laptop. I have the sticky notes.

Katherine: Your laptop will tell you when things are due?

Caleb: Yep. On my laptop, I make it so that it is bigger and it will tell me what’s due, like in chronological order with the due dates. (Interview 2)

James, Caleb, and Gabe each described trying to find time in their schedule when they were at school to work on homework, assignments, or study, in order to have more free time during the evenings and weekends. James, who had a day off during the week in his last semester, would use this day to “get caught up on any assignments” (James, Interview 2). Caleb, who seemed to enjoy solitude, would often find a quiet corner of the college to get some of his work done. He would frequently use his spare time between classes to work on his assignments and course work. He would often “go downstairs…to the wooden benches—sometimes it is quiet there, or the study room. There is a room upstairs on the third floor that is really quiet, no distractions, so I go there to do my homework” (Interview 1). Figure 6.6 below is the photograph that Caleb showed me of the bench area where he enjoyed doing his work.
Figure 6.6. Caleb’s photograph of a quiet study space where he would often work on his homework.

Jeff appeared to take a more casual approach to his homework and course obligations. When asked about how much homework he completed, Jeff admitted that he thought he should do more:

Katherine: Excellent, that brings me to my next question. How much homework do you do?
Jeff: Not enough, but enough. Like I said, the course wants you to be involved in the community. So, I am trying to get involved in the community. But a lot of times I look over the notes, and try to read them and write down what I think about them, and sometimes I forget.
Katherine: Does anyone remind you when assignments are coming up?

Jeff: Sometimes, but usually no. I am pretty good at knowing when I have a test and when my assignments are due, and that it just varies. College is hard because you have a lot of things to go for, so I mean, like you can be caught up on something at home and easily forget. (Interview 1)

Because of his busy schedule, Gabe confessed that he completed much of his homework at the last minute. He admitted that he would often stay up late the night before an assignment was due and cram to get it done. He explained, “sometimes it is hard to get it done, but I know I have to get it done!” (Gabe, Interview 3).

**Learning Supports.** The foundation of CICE programs is the provision of supports and services for students with intellectual disabilities who require modifications to their course work, and additional supports from what is typically provided through accommodations. Each participant in this study demonstrated an awareness of their learning needs. For example, James explained that the CICE program was developed for people with autism, like himself:

Katherine: Can you describe the program that you are in?

James: My program? The CICE program is for special needs people that are not fully handicapped, but autistic, who may have problems, or have their own way of doing stuff. And I think this program understands the full meaning of autistic people, and that it is really good for them. It's perfect the whole way that
everyone is together. This is where I actually belong…I feel like I fit in…feels like this place is where I belong. (Interview 1)

Caleb explained what he felt was a benefit for him in the program:

Katherine: Good. Are there other benefits to learning at college? What about the learning that you're doing?

Caleb: I have the Learning Facilitators to help me out. One benefit they give me assistance for someone with special needs like myself. (Interview 3)

With regard to their learning needs, each participant described learning at a slower pace than other students. Gabe explained that it was difficult for him to take in a lot of information at a time. Jeff expressed that sometimes he had difficulties determining what he actually needed to know, and where he should focus his efforts. Each of the participants discussed the fact that they required modifications and support in order to be successful in their program.

*The Learning Facilitator.* By far, the most common support identified by the participants in this study was the support they received through a Learning Facilitator. Both college sites provided CICE students with access to a Learning Facilitator in order to assist with course work. A Learning Facilitator attended each class with the CICE student with whom they were assigned to work. According to the participants, the Learning Facilitator would work under the direction of the professor of each course they were taking in order to make appropriate modifications to the course work for each student. The participants reported modifications to their course work could include
adjusted learning outcomes, and a reduced number of assignment requirements or assessment strategies. James discussed some of the supports provided to CICE students from the Learning Facilitator:

Katherine: What does a Learning Facilitator do?

James: They help us with our work, they give us homework and stuff. They help us with typing when we need it, they help keep us in check and see how things are going. They help me read stuff that I can't read very well, they help me get caught up when I get confused with something, they will help me get my papers done. (Interview 1)

Jeff also described the support CICE students receive from the Learning Facilitator:

Katherine: Can you describe what a Learning Facilitator does?

Jeff: They give us a little bit more detail, they give us the answer; but not quite the answer. So basically, when you read the test the teacher gave you, you have to remember everything she taught you, really. Where [the Learning Facilitator] puts it into their own words, and change it a bit so we can understand it. But it is still the same as what the teacher gave you, just a little bit more of the detail. (Interview 2)

With regard to the support he received from his Learning Facilitator, Caleb explained: “My Learning Facilitator, they will help me if I have any questions or concerns or need help understanding the assignments, or when I study for tests” (Interview 1).
Wolfie simply summed up the role of the Learning Facilitator:

   Katherine: How do they help you?
   
   Wolfie: They help you in a way that you can learn. They put it to your level, or however you learn. (Interview 3)

Participants described specific assistance provided to them by the Learning Facilitator, including assisting with assignments, note-taking, test assistance and modifications, in-class assistance, and the provision of tutorials to assist students develop an understanding of the course materials. In the following sections, these specific supports provided by the Learning Facilitator are discussed.

Assignments. Participants indicated that the Learning Facilitator would make modifications to their assignments. With regard to assignment modifications, participants reported that they completed the same assignments as other students in the class, however, typically they were adjusted. For example, James explained the difference between his assignments, and other students’ assignments in his classes:

   Katherine: Is your course work the same as other students in your class?
   
   James: We have the same work. We have different problems, but we do it differently. (Interview 1)

In explaining the types of modifications made to his assignment requirements, Caleb stated: “they're the same class assignments, but the Learning Facilitators, they modify it so it's a little easier. If there was 10 questions, I would have seven questions, or five, or whatever they choose” (Interview 2). Gabe also reported that the assignments that he
worked on were similar to the work completed by the students in the mainstream class. He stated, “It is the same assignment, but what we do is we break it down so we can understand it. It is the same assignment that is given to the rest of the class” (Interview 1). Belle described the modifications that she received to complete her assignments: “mine are modified, we do some that are smaller, so it is not too much for us” (Belle, Interview 3). Shannon indicated that the modifications provided her with independence to complete assignments and course work:

Katherine: The assignments you have to do, are they the same as everyone else?

Shannon: Nope, ours are modified.

Katherine: And what does that mean?

Shannon: Some of the work is modified. So, we basically do the same thing, but we don't do the whole thing. We do half of the work, like everyone else has to do the whole thing.

Katherine: Do you find that helpful?

Shannon: Mhmm. When I ask for help, they show me how to do it and I can go on my own and get it done. They don't do it for me. (Interview 2)

**Note-Taking.** In describing the specific supports and assistance received through the Learning Facilitator, all of the participants reported that the Learning Facilitator would take notes during the lecture and provide them to the students. Participants explained that the Learning Facilitator would take notes using language and terminology that was easily understood by them. Belle described the role of the Learning Facilitator
in taking notes as “my Learning Facilitator kind of modifies the notes…and they take only the information that we need to know” (Interview 1). At both college sites, the Learning Facilitator would type the notes after class, and leave them in a folder in the main CICE office area for the participant to pick up. The Learning Facilitators would also provide time during their weekly tutorials to review the notes and compare them with the notes that the student had taken in order to ensure that they had all the required information. Figures 6.7 and 6.8 provide examples of the study notes prepared for Gabe by his Learning Facilitator.

Figure 6.7. Gabe’s study notes prepared for him by a Learning Facilitator.

Figure 6.8. Gabe’s fill-in-the-blanks notes prepared for him by a Learning Facilitator.
Gabe explained that his Learning Facilitator would prepare notes such as the ones in Figures 6.7 and 6.8, in order for him to review the course materials and prepare for a test:

Katherine: Can you maybe explain these study notes? Remember, we took a picture of this. This is yours right? Is that provided by the Learning Facilitator?

Gabe: What they do is, they go to the professor and they ask what can do to help the student out. By doing notes like that, it is just the way we study. Because I have a learning disability, I can’t take all the information that the other people are doing, so they give us a little, whatever is on that test they give us the study notes from it. For example, this study note instead of giving us 50 questions, they give us 20, so it is modified for us. So we understand what is happening on that test basically. (Interview 2)

Gabe further described his notes:

Katherine: Can you describe these notes?

Gabe: What they do is, they ask us to do it for homework [fill in the blanks], and look into your notes to make sure you have the right answers. Then we take it up in our tutorial and if it is not the right answer they go over and over it again until you know your stuff. (Interview 2)

Test Modifications. Another vital support provided by the Learning Facilitator described by the participants was the provision of assistance for tests. The participants indicated that the Learning Facilitator was responsible for modifying tests to
accommodate their level and to make the test more manageable. Caleb explained how modifications were made to his tests by the Learning Facilitator. He stated, “They take out the more difficult questions; they approve it with the professor” (Interview 1). The participants also described having a reduced number of questions on their tests as part of their modifications to make the test more manageable for the student. Belle explained, “They make it shorter and only specific questions” (Interview 1). Shannon described modifications to her tests:

Katherine: So, what are your tests like?

Shannon: Like our tests are modified. They're not handwritten. They’re like a true and false, ABC… multiple-choice, and some of the work is modified. We basically do the same thing, but we don't do the whole thing. We do half of the work; everyone else has to do the whole thing. (Interview 1)

Gabe provided further detail on how the Learning Facilitators modified the tests:

Katherine: How are your tests modified?

Gabe: They take the questions that the professor gives to the other students, but they do it in a modified way. They give it to us the way we understand. It is the same test, but we are learning a different way that we understand it. (Interview 1)

Additional types of assistance on tests were described by the participants. Jeff explained, “If I had a test they would read it for me, I would read it over and over again, or I would memorize it” (Interview 1). Wolfie clarified some of the supports she received when taking a test. She claimed, “they’ll [Learning Facilitators] read it to you,
but they don’t help you, if you don’t understand a word if you don’t know exactly what a word means, the challenge words, they help you” (Interview 3). Belle explained that CICE students from College B would take their tests in a tutorial room. She explained that this is because sometimes they may take longer to do the test, or the Learning Facilitator may read the questions or explain what some words mean.

**In-Class Assistance.** While the participants may have worked with different Learning Facilitators in different courses, they consistently had the same one for each course. If there happened to be more than one CICE student in a particular class, there would usually be just one Learning Facilitator assigned to work with both students. Most of the participants indicated that they sat with their Learning Facilitator in class. In fact, Caleb claimed that most of the CICE students he knew also sat with their Learning Facilitator in class. Gabe jokingly explained, “I do sit with them, but sometimes they want to sit far away from me [laughing]!” (Interview 2). Gabe further explained that he didn’t feel self-conscious about having the Learning Facilitator sit with him in class, because “nobody really judges you with a learning disability or anything like that; it's amazing!” (Interview 2). Jeff was the only participant who reported that he preferred not to sit with his Learning Facilitator.

Wolfie reported that there were additional benefits to her for sitting with her Learning Facilitator in class:

Katherine: Do you sit with your Learning Facilitator in class?
Wolfie: Yes, I usually sit with my Learning Facilitator in class. If I am confused about what the teacher is saying, she will explain it to me. Also, I am almost deaf, so sometimes I can’t hear what the teacher is saying. Especially if I can’t get a seat close to the front. So the Learning Facilitator will sometimes tell me what he is saying. (Interview 3)

Belle also reported that the Learning Facilitator would provide other supports for her in the classroom. For example, she explained how the Learning Facilitator would help facilitate group work and classroom activities for her: “she would explain what we had to do, and just provide examples of things we had to do, but she wouldn’t be in the group with me” (Interview 2).

**Tutorials.** At both college sites, Learning Facilitators provided regular weekly tutorials for the participants to help review concepts, manage their assignments, review notes, and help prepare for tests. Each participant reported that the tutorial was generally one hour per course each week. The tutorials were usually individual, but occasionally the tutorials would be held with other CICE students. Belle explained that sometimes tutorials were held with other CICE students who were taking the same course. Gabe also reported having other CICE students attend tutorials with him. In such instances, the Learning Facilitator would spend their time going between the students to review concepts and answer questions.

Caleb described some of the activities he worked on in his tutorial: “we go over the class notes, work on any assignments, we make sure we’re on track, and make sure
the assignments that are due are on time” (Interview 1). Wolfie reported that during her tutorials, the Learning Facilitator would “explain what we did in class, if we have projects then she/he helps to get ready and give some ideas and be organized so we can be ready for class or whenever it is due gets us up-to-date” (Interview 1). Belle also described similar supports provided in her tutorials. She stated, “They review your homework, they help you get ready for a test, help you think of what to do for projects…stuff like that” (Interview 1). Gabe reported that he could prepare for his tutorial by sending an email in advance to his Learning Facilitator. He stated, “we email if we have a question, and they will answer it for you when we have our tutorial” (Interview 1).

All of the participants made clear that attending the tutorials was an integral part of their CICE program, and that it was just as important to attend tutorials as it was to attend class. Wolfie warned about the consequences for students who skipped their tutorials:

Katherine: Do you have choices about attending your tutorials?

Wolfie: I skipped tutoring sessions and classes. If you miss class or tutoring, you will fail. They will automatically fail you, because the tutors can go up to the teacher and tell her my student is not showing up; she is not doing this, she is not doing that, and that teacher can automatically get that information, and fail you. (Interview 3)
Levels of Support Provision. Each participant explained that the Learning Facilitator would tailor the supports provided to individual strengths and needs. Caleb indicated that he preferred to do his tests on his own, but knew that if he required extra support, it was available to him. Belle explained that she took notes for herself, and during her tutorial, she was able to match her notes to the ones taken by the Learning Facilitator to ensure that she had covered everything. Belle also reported that she could decide how much support she wanted with her tests. For example, while Learning Facilitators were available to read the test questions or explain them, Belle would usually take the modified version of the test on her own. Belle compared the support she received from the Learning Facilitator with the support received by another CICE student who was taking the same course:

Katherine: Does everyone in the CICE program get the same kind of assistance?  
Belle: If we have a test they can scribe for us. I normally do my test on my own, and I read the questions, think, and write them out on the sheet. With the other student that is in my class, she normally gets a scribe. (Interview 2)

Caleb reported that the Learning Facilitator would modify the level of support provided to him based on his strengths and abilities. When asked how the Learning Facilitators knew how much support to provide to a student, Caleb simply stated, “They ask us!” (Interview 1). Gabe explained that the Learning Facilitator would basically provide him with directions, and then leave him to get on with his work:

Katherine: How much assistance does the Learning Facilitator provide to you?
Gabe: My Learning Facilitator will help me if I need help, basically I do the work, the homework, and if I get stuck, I can email them and they will look at it to see if we need to look over it. (Interview 2)

When asked whether the modifications were tailored to his strengths, Gabe wholeheartedly agreed that Learning Facilitators provided supports based on his strengths: “it is based on my strengths, so if I can understand, they will modify it for me based on that” (Interview 2). When discussing students who have different needs, Gabe further explained, “They [Learning Facilitators] would modify it more for them, different modifications” (Interview 2). Wolfie summed up how the Learning Facilitators provided individualized modifications to course work with her comment, “They help you in a way that you can learn. They put it to the level, or however you learn” (Wolfie, Interview 2).

**Participants’ Thoughts About Learning Facilitators.** Caleb reported that his Learning Facilitators were very nice and friendly. He stated: “I love working with them. I've had so many great Learning Facilitators. They are so friendly and so helpful” (Interview 2). James also indicated that he enjoyed working with his Learning Facilitators. He described his Learning Facilitators as “a lot of fun, and they’re a lot of help, and I'm thankful that I have them. They're really nice people and I am actually going to miss them when I leave here” (Interview 1). He went on to describe his Learning Facilitators as “fine people that we can talk to, and they're all really great helpers. Feels like we have parental guidance to help us” (Interview 1). Belle also expressed that she enjoyed working with her Learning Facilitators:
Katherine: How do you feel about working with the Learning Facilitators?

Belle: I enjoy working with my Learning Facilitators; they make the tutorial fun and once in awhile we do activities and games, and sometimes afterwards, we go through the notes and they make it fun with jokes and comments, and so on.

(Interview 3)

Shannon reported also that she enjoyed working with her Learning Facilitator:

Katherine: How do you feel about having a Learning Facilitator?

Shannon: Really good. If not, I’d be lost and confused and I wouldn't be here.

(Interview 3)

James described the sense of pride that he felt his Learning Facilitators had for his accomplishments:

James: Some of them would say I am pretty good. Some are hard to tell; they won’t tell you unless you are doing a good job. A lot are proud and happy because they are with me in each classroom and they have seen how I have passed. I feel like this place is my comfort of protection, and it makes me feel safe. Everyone is polite…everything is so positive. You know, everything here is respectable and I don't think I've ever been to such a respectful place out of anywhere else. (Interview 1)

Other College Supports. In addition to the supports provided by their Learning Facilitators, participants also reported that they had access to all of the supports and services provided to students at the college. Wolfie described the Peer Tutoring supports
provided to the entire college population. She stated, “anyone can go, even people from regular classes. If they are having struggles with some of their work, they can go to the tutors if they need help” (Interview 1). She reported that the tutoring support was a quiet place for students to work on their course materials. She stated, “you can sign in before you drop in. You can go on the computers. You can do work in the learning bridge, it is like a quiet area like the library, it has to be quiet” (Interview 1). Wolfie, Shannon, and Gabe also reported that they had access to Counselling Services and Disability Services provided at the college, but did not expand upon instances when they have accessed these services.

**Expanding Learning Opportunities.** College has provided the opportunity for the participants in this study to realize their learning potential, and cultivate their interests and desires for learning. For some of the participants, attending college has also opened the door to future learning opportunities. Five of the participants reported that they were interested in pursuing additional education after they completed their CICE certificate program.

Belle and Wolfie each expressed an interest in applying for the mainstream college program in their program area of concentration to obtain a diploma. Wolfie described the plans she made for her educational path:

> Wolfie: [My main goal is] to get my Early Childhood Education [diploma] because ever since I was eight years old, I wanted to work with kids. So I talked with my mom and we worked it out, and we found a [Early Childhood Education]
program…working with children, and I said that is going to be my dream. I will be the happiest woman alive. I know I've had a lot of learning, but sometimes we have to take the extra step just to do stuff that everyone else [can]. (Interview 3)

Belle used the CICE program to gauge how well she would do in college before making the leap to a mainstream college program. She stated, “It was my only opportunity to come to college, because if I took a mainstream course, it would be really difficult. So, I took this one to see if I could do well in college in the modified program” (Interview 1). During the span of research interviews with the participants in this study, Belle had applied to a Veterinary Assistant program at another college, but subsequently found out that she did not have the prerequisites for admission. She had decided to take the required steps to gain the entrance requirements in the near future. Gabe and Jeff both indicated a desire to take courses in a closely related field. Jeff was interested in pursuing what he needed to do in order to meet the requirements for police college or the military. Gabe was also exploring his options as to whether any programs or courses were available to him at the university level. Caleb had indicated that through his college education, he had found a love of learning and was interested in taking interest courses just to expand his knowledge in areas in which he was interested. Additional information regarding expanding learning opportunities is discussed in the Career Development and Employment Potential section later in this chapter.
Interpersonal Relationships and Social Networks

A significant element of the college experience is the social milieu, that is, the social activities and experiences students are exposed to as a result of being in the college environment. The college social milieu can provide opportunities for students to become involved with campus activities and engage in student life; colleges generally provide clubs, student groups, sports activities, fitness centers, and recreational activities for students. Informally, college provides shared space with others, and opportunities to interact and socialize with others. All of these features of the social milieu provide opportunities for students to develop interpersonal relationships and social networks. The participants in this study described various aspects of the social milieu, including sharing common space with others, participating in college recreational activities, and developing social networks and friendships as the main opportunities at college for social engagement. Each participant indicated varying levels of engagement in the social milieu, and described feelings of belonging with the college environment.

Common Spaces. College provides an environment where students can interact and socialize with others. In discussing some of the spaces at the college where students can socialize, James listed many places where he would hang out with his friends, including “just the hallways, just downstairs, the common area, the computer lab, my Mac classroom, that is where I go…” (Interview 1). Figure 6.9 is a photograph that depicts one of the computer labs to which James was referring. He described this area as a place where he could hang out with his friends while getting his homework done.
The college environment provided many opportunities for the participants to meet people and socialize with peers between classes and on their breaks. Wolfie described some of the places students could hang out at the college: “there are lots of places, the library, even finding a random corner and chill out in the hall” (Interview 1). For Wolfie, living on campus added another space for her to hang out with her friends. She explained that she would often go back to Residence to hang out with her friends between classes and after school. James also discussed a variety of areas to get together with his college friends: “we hang out in the hallway, we get together and work on stuff and projects and
stuff” (Interview 1). Figure 6.10 is a photograph that Shannon shared in order to portray a college space where she would meet her friends between classes.

Figure 6.10. Shannon with her friends in a college hallway where they would often socialize between classes.

With regard to Figure 6.10, Shannon stated that she would often sit with her friends in this hallway area between classes. She stated that it was a common area for CICE students and other college students to socialize with their peers.

Interestingly, while the topics of the library and other common learning spaces were brought up in the interviews, most of the participants responded that they tended not
to use those spaces on a regular basis. For example, James described his thoughts about the library:

James: I never go to the library. I went there once to get an Edgar Allen Poe book. I mostly like to purchase my books and graphic novels, so I go to Chapters.

Katherine: Do you find that the library is too far away?

James: No. It’s just boring to me.

Figure 6.11. Researcher generated photograph of College B library.

Figure 6.11 is a researcher generated photograph of the library at College B. Participants from College B were shown this image during an interview. When the participants from College B were asked if they frequented the library, they each
responded that they did not visit the library often. For example, Gabe explained when he would use the library:

Katherine: Do you spend a lot of time at the library here?

Gabe: I do when I have a major assignment. But not all the time because sometimes it is hard, it is in another part of the building. Sometimes I do use the library a lot for my different studying stuff, like if I have a major project that is due. But I don’t use it that often. I usually do my work at home. It is quieter, and I have everything all over my desk and I know where everything is.

(Interview 2)

Belle also discussed how often she would visit the library:

Katherine: Is that the library? Have you ever been to the library?

Belle: This area? This is the second floor with all the books. I don’t go there much often this year, but I used to go there every other week last year. The only section I would go to is the animal section.

Katherine: Oh, okay. The animal section?

Belle: I would rent or borrow the books or two for a week and read them and learn stuff.

Katherine: So you said you don’t go there this year. How come? You just don’t need to?
Belle: I find they don’t have the good seating area and chairs. Because all of them are too low, or like no one wants to do homework on the couch because of the chance that you might go to sleep.

Katherine: That’s right, you need a desk. (Interview 2)

Both College A and College B had a pub on campus. All participants indicated that they knew where the pub was located and had visited it on at least one occasion. Some participants described hanging out there more often. Wolfie and Jeff both indicated that during their first year, they frequented the pub a little more than they should have, but go less often now. For example, Jeff explained:

Katherine: Are there places at the college where you can hang out with your friends?

Jeff: Ah, yeah, the bar here.

Katherine: The bar, do you go there?

Jeff: I did last year. That was not really a good year. (Interview 2)

Jeff and Wolfie both felt that they had matured since the previous year, and were now more focused on getting good grades and completing their studies than spending time at the pub.
Figure 6.12. Researcher generated photograph of College B pub where Gabe often met with friends for drinks or lunch.

Figure 6.12 is a researcher generated photograph of the pub at College B. When viewing this photograph, Gabe indicated that he frequented the pub regularly with his friends on his breaks and after class. He explained some of the things that he would do at the pub:

Gabe: Oh, we have a picture of my bar? [laughing]

Katherine: [laughing] So, is that your bar?
Gabe: Yes. We have a good time there. I go there just to listen to the music and mellow out for a bit and get everything off my mind… We do have different events happening in there all the time. We had an event called “In the Blast” at the end of the year for all the students are graduating, you know.

Katherine: So, is that where you would hang out with your friends?

Gabe: Yup. I hang there all the time. (Interview 2)

**Recreational Activities.** Each participant in this study described an awareness of various recreational activities provided by the college; however, most expressed limited involvement in such activities. Some of the activities described by the participants included sports and fitness activities, and college social activities. Gabe, Caleb, and Belle each discussed that they had a membership to the college fitness center, but they did not use the facilities as much as they would have liked. Jeff was the only participant who mentioned playing any type of intramural sports. He enjoyed playing intramural hockey on his lunch breaks. He also participated in special hockey games arranged through the college. For instance, Jeff described a hockey game that was arranged at college between local police officers and college students:

Jeff: Yeah, like yesterday we had a hockey game against the police officers and it was alright. We lost 13-8.

Katherine: You’re kidding! They let you lose? They are supposed to let you win!
Jeff: They win every year, we lose every year. The year before, we lost too. I think it was like 12-30 last year.

Katherine: What programs play against the police officers?

Jeff: Police, Criminal Justice group. (Interview 2)

Of all the participants, Gabe seemed to be the most active and engaged in college activities. He often participated in school fundraisers and campaigns, socialized with his many friends in college spaces, and was actively involved in various clubs and organizations. Gabe described his involvement in campus activities:

Katherine: Do you get involved with campus activities?

Gabe: I do belong to different groups [at college]. Right now, I'm doing a food drive for one of my classes, and I am just enjoying every moment of it. It just makes me feel like I am part of the college and it feels good that I'm giving back what I can do to the college. (Interview 2)

In a subsequent interview, Gabe further discussed his involvement in the campus community:

Gabe: I got myself involved in the gay and lesbian group. It was really good.

We are having a big party Friday night. (Interview 3)

Not all of the participants identified the social milieu as a priority for attending college. For example, Shannon did not particularly enjoy hanging out with other students. She explained, “I basically don't do a lot of activities at the school, I'm not a socialized person. I like to keep to myself” (Interview 2).
Social Networks. Despite strong desires for acceptance and friendship, individuals with intellectual disabilities often have small social networks and experience social isolation and loneliness in their adult lives. However, participants in this study reported that college has provided opportunities to meet people with similar interests and aspirations and to develop social networks. For example, Caleb reported that he made several new acquaintances and a few close friends at college. He felt that he was able to develop this social network because he had shared similar interests and courses with other college students. Jeff claimed that making friends in college was easy because he had something in common with other students. When describing how he made friends at college, Jeff explained, “if you have something in common like going to classes, I guess it just works out” (Interview 1).

James described that taking courses with other students has provided him with opportunities to meet people with similar interests. He explained, “you get to meet a lot of people that you may not meet anywhere else, so as a filmmaker, I got to meet people that are more experienced” (Interview 1). Gabe expressed his excitement about making new friends and relationships:

Katherine: So, what is the best thing for you about being in college?
Gabe: The best thing about being in college is meeting new people. We are like a happy family in college. It was kind of hard getting back into everything, but once you've met people that you start to hang out and it made it a lot easier for me. (Interview 2)
Friendships. Each of the participants described meeting new people and developing friendships as a goal for attending, or benefit of, college. According to Lippold and Burns (2009), the social and personal relationships taken for granted by many, which contribute to quality of life, are often elusive for people with intellectual disabilities. As Shakespeare (2006) discussed, developing friendships and social relationships depends on having opportunities to meet people, and having the skills to develop and sustain friendships. Participants in this study each claimed that the college experience provided an opportunity for making friends, developing social networks, maintaining friendships, and interacting with diverse groups of students. While each participant varied in the level of engagement with their friends and the importance of friendships to them, they all expressed contentment with the friendships and relationships they had developed in college.

Each participant indicated that they had more friends because they were attending college. When asked whether he had a lot of friends, Caleb enthusiastically replied, “I have a lot of friends now. When I first came [to college] I didn’t have very many friends” (Interview 2). Two participants, James and Gabe, reported that a main goal for them at college was to meet new people, and hopefully develop new friendships. James expected that college would be a good place to meet people because there were many people attending college, and he wanted to be a part of that. Gabe expressed that college was an opportunity to expand his network of friends. Wolfie described her favourite memory of her college experience thus far as “getting to know lots and lots of people that
I didn't know before. I have lots of friends now, and I hope to keep in touch” (Interview 3).

Jeff and Belle both claimed that they did not make hanging out with their friends a priority at college. Jeff explained that he would mostly go to his classes, talk with his friends in the hall, and then he would go home. Belle also indicated that hanging out with her friends was not a priority for her, because she was attending college with a specific goal of doing well in her studies, and that was what she wanted to focus on.

Participants reported that they learned how to balance their school schedule and commitments with their social activities. Wolfie described how she tried to maintain a balance between her friendships and her school work:

Wolfie: I like to get my work done. I find ways to get my work done on my breaks at school, and I have my time afterwards for my fiancée and my friends. I tried to save time for both; so I could have a fun time, and work time. Put it all together, because I put school before my fun time. (Interview 3)

Participants developed friendships with CICE students, students from their area of concentration, and students from the general student population through interacting in campus activities and occupying campus space. Clearly, participants managed different types of friendships while in college.

**Friendships With Fellow CICE Students.** At both college sites, the seminar class provided an opportunity for CICE students to connect with other CICE students who have similar goals, interests, and issues. This was typically the only class that CICE
students had together as a cohort. Participants reported that through the seminar class, CICE students were able to meet other CICE students and develop friendships and relationships. Participants also reported running into other CICE students in the common areas for the program, such as where they would waiting for tutoring. Figure 6.13, a photograph taken by Jeff, shows an example of a college space where CICE students would hang out and socialize while they were waiting for tutoring.

Figure 6.13. Common space where Jeff enjoyed hanging out with friends while waiting for tutoring.

Most of the participants in this study indicated that they had made what they considered to be good friends within the CICE program. James explained why he felt a connection with other CICE students:
Katherine: Do you have friends in the CICE class?

James: I feel like I belong and [can] work together, even if we have disagreements. I feel like I'm connected, and the way we know what it's like to be with one another, we know what it's like to be autistic and we're in the same boat.

(Interview 1)

James indicated that attending class with other CICE students provided an opportunity for him to be himself, and, with regard to his relationships with other CICE students, he further explained, “it doesn't feel awkward, and it doesn't feel like we’re being switched to be good for people” (Interview 1). James reported that he spent a lot of time hanging out with his friends from the CICE program. He frequently went to his friend’s house to work on projects of interest together.

Caleb had also made many friends in the CICE program. He felt a connection with other CICE students because they started out in their college program at the same time, and have progressed through their program together. He often spent time outside of class with his CICE friends, regularly going out for coffee with them. He felt that they had many things in common, and shared interests such as horror movies and computers.

Belle reported that she made many friends in the CICE program. She recounted that during her first year of college, she would often go out with CICE students to have pizza at the cafeteria. She regretted that she did not have as much time to get together with her friends in her second year, because of busy and varying schedules. She explained that everyone was doing their own thing and hanging out with other people,
and it was difficult to get together because of schedules. James also reported that a big challenge in connecting with other CICE students was that their schedules did not match because of the different courses they were taking.

Figure 6.14 is a photograph taken by Shannon to show me her and her friends in the CICE program. She explained that this photograph was taken one evening when they were getting ready to go out to see a movie together. Shannon reported that she would often go out in the evening with her close friends, or have them over for a visit.

Figure 6.14. Shannon’s CICE friends at her apartment getting ready to go out for an evening.
**Friendships With Fellow Program Area of Concentration Students.** Wolfie, Gabe, and Belle each reported feeling more connected to the students who were taking courses in their program areas of concentration. Wolfie claimed to have made friends with the entire Early Childhood Education class. She would sometimes go out in the evening with her friends from the Early Childhood Education program. She also explained that she would often get together with them socially to work on assignments, projects, and participate in study groups. Wolfie reported that she felt more connected to the mainstream program students because she found that her schedule matched more with theirs, which provided more free time to get together on campus. When asked about his friendships with the mainstream program students, Gabe also claimed that he had made friendships with the entire Child and Youth Worker class, due, in part, to their similar interests. Belle felt a strong connection and friendship with her roommate, who happened to be a Veterinary Assistant student. She explained that they would often help each other out with homework and work on assignments together. Jeff would sometimes hang out with students from the Police Foundations program, but not as much as his friends in the CICE program. He had two friends from the Police Foundations program with whom he regularly played hockey.

Gabe reported that he felt connected to both the CICE students and his program area of concentration peers. He expressed his feelings about the friendships he made in college:

Katherine: How do you feel about the friendships you have made in college?
Gabe: It's nice to have the feeling that everyone wants to talk to you. From my first semester to my last semester, you meet new friends and they will always be your friend. It's like amazing. Half of the people that I had class with last semester I see now, we see each other, in the hall and say “Hi. How are you? Let’s go for coffee.” And we go, “Sure. Just give me a text,” and away we go!

(Interview 3)

College has provided the participants with the opportunity to develop different types of friendships on a variety of levels. James acknowledged that he did not make close friends in his program area of concentration. However, he considered these students to be good associates, and would be friendly in the halls and make small talk with these students. Caleb also claimed that he did not make many friends in his program area of concentration, however, he felt that they were good acquaintances to have, and he would often talk to them in the hallways.

Maintaining Friendships. According to Mirfin-Veitch (2003), social network stability and continuity are often compromised for adults with intellectual disabilities because they are often dependent on parents or paid staff to provide such continuity. However, participants in this study conveyed that college has provided them with an opportunity to maintain friendships and relationships that they had developed with students in high school and with whom they progressed on to college. Participants also indicated that they hoped to maintain the friendships that they made in college for a very long time after they graduated.
When asked to describe how many friends he had in college, Jeff claimed to have too many to count. He explained that he already knew many of the students at college because he attended high school with them. He claimed to always be running into familiar faces in the hallways. James, who also went to a local college, knew many people at the college because he went to high school with them; some were in the CICE program, and some were taking other programs. He explained that it was great to keep in touch with some of the people he knew from high school and enjoyed seeing them in the campus hallways. Caleb also reported that he knew people at college from his high school. Because he took a few years off before coming to college, many of the friends that he went to high school with were already college graduates.

Most of the participants expressed an intention to keep their college friendships for a long time. Wolfie described a benefit of college as “getting to know lots, and lots of people that I didn't know before. I have lots of friends, and I hope to keep in touch” (Interview 3). Belle also hoped to keep in touch with her college friends long after graduation. Because Belle lived in a different town, she was planning to rely on social media to keep in touch with her friends. James summed up his intent for lasting friendships with his comment, “friendships here will be only the beginning!” (Interview 1).

When asked whether she was happy with the friends she has made in college, Belle expressed some dissatisfaction. She reported “[I’m not happy with] the socialization part. I would probably be happier if I did more things in the college, or with
people, and try to get out more. I don’t really get out much” (Interview 2). Jeff also did not participate in many activities at the college besides hanging out with his friends, as he liked to relax when he was not doing schoolwork. However, he was happy with his social network and would meet new people by participating in school events.

**Sense of Belonging.** Feelings of belonging and friendships are important components of emotional and physical development and health (Hanson-Baldauf, 2011). Participants in this study reported feeling a connection with and sense of belonging in the college environment. As Wolfie described, “I feel connected, like I just feel like I belong here, like I always felt I belong here. I like the classes, I feel connected to the classes” (Interview 2). Caleb also expressed feeling a sense of belonging with “pretty well with all my classmates from the CICE, and some first years” (Interview 2). Gabe described his strong sense of belonging in the college environment:

Gabe: I do belong to different groups. I am enjoying it right now. I'm doing a food drive for one of my classes, and I am just enjoying every moment of it. It just makes me feel like I am part of the college, and it feels good that I'm giving back what I can do to the college. (Interview 2)

When he later discussed graduating from college, Gabe added:

Gabe: I am going to cry! I am moving on, but…you know when you have those two years, you are like family. They are there when you need them, and I am there when they need me. There is a respect I get back from them, so amazing I just don’t want to leave. (Interview 2)
Participating in college activities has provided Caleb with opportunities to feel part of the college crowd. For instance, he reported feeling a sense of belonging to the college community when he volunteered for charity events such as the breast cancer awareness campaign: “I do feel that I belong here. I love seeing people’s smiling faces with them and hanging around smiling and chit chatting” (Interview 3). When asked whether he felt a sense of belonging at college, James replied “I actually think I belong too much, because my cell phone keeps ringing with people wanting me to do projects and stuff like that” (Interview 1).

Career Development and Employment Potential

Each of the participants in this study reported that in order to obtain employment in their area of interest, they felt that post-secondary education would help to open some doors for them. According to Luecking (2010), the culmination of any student’s educational experience can, and should, be the beginning of a productive adult life, a job, or a career. For the students who participated in this study, employment potential was identified as a primary motive for attending college. Sandys (2007) claimed that most people want to secure interesting, challenging, and meaningful work, including people with intellectual disabilities. Each participant in this study felt that college has helped them to develop the knowledge and skills required for their chosen career. Belle summarized a goal she had for attending college: “I’m thinking about my career. College has helped me a lot, especially with what I want to do; it’s helped me a
lot” (Interview 3). Caleb, who never had a job, felt that his overall experience at college, especially with the field placements, has helped him to build the skills required to start a good career in his field of choice. In describing this experience, he explained: “In my placement, I got lots of experience. And [including this experience] on my resume will help me get a job” (Interview 1). James described how his college experience would help him secure employment, and the impact it would have on his life. He stated: “I know I've succeeded at something…it will help me get a better career so I could look after myself, a nicer home, get nicer things that I need, stuff that will do more than pay the bills” (Interview 2). Because of his experience in college, Jeff was confident in his ability to get a job when he finished college. He stated: “I’ve improved on my education, it is higher now. It should be quite easy for me to get a job once I am done” (Interview 2).

**Hopes and Dreams For Future.** All of the participants described their hopes and dreams for their future as being intertwined with their career aspirations. Who they are, and what they envisioned for their lives, was directly related to their future career goals. For James, he always had a clear focus for his dreams. He wanted to become “a professional business man who is really good at his job, and I want to be a filmmaker, a full movie maker, and make documentaries and stuff for Youtube…I want to keep busy doing the stuff I like best” (Interview 1). Wolfie also expressed that her college education was closely tied to her hopes and dreams for her future. She stated. “All my big dreams are to work with children, how to deal with them, and work with kids with
disabilities. I just love working with children” (Interview 3). Caleb reported that he had always envisioned himself working with computers. He stated, “I want a good career. I want a diploma, like to get a good career. I've always been thinking about web design because I am very good with the computers” (Interview 1). For Gabe, it had always been his aspiration to go to college in order to further develop his skills in order to make a difference in other people’s lives when working with children. He stated, “it has always been my dream to go to college and be who I am. Just to make a difference in somebody's life” (Interview 2).

**Obtaining Credentials For Employment.** Each participant in this study expressed a need to further their education through college in order to obtain credentials to secure future employment in their desired area of interest. Gabe conveyed the importance of gaining credentials through college education: “These days, you really need an education. Because if you don't have an education, there is not any good jobs out there for you, and I need a good job right now!” (Interview 2). Wolfie’s comment emphasized her perspective regarding what employers are looking for:

Katherine: Why is college important to you?

Wolfie: If you just drop out of school, they [employers] don't always accept you with just a Grade 12. They want you to have graduated from college with your full diploma, and be capable of doing proper work that is needed. You have to be a professional in it [employment]. (Interview 3)
Caleb, who had tried unsuccessfully to secure employment before coming to college, stated that he “needed some education to help me get a job” (Interview 3). He described his reason for going to college as exploratory, to develop the skills he required to get a job in his area of interest. He explained, “College is the opportunity to explore yourself and develop the skills required to become a professional” (Interview 2). Belle described how she felt about how her education would impact her career prospects, “I think with all the experience and education I have, I can find a good job that requires the levels of education that I have, and put it to use” (Interview 3). Shannon also went to college in order to gain credentials to find a job in her area of interest. She stated that her ultimate goal was “to try to find a better job out there, to try to move on, move forward” (Interview 2). Jeff explained that college is the path “…to get somewhere in life, ‘cause pretty much I could only be a garbage man without Grade 12, and pretty soon it is going to come down to you need a university or college degree” (Interview 2). James explained how gaining credentials through college would help him in his life:

Katherine: How will your college experience help you?

James: I want to…move ahead with life. I want to have opportunities, and I want to meet some great people there. You look a lot better than working day-to-day in a factory, because you can get a little boring at the dead-end job. (Interview 2)

James further described his reason for attending college, “for me, it is learning new things, it is becoming professional” (Interview 1). As demonstrated through the
participants’ comments, they clearly felt that their college education would help them obtain credentials required to gain employment in their fields of interest.

Gabe realized the benefits for him in going to college, and had the following recommendation for other students who were considering the CICE program:

Katherine: What do you feel is the best part about going to college?

Gabe: The best part of coming to college is getting an education. Because if you don’t have an education, you can’t get a good job. For me, I know I went to college. I had that experience, and it was really hard to get a job. What I am trying to say here is, go to college! It makes a big difference in getting a job, meeting a new people, and getting socialized, and stuff like that. It is really important. If you didn’t have it, you don’t know what you will do. For me, it is really important so I can get a job. (Interview 2)

**Pursuing Specific Vocational Interests.** As Dwyre et al. (2010) claimed, college can support a student’s employment goal through the learning environment and course offerings. Each participant in this study expressed that a main reason they wanted to go to college was to be able to pursue a good career in their area of interest. College provided an opportunity for all participants to further expand their knowledge and skill base to pursue specific vocational options. For each participant, courses and placements were focused on their specific program area of interest, which was outlined in Table 6.1. Gabe’s comment highlighted his learning in college:

Katherine: What did you want to learn in college?
Gabe: I wanted to learn about being a Youth Worker, and what it takes to be a Youth Worker, and stuff like that, and what do I have to do, what you have to say, and what to do. And what I have to know [about] how to do it. (Interview 3)

James described his desire to pursue college studies in order to gain employment, but found it challenging to get into other programs that would provide credentials for him to pursue employment. He explained:

Katherine: Did you always want to go to college?

James: I wanted to go [to college] for a while. I wanted to experience different work. A long time ago, I applied to [XXX] College for film. I didn’t get accepted, but my reading tutor taught me how to read. I took a producing course at [XXY] college, and that was better. And this one, you just have to learn some skills, but you don't have to take two full years. (Interview 3)

Wolfie, who always wanted to work with children, claimed that the CICE program was the only college program that would accept her with her limited high school credit history. Wolfie described her main reason for attending college:

Katherine: Why did you want to come to college?

Wolfie: It was my own idea in my head. I always knew I wanted to go to college. I wanted to work with children. In grade ten, I asked my mom where can I go to work with children and she said take ECE, so that was when I thought I would go to college. (Interview 3)
Participants used their experience in the CICE program to explore their career options, and as a steppingstone to further their career goals. Jeff reported that he was told by military recruiters that completing a college program would help him get into the military. He stated, “I was talking to a couple of the recruiters, and they said they would rather take somebody from a college program than someone off the street” (Interview 1). Therefore, Jeff decided to go to college to get credentials he thought would help him reach his goals. He explained that college would help him “to get a career and to be something. No one really wants to flip burgers; it is not a good paying job to put a roof over your head” (Interview 2). Jeff also explained the benefit of going to college as related to future career aspirations in gaining employment in his field of choice:

Katherine: Why is attending college important to you? 
Jeff: Learning on what life is really all about. Yeah, I mean high school is different; I used to think high school was a joke. Once you get to college, you need to step up and get a hold of life, ‘cause you choose what you want to do. You want to be fast, so you can come here to do what you need to do. Get it done, and you may be able to get into your profession from what you took. You might go to the next level. I mean basically, you just gotta. (Interview 2)

Stepping Stone to Further Education. Some of the participants expressed a need or desire to continue their education in order to obtain the credentials required to work in their field. Belle explained, “I actually applied to XXP college main stream course for Veterinary Assistant, so I am hoping” (Interview 1). Wolfie also described her
plans for furthering her education after she completed the CICE program. Regarding her plans to achieve this, she reported, “And now I have to go through another step to be able to get my full diploma so I can get my full ECE. After this college, I am going to another college, and that is when I am going to get my full diploma” (Interview 1). She further explained, “So, I need to take that extra step so I can get to the point where everyone else is.” She described her goals after she completed the CICE program as, “finishing here, and getting my certificate, and going on to another college to get my full diploma to work in the field without any assistance” (Interview 1).

The college experience opened new doors for participants to understand their potential and grow to their capabilities. It provided an opportunity for self-discovery and figuring out personal possibilities. Gabe reported that because of his participation in college, he saw new possibilities for himself that he never would have imagined:

Katherine: So, what’s next?

Gabe: I have an appointment for my BA. They want to see if I can do it or not because of my learning disability. There is a lot of studying, a lot of papers, a lot of writing. They want to see if I can do it or not. If I can, I will enroll in September and come back for my BA. (Interview 2)

Through his college experience, Caleb discovered his love of learning and planned to take more night school courses. He reported:

Katherine: What do you plan to do once you have graduated from college?
Caleb: I hope to get a part time job…and do more courses. Maybe more night courses. I am hoping to do Photoshop2, and maybe a computer course, maybe website design, I am really computer savvy. I am a media geek. Either probably get a job, and do more courses. (Interview 1)

**Expanding Employment Networks.** Taking college courses within a specific program area has provided participants with the opportunity meet other students with similar career aspirations. These connections can create a natural employment network. As Jeff stated, “It seems like you are making a lot of connections too, meeting a lot of people, so that is always good to get a job” (Interview 2). James also articulated the connections he was making through his college program:

Katherine: What has been the best part of your college experience?

James: The best thing about college is that you take the courses you want, and you learn so much at once. And you get to meet a lot of people that you may not meet anywhere else. So as a filmmaker, I got to meet people that are more experienced. (Interview 2)

Gabe also described career connections and networks he had developed in college, “Actually, I have made one connection so far. The shelter downtown, and I’m hoping next week or the week after to go to the school board and put in my application” (Interview 3). Dwyre et al. (2010) explained that the expanded networks of new situations and people that are available to college students can lead to a wider, more diverse variety of experiences, and therefore open the door to more career opportunities.
Co-op Placement Experience. Youth with disabilities often face significant obstacles in identifying and retaining work experiences, including having to overcome low expectations for their participation in employment, identifying and securing needed supports, and obtaining adequate career preparation (Trainor, Carter, Sweeden & Pickett, 2012). Therefore, as Luecking (2009) contended, work-based experiences, such as co-op placements, are important prerequisites to successful post-school employment success for students with intellectual disabilities. Co-op placements are particularly vital for youth with intellectual disabilities as exposure to a range of career options is typically limited. Each participant in this study described having a co-op placement as part of their college program, and reported completing between four to six hours weekly in their placements. They explained that each semester they would participate in different co-op placements in order to develop a variety of skills and experiences for the workplace, including both transferrable skills and specific skills related to their program area of concentration. Co-op placements provided the participants with opportunities to practice the skills they were learning in class in an authentic environment. Figure 6.15 is a photograph that Wolfie took to portray the authentic work environment where she was completing her co-op placement in a day care center.
In reviewing Figure 6.15, Wolfie discussed how she loved working with children. She stated that her favourite play activity with the children was “house.” She divulged that she would often play the father, because none of the children wanted that role in the game.

Co-op placements were considered to be a valuable experience for the participants in this study. They each described that their co-op placements provide opportunities for them to practice the skills they had learned in the classroom. Overall, they each described their co-op placements as a very important part of their program that provided
them with real work experience. Belle was especially happy to have been able to make
arrangements to have her co-op placement at a local pet store when she went home on the
weekends. She felt that this would help her to develop employment connections in her
home town.

Shannon’s co-op placement was at a daycare center; she enjoyed her placement
because she was gaining a great deal of experience working with children. Shannon
claimed that her supervisors at her co-op placement would describe her as dependable
and reliable, and that they wanted her to return to their placement site each semester
because they were so pleased with her work. Shannon described a variety of skills that
she was learning at her co-op placement, including “playing with the kids, knowing what
they can do, what they can’t do, learning about when they go into the gym, they can’t do
this or that. I am learning all kinds of different skills” (Interview 2).

Caleb worked at his co-op placement for six hours each week building sets for
plays at a local theatre group. He claimed that his placement “is a big workload, but it is
worth it” (Interview 2). For Caleb, his co-op placements offered him a valuable
experience to gain confidence and skills. He stated, “My placements have helped me
build up my skills. I haven’t worked a lot in my whole life” (Interview 2). Caleb
reported that throughout his two years at college he participated in a variety of co-op
placement experiences, including a few that were not related to his program area of
interest in his first year. He explained that his co-op placement in a local department
store provided an opportunity to acquire transferrable skills, most notably, customer
service skills. Caleb claimed that his current co-op supervisor would say that he is “a really hard worker, and that I learn fast, and I take initiative, I listen to direction, and all that” (Interview 2). He further went on to say, “I've got a lot of compliments. My supervisor told me ‘look at you go!, because I was doing all the drilling on Sunday” (Interview 2).

At the time of this study, James described his co-op placement in his program area of concentration: “[It is] in the theatre. I am wanting to get into the stage, and I am always wanting to get involved in the movies. That is something I have wanted to do since I was little” (James, Interview 1). However, he also reported that a few of his co-op placements were unrelated to his program area of concentration, and described his preference for co-op placements in his area of concentration:

Katherine: Can you describe your placements to me?

James: I actually like my [current] placements a lot better than [the department store placement] because I feel they are more related to my work. It is not a paid job, but more of a volunteer job. But for co-op-wise, I’d say it is a lot better because I am good at it and [the department store] is good, but it is really slow and boring, and I feel more connected to my current placement. (Interview 1)

Gabe reported that most of his co-op placement experiences at college were in his program area of concentration. Gabe’s co-op placement at the time of this study was in a Grade 3 classroom. He was working on applying some of the things he was learning in
class to his placement. Gabe described some of these activities that he was working on at his placement:

Katherine: So, can you provide me with an example of what you do at your placement?

Gabe: I did a gym activity with them. I noticed they didn’t know the days of the week, so I made up little games and I used that. I did a lot of arts and stuff with them because they loved art. (Interview 1)

Gabe indicated that he was learning a lot from his co-op placement and enjoyed his learning immensely:

Katherine: So, you are really enjoying your placements, then?

Gabe: I do, I really do love my placements. I have nothing bad to say about them. I'm learning a lot, and I learned how to deal with the students basically. I learned how to program a classroom, and stuff like, that it was really interesting, and making plans for the lesson. (Interview 2)

Wolfie also reported that she was able to apply the concepts that she was learning in her classes to her co-op placement. She described how she was able to take learning activities that she had developed in college courses and use them at her placement site. Figures 6.16 and 6.17 are photographs that Wolfie had taken to show examples of learning activities she created and used with the children at her placement site. She claimed that she was able to create this activity as an assignment in one of her courses, and then take it to her placement to use with the children.
Figure 6.16. Wolfie’s learning activity that she created in a course and used with children at her placement site.

Figure 6.17. Materials that Wolfie used with her learning activity.
CICE Seminar Class. Within the CICE model, students participate in a seminar class with their cohort each semester. In their seminar class, participants reported that they learned about employment processes, including resume writing, cover letters, and practice interviews. Caleb described the variety of things he learned in his seminar class to help students secure employment after they complete college:

Katherine: So, what kinds of things are you learning in your seminar class?
Caleb: In our seminar classes, I learn about resumes, looking for jobs. We learn about situations on the job, so like harassment for example. This semester, my last semester now, I am actually learning about cover letters, resumes, and getting ready for work. People from the community come to talk about it. ODSP come in to talk about their employment program. (Interview 1)

Jeff described learning similar things in his seminar class, but also reported that he had learned “how to present yourself for a certain job, and how to conduct a job search” (Interview 1). Shannon added that she was learning about “Jobs, we’re learning about portfolios, resumes. What else are we learning about? About our health. Why did we choose college for our career, and what’s [the difference] between a career and a job” (Interview 2). When asked what she was learning in her seminar class, Wolfie’s response focused mainly on teamwork and interpersonal skills:

Katherine: What kinds of things are you learning in your seminar class?
Wolfie: We are learning about experiences, anything that has to with the real world, you learn about it in that class. So, planning jobs…resumes is what we
were doing. How to be successful in getting a job, and knowing that you need references, and that kind of stuff. Just to be able to get the jobs that you want.

(Interview 1)

Some participants from College B also described participating in a mock interview to help them think about the interview questions and how to answer them correctly. Caleb reported:

Katherine: You are all dressed up today! What is the occasion?

Caleb: I had my mock interview today.

Katherine: Mock interview?

Caleb: Yes. The mock interview helps me get over the fear of talking in an interview. Knowing what I'm going to do. Knowing the answer. I did my first mock interview, and I nailed it. I got all the answers and knew them right and quick, and I enjoyed it! (Interview 2)

He further went on to explain that the mock interview was like a test-run of a real interview; students were expected to treat this interview as they would an interview for a real job. Caleb acknowledged that was why he felt quite nervous about it.

For the most part, participants found value in taking the seminar course to learn about employment related processes. For James, the information he learned in the seminar class was particularly important. As he explained:

Katherine: How do you feel about the seminar class?
James: I think it is important to learn how to do resumes to do well in society today because resumes and everything else is on computers, and to learn how to get your foot in the door and get experience with companies. Yes, this is a very valuable course. (Interview 1)

However, not all participants found the seminar course to be useful. For example, Gabe, who was a mature student with many years of employment experience, felt that he already knew most of the information that was covered in the seminar class, especially how to make a resume and cover letter. Gabe described his expectations for his seminar class:

Katherine: So, what kinds of things are you learning in your seminar class?

Gabe: Last semester we were talking about safety at work, and that was kind of boring too. We did all kinds of different things, but it's not the seminar that I was expecting. I was expecting more other things like talking about placement. Talk about different things. Like other classes that have the opportunity to talk about placement. (Interview 2)

However, Gabe did go on to acknowledge that the seminar class was valuable for people with less or no employment experience.

Other Employment. Each of the participants reported that if they were not in college, they would either be working or looking for work. Generally, participants claimed that the employment they would obtain without college would be general in nature, and not related to their interests. Caleb stated, “I would probably be at home,
being bored. I would have a hell of a time getting a job. Because without college…I'd be pretty screwed up right now. So without those [placements], I couldn't get a job” (Interview 3). Wolfie also described the type of job she saw herself in if she hadn’t been in college. She reported:

Katherine: What do you think you would be doing if you weren’t attending college?

Wolfie: If I didn't go to college, I wouldn't get as great a job. Like, I might be working part time all the time if I was not in college. Right now I'm finishing college and I'm hoping to get a full-time job which means I could get a really good job that pays more than $10 an hour. I can tell you now that working at a $10 an hour job is not going to help you pay for an apartment; it's not going to help you pay for a house, or a car, or an apartment. I need to get a job that is more than $10 an hour. (Interview 3)

Shannon reported that she would be a different person if she didn’t attend college. When asked what she thought she would be doing if she were not attending college, Shannon responded, “probably not doing what I am supposed to be doing, probably getting into trouble” (Interview 3).

Self-Determination

Participating in college has provided an opportunity for the participants in this study to exercise self-determination. Self-determination refers to the right and capacity
of individuals to exert control over and direct their lives (Wehmeyer, 2004). Self-determination also encompasses the notion of individual freedom, defined by Rioux (2010) as “the empowered individual’s right to make choices not within the narrow confines of externally defined limitations, but within the full range of possibilities and within their own understanding of what well-being means to them” (p. 209). Self-determination involves the right to make decisions that are personally valued, and opportunities to achieve such outcomes. Students with intellectual disabilities are often considered incapable of making decisions on their own. As Hallahan et al. (2010) asserted, this paternalistic attitude can often result in a self-fulfilling prophecy by not providing people with intellectual disabilities opportunities to take more control in their lives. However, each participant in this study described having opportunities in college to make decisions and choices for themselves based on their interests and desires. This was evident in their individual accounts regarding program choice, exercising their goals for college, choosing what activities to participate in the college environment, the relationships they chose to develop, and the strategies they utilized for managing college rigour.

Program and Course Selection. As discussed previously, participants had input into both their program area of concentration, and the courses they took within their program. For example, Belle realized that a mainstream course might be too difficult for her, so attending the CICE program provided her the opportunity to follow her dream of attending college to see if she could be successful taking modified courses in the
Veterinary Assistant program. Belle was satisfied that she was learning important information she required in order to be successful in her chosen future career working with animals. With regard to her course work, Belle stated that college had provided her with the opportunity to: “experience college life, meet people and decide what you want to do. Just to get to the year and think about the courses you can take, like genEds, courses you think you might enjoy” (Interview 3).

Caleb chose to take computer courses, as computers had always been an interest of his. He explained that he wanted to “get a diploma, like to get a good career. I’ve always been thinking about web design because I am very good with the computer” (Interview 2). With regard to his courses, Caleb stated, “They [courses] are interesting, they are fun, they are very interesting. I picked the really interesting courses that I think are going to be really interesting to me” (Interview 2).

Self-determination was also exercised in decisions that the participants made regarding their course selections. Participants from both college sites described having input into their course selections. For program choices, they reported that they were able to select from a block list of courses available to CICE students and that the final decision for courses was theirs. The participants also reported having choice in selecting their elective courses.

**Living Skills.** Attending college provided some participants the opportunity to move away from home and live independently. Shannon, Wolfie, and Belle each moved away from home for the first time in order to attend college. Shannon found a shared
apartment with other college students through an internet advertisement. She shared her kitchen and laundry facilities with the other students, but everyone basically did their own thing. Wolfie moved into residence to attend college. In her second year, she was paired with another CICE student as a roommate. Belle also moved into residence for her first year of college. In her second year, she found accommodations in nearby college student housing. Belle indicated that if she was not attending college, she would still be living at home with her parents.

Living on their own meant that these three participants were required to develop a level of independence to take care of their living requirements. They were required to be aware of their needs, take care of their laundry, purchase their groceries, budget their money, and pay their bills while managing their course load.
Figure 6.18. Wolfie’s room in residence where she moved to attend college.

Figure 6.18 is a photograph taken by Wolfie to show her residence room. While reviewing Figure 6.18, Wolfie described the opportunities for increased independence she had at college resulting from her new living arrangements:

Wolfie: I am having independence for the very first time, and it is scary. You leap a big step going from high school to college. A big step that everyone is petrified of taking, except I took it, and I like a challenge. I became independent, I figured out how to clean my bathroom, how to clean out my fridge, how to clean my room. (Interview 2)
In a subsequent interview, Wolfie described additional skills that she has learned as a result of living on her own: “my level of independence is pretty good, [I am] able to take care of my health…and I’ve learned how to clean and cook for myself” (Wolfie, Interview 3).

Belle explained that before she went to college, her parents would take care of everything for her. Now, she said that it was up to her to figure out “how to budget, and select food; I need the healthy stuff” (Interview 2). Living away from home has also provided Shannon experience in how to save and budget her money. Shannon stated that budgeting can be difficult: “You have to pay rent and get groceries. I know what I have to get this month, this bill, that bill. I have to pay my rent. I keep track” (Interview 1). For Shannon, the best part of living on her own was that she was able to have friends over, and they could stay as late as they wanted to.

Every participant discussed having to navigate the public transit system, their main mode of transportation, in order to get to college and their co-op field placements. A public transit pass was included with each participant’s tuition fees. The participants were required to become familiar with the transit schedules and to plan their daily schedules accordingly. Belle went home every weekend, and would make her own arrangements to take the train.

**Independence.** Each participant described having increased independence as a result of attending college. For instance, in describing his level of independence at college, Gabe revealed:
Gabe: My level of independence is really well. I don't have to lean on anyone. I can do my task when I need to get it done. I may take a little while because of my learning disability. I'm trying to take more and more independence. (Interview 2)

James also described his level of independence at college:

Katherine: Can you describe your level of independence at college for me?
James: My independence, I think is pretty good. I memorize everything. I show up to class on time. I am never late unless something is holding me back. I always show up early. I am always with [my friend], she likes to keep people on edge. I think mine is pretty good. I try to get things done on time, and figure things out. I forget little things because I have so much on my mind, but I don’t always forget. So that is a good thing. It shows you are prepared. (Interview 2)

The participants reported that they were required to manage their own schedules and make decisions regarding how to get their work done. Specific strategies to manage their course load were previously discussed, however, it is worth mentioning again that participants were required to possess a level of independence in order to organize themselves and plan how to manage their time. Belle discussed her independence with regard to self-management: “I am used to it now on my own. I normally think about what I have to do on my own” (Interview 3). Caleb also expressed his independence in managing his schoolwork. He reported, “I am very independent. I do all my assignments on my own, either in the college or at home on my own too” (Interview 3).
James described the increased level of decision-making required of college students:

Katherine: Do you think college is different than high school?

James: I think that's a big difference from high school, a lot better, a lot more freedom for some people. A lot of students, they look at college as a glorified thing about getting drunk, parties, picking up hot babes. It is not about that at all. That stuff, you can do anywhere. If you celebrate too long, you may have blown it, and you don’t realize it. You can have fun like the guy playing piano, and people doing their own sports, and cameras. You have to do everything in moderation. You focus on your work, and when you have free time, then you do that fun stuff. That's the way I look at it. (Interview 3)

Wolfie and Jeff both described the fact that they did not make the best decisions for themselves during their first year of college. They each claimed that they did not take their first year seriously; they spent too much time partying instead of making course work a priority. Fortunately, both participants reported that they grew and matured since their first semester, and that they had learned to manage their social life while making school a priority. Wolfie shared her strategy for managing her course load with her social activities:

Katherine: How do you find balance between the work and the fun stuff?

Wolfie: You plan out your homework, and plan out your fun stuff. You have to get your homework done first. I hate when people say they are going to go out,
and I say, have you got your homework done? And they say no, and I say well then, that is your problem, you are going to fail your class. (Interview 1)

**Problem-Solving.** Along with increased self-determination, participants were also required to learn how to solve problems and take the initiative to ask for help if required. Gabe explained that he had no problem in asking for help if he needed assistance with his course work:

Katherine: Do you ever ask for help?

Gabe: They always say never be afraid to ask for help. I am not afraid to ask for help. I always ask for help when I need it. I make sure that I make time to go see them [Learning Facilitators], and they make time for me too. For example, next week, I made an appointment because I'm having a little difficulty with one of my assignments, so I am going to get some extra help. All you have to do is just ask for help and you get it. (Interview 2)

Shannon explained how support was provided for her when she asked for help. She reported: “When I ask for help, they show me how to do it, and I can go on my own and get it done. They don't do it for me” (Interview 1).

In learning how to manage the demands of college, participants also learned how to deal with stress. Wolfie described feeling a lot of stress and pressure to be successful in her course work and get good grades. She stated: “I am petrified of failing my classes” (Interview 3). Even though she was getting good grades, she reported that in the back of her mind she was always worried that she would fail a course. Gabe shared an
example of when he would feel stress at college: “I get stressed if I don’t have enough
time to study for a test, or if I feel rushed, or overwhelmed” (Interview 1). He went on to
describe a strategy that he had developed for dealing with stress. He would “go for a
walk and get fresh air” (Interview 1). Caleb also reported developing coping strategies
for dealing with stress at college. In describing some frustration with one of his
assignments, he proudly described how he “walked away and cooled off” (Interview 2)
and then later returned to complete the assignment.

It is important to note that stress was not always considered by the participants to
be a negative emotion. Belle explained her mixed emotions about starting college: “I
was kind of excited because it was the start of my career, but I was at the same time
nervous a bit” (Interview 1). Gabe described how he got over the stress he felt about
coming to college: “At first, it was overwhelming because I had been out of school for so
many years. But you know what? I got used to going back, doing different things, trying
to take part in different things” (Interview 1). Caleb also reported feeling nervous about
attending college. He explained, “today I am [relaxed] now, but the first semester took
me time to adjust. Now, I'm able to handle it better” (Interview 3). Participants reported
that feeling some stress with their course work would help motivate them to get their
work done.

**Pride.** College has provided an opportunity for the participants to work towards
their goals and take pride in their achievements. Participants reported feeling proud of
themselves for making the decision to go to college, and for their achievements and
accomplishments in college. Throughout the course of the interviews, Gabe made several 
references to being proud to attend college. For example, he stated:

Gabe: My favourite memory of college is when I stepped through the front door 
of the college on the first day, and I said “Wow Gabe! I am proud of you! For 
making that big step in my life!” It was an amazing first day!

Gabe: I didn’t realize I had this in me. I’m not trying to brag here about my 
grades, but I am on the honour roll. I feel proud of who I am being at college, 
because it makes me feel that I can do things for myself, like I don't have to lean 
on other people for other things. They just made me feel welcome when I walk 
through the doors every day and it's an amazing feeling! (Interview 3)

Caleb enthusiastically shared his reaction when he first learned of his offer of 
admission to college:

Katherine: That’s awesome! So how did you feel when you got that good news?

Caleb: When I checked my emails on my computer, my PC laptop, when I got 
the email, I screamed out in the whole house! And I jumped up, and all you heard 
was a big thud in the upstairs floor, it was so funny! I was so proud! (Interview 1)

Jeff was proud to attend college because he considered college to be a step up 
from high school. He stated: “I am proud, because I am in college. High school is 
different; you have to be there. In college, you are there because you wanted to go” 
(Interview 1). Jeff explained that he felt pride because he had taken on a bigger role for 
himself when he became a college student.
Wolfie triumphantly reported that even though college was a lot of hard work, “we feel good about it, because we accomplished it!” (Interview 2). She further explained that she felt a real sense of accomplishment in meeting her goals:

Wolfie: I have always had my heart set on something, and I just keep it there solid… I want to do the work that everyone else is doing. I want to do what everyone else is doing. I might need an extra step just to get up there, but like, I still passed. (Interview 2)

She reported that feeling good about her accomplishments motivated her to keep up the good work and try to do well in all her courses.

Caleb reported that he won an award for his achievements in college. In describing his accomplishments, he stated: “I won two honour awards already, and I'm hoping to win another one before I graduate this year. I won the residential award” (Interview 2). He declared with pride these achievements as he had never won an award before. James was happy to report that he was also on the Dean’s list for good grades. When asked how college has made a difference in his life, he explained: “I enjoy learning, and getting ahead in class, and being successful in winning awards and stuff” (Interview 1).

**Self-Esteem.** When asked how attending college made them feel, each participant responded that they had positive feelings. Wolfie stated that she felt good about “just succeeding and getting done. It makes you feel good about yourself” (Interview 1). Wolfie reported that she would not have felt the same about herself if she
did not attend college. Caleb explained that he felt good about meeting the goals that he set out for himself at college. Regarding these goals, he keenly mused: “Yeah I think I've been successful, and I'm ready to go up on that podium and get my certificate” (Interview 3). Gabe expressed feeling good about himself because of his good grades. He eagerly reported:

    Gabe: I am doing really well. I am on the honor roll! I am so happy about that. I am so happy, and so pleased. I am sky high right now! I couldn't believe that I could do that with this learning disability that I have. It’s amazing how I can have this program, and take it all in! (Interview 2)

Caleb indicated that his friends and family were proud of him for attending college. He stated: “They would be proud and happy that I'm going to have career down the road” (Interview 2). Jeff claimed that people saw him in a different light for attending college. He explained: “I think they look at me more as I’ve taken a bigger role in my life” (Interview 1). Gabe confided that people told him that he would never go to college, and he was happy to prove them wrong: “Everyone was telling me you can’t do this, you can’t do that, you don’t have the marks. I am a fighter, and I can do it; and this week I got a letter from the Dean telling me that I am on the honour roll” (Interview 3).

    James expressed the pride that his family and friends felt for him attending college. He stated: “I think they are real proud of me, and relieved that I can do something. I am in college, and you really don’t [usually] do much to make people
proud. To get an award, and get good grades, and graduate, and all these pictures [from the interview], is like going up to a movie and getting an academy award!” (Interview 1). He also described how his friends felt about him going to college: “My buddies are proud of me. I guess somehow I have a different type of lifestyle now. I guess they are really happy for me, my friends are really glad for me.” He went on: “I want to be successful and do something that I'm proud of. I want to show people that if anyone says that you were dumb and can't do anything, I want to show them that I have won awards, and no one can say that I can't do that!” (Interview 1).

Caleb summarized his thoughts as he was nearing graduation: “A lot of people had negative attitudes, and said you can't do this. Well, I proved them wrong already, and I've gone higher and higher! I will say this: You can never say never to anything! Changes can happen!” (Interview 3).

**Summary**

In summary, this chapter has presented common themes regarding the college experience as expressed by the participants in this study. The main themes that emerged from the data were academic growth and development, interpersonal relationships and social networks, career development and employment potential, and self-determination. Participants reported that participation in the college experience itself was one of their main goals in attending college. Participants described that they were able to further their education and skills by choosing to take most of their courses within a program area of
Learning Facilitators provided the main supports for the participants as they progressed through their course work. Participants reported that the Learning Facilitator, in collaboration with the course professor, was responsible to make modifications to their course work. Some of the modifications described by the participants included adjusted learning outcomes and assessment strategies. Learning Facilitators would assist participants with notes, tests, classroom activities, homework, keeping organized, and would also provide a tutorial each week to review course concepts with the participants. Each participant reported that they enjoyed working with their Learning Facilitator and felt that the support provided by the Learning Facilitator helped them to be successful at college. Most of the participants reported that they planned to further their education after they graduated from the CICE program, either through a mainstream program, or through interest courses.

Participants reported that as a result of attending college they were able to develop new friends and relationships, as well as maintain existing friendships. They reported that they were able to make friends in both their CICE cohort and within their program area of concentration. Each participant expressed satisfaction with the friendships and relationships they developed in college.

Each participant indicated that a main reason they chose to attend college was to attain a career in their chosen field. They indicated that having a college credential would help provide them with a foot in the door to employment. Co-op placements were described as a valuable experience by participants because they could apply the
knowledge they were learning in their course work to real-world experiences. They felt that their co-op placements were valuable experiences to include on their resumes.

Participants also reported that through their seminar class, they learned about employment processes such as developing resumes and cover letters, practice interviewing skills, and employment related issues. Most participants felt this would help prepare them for the job search process when they start to look for employment.

Participants described having increased self-esteem in college because of their college experience and a new-found confidence to attain their goals. Participants also reported that they thought people would hold them in a higher regard now that they were college graduates. Participants expressed that they had increased direction and control in their lives. They reported having input into the decisions that would affect their future.

This chapter presented findings, organized around common themes that emerged from a cross-case analysis of the participants’ stories of their experiences in inclusive post-secondary education programs in two Ontario colleges. The next chapter presents a discussion situating the findings of this study within existent literature, delineates how this study contributes to the literature, and presents a conclusion about this study.
Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the inclusive post-secondary educational experience of students with intellectual disabilities from the perspective of the student. This study documented the personal stories of seven young adults with intellectual disabilities who were participating in a CICE program in Ontario. The objectives of this study were to explore and describe: (a) their college experience in developing and pursuing their interests; (b) how they contribute to, and interact in their learning environment; (c) how they develop friendships and social networks; (d) their participation in recreational, social, and cultural activities of the college environment; and (e) the meaning derived from these experiences. Following the presentation of student portraits in Chapter 5 and thematic findings in Chapter 6, this chapter links findings to existent literature and portrays new findings that contribute to the literature.

The College Experience

As educational practices in Ontario are evolving to promote greater inclusion in education, students with intellectual disabilities and other diverse learning needs are more frequently being included in educational experiences with their same age peers (Bennett, Dworet, & Weber, 2008). As increased numbers of students are being included in inclusive elementary and secondary educational environments, it is logical that some students with intellectual disabilities would also want to progress through post-secondary
education with their peers. As such, with emerging opportunities for inclusive post-secondary education in Ontario, students with intellectual disabilities are gradually accessing these pathways to adulthood along with their peers.

Participants in this study reported that they wanted an opportunity to experience college and discover what it was like to be a college student. Participants reported that they had specific expectations for their college experience, including learning about course material, gaining independence, and meeting new people while pursuing a vocational area of interest. Hart and Grigal (2010) affirmed that the college experience is comprised of a wide array of possible experiences for students, including academic, social, and employment opportunities. Participants in this study discussed having access to typical college experiences, including participating in college course work, navigating the college campus, participating in college social life, and meeting the demands of college rigour. The college experience was unique for each participant, reflecting their individual preferences, interests, and goals.

The participants in this study reported that they perceived benefit and value in being a college student in preparing for their future. Being a college student is considered by most people to be a positive status in society. As such, participation in college affords students with intellectual disabilities the benefit of achieving a valued status and participation in a valued place in the community (Hart & Grigal, 2010; Oliver, 1996). Being a college student provides an anticipatory role for students whereby they engage in processes through which they prepare for future roles, especially with regard to
employment, citizenship, social relationships, and community participation (Murray, Linden, & Kendall, 2010). Each participant in this study indicated that their goals for attending college involved preparation for future roles, including employment, friendships, and community participation. According to Law (2002), participation in common aspects of life is a vital part of human development through which people acquire skills and competencies, connect with others, and find purpose and meaning in life. Dwyre et al. (2010) claimed that being a part of the college community, and all that it involves, can provide students with intellectual disabilities the chance to practice a variety of skills in real life circumstances, while also providing safety nets in this relatively structured environment. Participants reported having opportunities to develop and practice skills in an authentic environment. The main themes that emerged from the data were academic growth and development, interpersonal relationships and social networks, career development and employment potential, and self-determination. Each theme is situated within relevant literature and discussed in the sections that follow.

**Academic Growth and Development**

Post-secondary education provides all students the opportunity to take courses related to personal and vocational interests, and the opportunity to develop or expand existing skills (Dwyre et al., 2010). Participating in post-secondary education provided the participants in this study the opportunity to pursue a program area of personal
interest. Each participant selected their program area of concentration and specific
courses based on their personal and potential vocational interests.

Participants in this study reported that lectures were the most common method
used by professors to convey course information. Lectures provided a challenge for some
participants, as it was difficult to sit through a typical three-hour class without moving
around. Each participant indicated that they preferred a more hands-on approach to their
learning, including participating in classroom activities such as discussions and group
work. Participants also described self-regulation strategies they had developed to manage
their course work, including finding time in their schedule to complete homework, using
agendas and computer technology to track and organize their work, and prioritizing
course work.

Students with intellectual disabilities have the capacity and ability to learn in
educational environments typically offered to their non-disabled peers; however, they
may experience difficulty in intellectual functioning, including challenges with concept
learning, attention, language, and memory (Winzer, 2002). Accordingly, modified course
work and supports were provided to CICE students in order for them to be successful in a
college program. Participants reported course modifications that included adjusted
learning outcomes of their courses and a reduced number of assignment requirements or
assessment strategies. These are similar to typical approaches to modifications for
students with intellectual disabilities reported by Winzer (2002) that can include modified
tests, many short examinations rather than long ones, more time to complete tests,
alternate assignments, and the use of assistive devices such as computer access. The participants in this study frequently indicated that the Learning Facilitator was responsible to make any modifications to their course work; however, administration at both college sites clarified that the modifications were developed under the direction of course professors. Learning Facilitators also provided human support through tutoring, reviewing course work, explaining concepts to the participants, and taking notes that the students could understand.

Participants reported that modifications and accommodations were developed for them based on their strengths and abilities. Neubert & Moon (2006) claimed that effective supports in inclusive post-secondary education begin with the needs or desires of the student, as opposed to programs that are designed for the needs of a group. As such, the provision of modifications to course work based on individual strengths and needs enabled the participants in this study to develop knowledge and skills, and to participate in post-secondary education in meaningful ways. Each participant indicated that they were doing well in their courses; Belle, Shannon, Caleb, James, Gabe, and Wolfie each reported that they were on the honour roll. Participating in college provided the opportunity for the participants to realize their learning potential and cultivate their interest and desire for learning. For participants in this study, the college experience provided an opportunity for self-discovery and understanding personal possibilities.
Career Development and Employment Potential

Employment is a significant aspect of the lives of most people, and is often a central focus of adulthood. According to Sandys (2007), work structures one’s day, connects people to the larger society, influences self-concept and identity, and enables people to see themselves as useful contributing members of society. Sandys also identified other functions of employment, including influencing how people spend their time, with whom they interact, what they learn, what people think of themselves, and how others think of them. Since employment is such a major focus of adulthood, it is reasonable to assume that it would also be important in the lives of most adults with intellectual disabilities. However, as Crawford (2012) reported, the employment rate of Canadian people with intellectual disabilities is only 25 percent, compared to 75 percent of the general population. According to Griffen, Hammis, and George (2007), career preparation for students with intellectual disabilities is habitually characterized by stereotypical menial jobs, because of the mistaken belief that these types of jobs were the best that students with intellectual disabilities could achieve.

As discussed in the literature review, people with intellectual disabilities typically achieve poorer employment outcomes than the majority of the population (Ju, Zhang, & Pacha, 2012). People with disabilities often face significant obstacles in securing employment, including transcending low expectations for work participation, identifying and securing required employment supports, and obtaining adequate career preparation (Trainor, Carter, Sweeden, & Pickett, 2012). Morrison and Polloway (1995) reported
that employment outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities generally include
supported employment, vocational rehabilitation, sheltered work, and enclaves.
Crawford (2012) claimed that the difficulties people with intellectual disabilities
experience in the Canadian labour force are a direct result of the low level of formal
education amongst working age people with intellectual disabilities.

Because exposure to a range of career options is often very limited for people
with intellectual disabilities, participation in authentic work experiences is especially
critical (Luecking, 2009). According to Luecking (2009), participation in real-world
work experiences, where opportunities are provided for guidance and feedback on work
performance, is essential to avoid routinely meek post-school outcomes for students with
intellectual disabilities. The CICE programs provided career development and
preparation for the participants in this study through co-op field placements whereby
participants were able to practice authentic work skills. Each participant described
having a weekly co-op placement as part of their college program. Participants explained
that in each semester they participated in a different placement in order to develop a
variety of skills and experiences for the workplace. They each described that their co-op
placements were an opportunity for them to practice the skills they had learned in the
classroom. Participants described developing both transferrable skills, as well as specific
skills related to their area of interest. Overall, each participant described their co-op
placement as a very important part of their program that provided them with real work
experience. Participants also reported participating in a seminar class each semester
through which they learned about employment processes, including resume building, cover letters, and practice interviews. For the most part, participants found value in taking the seminar course to learn about employment related processes.

Luecking (2010) claimed that the culmination of any student’s educational experience can, and should be, the beginning of a productive adult life, job, or career. Sandys (2007) explained that most people want to secure interesting and challenging work with opportunities to learn new skills, to interact positively with coworkers, and to make a difference while being paid enough to meet their needs. Each participant in this study indicated that future employment potential was a primary motive for attending college, and that they felt post-secondary education would help to open some doors for them in order to obtain employment in their personal area of interest.

Post-secondary education increases the likelihood that people with intellectual disabilities will achieve full participation in society. According to Sandys (2007), work enables people to see themselves as useful contributing members of society. Crawford (2005) claimed that with an increased level of education attained, people with intellectual disabilities are more likely to be integrated within the paid labour force, to enjoy economic security, to participate in a range of community activities, and to enjoy better health and wellness overall. Ju et al. (2012) attested that employment is also positively related to various dimensions of quality of life, including economic resources, job satisfaction, positive self-perception, active social network, recreational activities, and preferred living arrangements. Post-secondary education and the attainment of gainful
employment significantly can improve one’s chances of participating as a member of a community and realizing a high quality of life (Stodden & Mruzek, 2010). As Trainor et al. (2012) explained, everyone benefits when all citizens, including people with disabilities, contribute to the economic and civic stability of a community.

**Interpersonal Relationships and Social Networks**

People with intellectual disabilities often have small social networks and experience social isolation and loneliness despite having desires for acceptance and friendship (Hanson-Baldouf, 2011). Shakespeare (2006) explained that most humans desire company, recognition, and acceptance, and without them, life can be isolated and lonely. The need to maintain relationships with others, feelings of belonging, and friendships are important components of emotional and physical development and health (Lippold & Burns, 2009; Hanson-Baldouf, 2011). Johnson, Douglas, Bigby, and Iacono (2012) claimed that developing personal relationships is fundamental to increasing a sense of social inclusion.

People can typically take advantage of numerous opportunities to meet other people and form relationships, including networking through families, neighbours, school, workplace, events, and everyday interactions (Lutfiyya, 1988). However, developing social relationships depends on having opportunities to meet people and the skills to develop and sustain relationships. The social relationships taken for granted by most people are often elusive for people with intellectual disabilities. Lippold and Burns
(2009) found that people with intellectual disabilities tend to have more restricted social networks and community presence, and do not have opportunities to develop friendship networks comparable to other people in society. Many people with intellectual disabilities encounter limited opportunities to take part in activities and events where they can meet others and form relationships, and therefore, such opportunities are simply lacking.

Participating in college provided a common experience through which the participants in this study could interact with others and develop relationships. Bigby and Wiesel (2011) pointed out that some places or events, such as the college environment, can provide greater opportunities for cordial encounters where people develop rapport through shared activities and common interests. The college environment also provides planned activities with the goal of bringing college students together socially; in fact there are numerous places on college campuses that exist for the sole purpose of allowing students to get together and hang out (Dwyre et al, 2010). Each participant described developing new friendships and social networks as a goal for, or benefit of, attending college. While each participant in this study varied in the level of engagement with their social networks and friends, they all expressed contentment with the friendships and relationships they developed in college and hoped to maintain these relationships long term.
**Self-Determination**

People with intellectual disabilities are frequently denied the opportunity to live their lives according to their own interests and preferences (Ward & Stewart, 2008). Opportunities to have a voice and make choices pertaining to their own lives are often limited (Wehmeyer & Plamer, 2003). Brown et al. (2007) claimed that the availability of options for personal choice is often limited by a number of factors, including the lack of opportunity for persons with intellectual disabilities to know about what options are available to them, and having readily available options accessible to choose from. Barnes and Mercer (2003) explained that common restrictions and exclusion imposed upon disabled people has resulted in fewer possibilities for them to advance and defend their interests within society.

As discussed in the literature review, dominant social constructions have contributed to responses of care and concern for people with intellectual disabilities (Beauchamp-Pryor, 2007) resulting in a paradigm of dependency. Dependency implies the inability to do things for oneself, and therefore, reliance on others (Oliver, 1990). Thus, when individuals are not permitted to have direction in their lives, this reinforces prevailing ideologies of incompetence. Consequently, people with intellectual disabilities are frequently denied ordinary liberties and forced to do things that are considered to be for their own good. Expectations for self-determination become reduced or non-existent for people with intellectual disabilities, and as Mackelprang and Salsgiver
Self-determination refers to the right and capacity of individuals to exert control over their lives (Wehmeyer, 2004). Hanson-Baldauf (2011) explained that self-determination concerns the ability and right to control one’s own destiny. Attending college provided an opportunity for the participants in this study to exercise self-determination and have direction and control in their lives. Each participant described having opportunities in college to make decisions and choices for themselves based on their interests and desires. For all participants, self-determination was exercised overall through choosing their program of interest, based on their interests and strengths. Participants also expressed having new independence in college they had not had prior to attending college, and that through this independence they also learned how to balance responsibility. Additionally, participants made choices about how they spent their time and managed the independence afforded to students at the college level. Participants were faced with making a wide range of decisions regarding their learning during their overall college experience.

People with intellectual disabilities should be empowered to make their own choices and pursue opportunities of interest to them, even if resulting consequences involve elements of risk. Levels of risk are typically perceived to be higher for people with intellectual disabilities because of dominant social constructions whereby rights and opportunities are often overlooked under the guise of paternalism or protection ideologies.
(Brown et al., 2007). According to Dwyre et al. (2010), most people learn through the dignity of risk-taking; the sense of uncertainty about an exact outcome of a venture provides a sense of pride and accomplishment when a result is favourable, and life lessons can be learned about how to adapt in unfavourable situations.

College has provided an opportunity for the participants in this study to work towards their goals and take pride in their achievements. Bandura (1989) theorized that personal goal setting is influenced by self-appraisal of capabilities; the stronger a person’s perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals they set for themselves, and the firmer their commitment to them. Participants in this study reported feeling proud of themselves for making the decision to go to college and for their accomplishments in college. They also reported having a raised level of confidence in their abilities resulting from their successful experiences in the college environment. An understanding of one’s strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential components of self-determination (Wehmeyer, 2004). As participants in this study became successful in their course work and developed positive feelings about their accomplishments, the more willing they were to raise their goals and try new things. For example, each participant in this study discussed the desire and intent to try additional educational endeavours as a direct result of having a successful educational experience in the CICE programs.

According to Kirkendall, Doueck, and Saladino (2009), a critical determinant of quality of life for persons with disabilities is their scope for exercising personal choice.
and control over their lives. Empowerment and self-direction are essential components to achieving equality of opportunity and citizenship in society (Oliver, 1990). Rioux (2010) explained that freedom is the empowered individual’s right to make choices not within the narrow confines of externally defined limitations, but within a full range of possibilities and within a personal understanding of what well-being means to them. It includes both the right to make decisions and the opportunities to achieve outcomes that are personally valued.

**Contributions to the Literature**

Inclusive post-secondary education is a relatively new phenomenon to which little attention has been paid over the years. In fact, inclusive post-secondary education has been described as unchartered territory (Grigal et al., 2010). There is currently very little literature available on inclusive post-secondary education (Mosoff et al., 2009), especially from the perspective of students. Findings from this study increase our understandings of the inclusive post-secondary education experience from the perspective of seven students who were participating in such opportunities in Ontario. Thus, this research contributes to the literature by providing a perspective that was previously non-existent.

As Kleinert, Jones, Sheppard-Jones, Harp, and Harrison (2012) argued, one of the greatest barriers to creating inclusive campus communities are the attitudes and preconceived notions about the limited ability of students with intellectual disabilities to
meaningfully contribute to the academic environment. A key principle in conducting this study through a disability studies perspective was to presume the competence and capabilities of each participant. Each participant in this study was the expert of their own experience. A strengths-based approach guided this study, which focused on the participants’ aptitudes, abilities, talents, desires, and potential. Findings from this study provide alternative, empowering conceptualizations of students with intellectual disabilities in contrast to the dominant social constructions that have historically supported and legitimated exclusion from post-secondary education policy and practice in Ontario. The conceptualizations of this study highlight the personal possibilities for the seven participants in developing and advancing their abilities and capacities for living a life of personal choice. As such, this research contributes to a new paradigm of possibility for people with intellectual disabilities.

This study provides a view of pedagogy that recognizes those who experience marginalization within typical post-secondary educational contexts in Ontario. More importantly, the findings reported in this study demonstrate the promise of inclusive post-secondary education for a group of students who are typically not provided access such opportunities. As the findings of this study suggest, participation in inclusive post-secondary education offers many benefits to students with intellectual disabilities, summarized as follows:

• Students enhanced their academic and vocational skills through completion of course work in a desired area of interest;
• Students successfully completed course work with curriculum modifications and required supports based on individual learning strengths and needs;
• Students met the challenges of academic rigour;
• Students developed friendships and social networks across the college community;
• Students accessed college social groups, facilities, and extra-curricular activities;
• Students developed skills in an area of vocational interest that lead to improved prospects for competitive employment and future learning opportunities;
• Students gained intrinsic benefits such as developing a sense of belonging, pride, and accomplishment; and
• Students experienced increased self-determination reflecting personal interests and desires that lead to personally desired outcomes.

These findings are consistent with typical expectations for all college students. Hart et al. (2006) affirmed that college students with intellectual disabilities can benefit in similar ways as non-disabled students. Based on these findings, this research offers timely consideration for policy and program planners in the development and enhancement of inclusive post-secondary programs and opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities. Notably, systemic reforms are required to provincial governments’ post-secondary education policies to eliminate barriers that restrict the participation of students with intellectual disabilities. Of particular consideration is the fact that students with intellectual disabilities are not currently protected under Ontario
Human Rights legislation that governs access to, and participation in, post-secondary education for students with disabilities, as previously discussed in Chapter 1. This study has provided evidence that students with intellectual disabilities are able to access educational content, meet the essential requirements of modified curriculum, and experience benefits typical to all college students. As such, post-secondary education institutions in Ontario should have a legal obligation to provide access and supports to students with intellectual disabilities to enable their participation in post-secondary education. Human Rights legislation should be amended to allow for modifications to post-secondary curriculum in order to facilitate the education of students with diverse learning needs. In addition, post-secondary education institutions should evaluate admission policies and eligibility requirements in order to facilitate increased access for students with intellectual disabilities.

Post-secondary educational institutions should firmly commit to the concept of inclusive post-secondary education and ensure such opportunities are provided to students with intellectual disabilities. This study validates a need for the creation and sustaining of inclusive and accessible post-secondary educational opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities. Inclusion involves the elimination of barriers to participation and the provision of resources to support the learning of all students in typical post-secondary education settings. Lessons can be learned from inclusion practices reported by the participants in this study. First, the use of medical or diagnostic labels was not a prominent consideration within the CICE program to understand the
learning needs of individual students. The Learning Facilitators who provided academic supports would get to know the student on an individual basis in order to understand individual learning needs and develop appropriate academic supports. Thus, the supports that were provided to students reflected individual learning strengths and needs that enabled students to learn at their own level and pace. Second, this study has revealed specific strategies that were utilized to foster learning at the individual level to maximize the learning potential of each student. Specifically, modifications to curriculum enabled altered or reduced learning outcomes and adapted learning materials based on an individual’s strengths and needs. These supports identified by the participants highlight positive teaching and learning strategies that could potentially foster the successes of other students.

Typical approaches to the education of students with intellectual disabilities are frequently provided based on the belief that academic and social differences between students with and without disabilities are of such significance that separate educational provisions are required (Crawford, 2005). However, this study demonstrates that students with intellectual disabilities can learn in typical post-secondary education environments and benefit from participation in similar ways as all college students. An inclusive philosophy fosters the premise that all students should be provided with opportunities to realize their potential and contribute to the life of the school.

Recommendations for Further Study. What became evident through this study was that when an Ontario college proposes to initiate a CICE program at their campus,
they do so based on the most current proposal submission to Credentials Validation Services. As such, new CICE programs are initiated based on assumptions already in place at other colleges. Considering this, a CICE program evaluation would be beneficial to determine best practices for this model of inclusive post-secondary education. In particular, an examination of the accommodation and modification processes available for students with intellectual disabilities would be helpful to provide understandings of such processes for post-secondary education institutions that wish to initiate a CICE program or enhance current offerings. In addition, the CICE programs in Ontario are only one model of inclusive post-secondary education. While these programs have provided access to college that students with intellectual disabilities did not previously have, an evaluation of inclusive post-secondary education models would help identify best practices for providing inclusive post-secondary education opportunities. As Brown, Percy, and Machclek (2006) pointed out, post-secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities is a new area, and methods for evaluating the efficacy of these programs is still developing.

Employment potential was a significant theme identified by the participants in this study. According to Tepperman, Albanese, and Wortherspoon (2012), education plays a central role as individuals strive to keep pace with demands for new knowledge and credentials required for jobs, career advancement, and economic and social development. Winzer (2002) acknowledged that in the past few decades, the domain of work has passed through a massive shift at incredible speed. Wortherspoon (2012)
explained that there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of formal education and credentials in the workplace, resulting in part from an expansion of educational opportunities and requirements, and increasing levels of educational attainment among Canadian citizens. These issues of credentialism and pressures for achievement of higher education in society can result in dire consequences for those who are left behind. Further research regarding employment outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities who participated in inclusive post-secondary education would be beneficial to provide an understanding of whether or not their goals for employment are being met through inclusive post-secondary education.

**Conclusion**

In reflecting upon the student portraits and findings that emerged in this study, it is evident that participation in inclusive post-secondary education has positive outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities, including an anticipated positive impact that would extend well into the futures of each participant. Each participant imagined a bright future in store for them because of attending college. Each participant exuded excitement and pride as they shared their stories, their successes, and overall experience in college. Participants reported that they enjoyed participating in this study, and that it provided them with a unique opportunity to share their stories. They indicated that it was important to increase awareness about inclusive post-secondary education and the benefits of participation. Caleb, Belle, and Wolfie each stated that they enjoyed
participating in this study and hoped it would help other people to make the decision to
attend college. Gabe made a recommendation for other students thinking about
participating in inclusive post-secondary education:

   Katherine: Do you see value in sharing your story?
   Gabe: I do. This has been really fun. I hope this helps people…I hope that by
   listening to me, I can make a difference in people’s lives. This program is great.
   Come and try it, and be a good student. I hope for their future, they will think
   about it and do it. (Interview 3)

Post-secondary education provides a pathway to community inclusion,
independent living, and competitive employment for people with intellectual disabilities,
just as it has been for the general population. Stodden and Mruzek (2012) contended that
completion of some type of post-secondary education and the attainment of meaningful
employment significantly improves one’s chances of participating as a member of a
community and realizing a high quality of life. Wortherspoon (2012) also argued that the
more education one has, the higher the chances of having a job, a better income, good
health status, and many other factors positively associated with a high standard of living.
Cummins and Lau (2003) concluded that inclusion promotes a desirable lifestyle for
individuals. People with intellectual disabilities should also be provided opportunities to
reap the benefits associated with participating in post-secondary education.

Despite evolving inclusion philosophies and the proven benefits of inclusion,
people with intellectual disabilities continue to experience systemic exclusion in trying to
access segments of the community. Indeed, inclusion remains a paramount concern for people with intellectual disabilities. True inclusion philosophy means that people with disabilities live among non-disabled people in community settings, with the ultimate goal of forming part of the larger culture and belonging within it (Brown et al., 2007). However, the current reality is that persons with disabilities still face barriers and discrimination that prevent them from participating as equal citizens in society. Social exclusion for people with intellectual disabilities still remains entrenched in discrimination and prejudice through lack of education and employment opportunities (Hall, 2010). Policies and practices need to evolve to eradicate the marginalization and discrimination that people with intellectual disabilities have had imposed upon them. The creation of social policies and practices are required that foster and promote the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of society.

Because social constructions inform values and beliefs that directly influence perceptions of individuals and groups, it is imperative to share stories that highlight positive conceptualizations of individuals with intellectual disabilities. The stories shared by Belle, Caleb, Wolfie, Jeff, Gabe, Shannon, and James in this study provide a deep understanding of inclusive post-secondary education through the voices and perceptions of those engaged in the experience. Through the sharing of stories that reflect the reality of those involved, new social constructions can be formed based on positive conceptualizations of intellectual disabilities that focus on capabilities, capacities, and opportunities, rather than limitations.
These stories of Belle, Caleb, Wolfie, Jeff, Gabe, Shannon, and James serve as a beginning for the development of new knowledge to inform perceptions, philosophies, and policy where inclusion and belonging of individuals with intellectual disabilities become natural, typical, and accepted in our society.
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Appendix A

Interview Guide for Interview One

1. Can you please describe yourself to me.
2. What made you decide to come to college?
3. How did you feel about coming to college?
4. Can you describe your college program to me?
   a) What is the name of your college program?
   b) What types of courses do you take in your program?
5. What does your schedule look like? What do you do in between classes?
6. Can you describe a typical day at college to me?
7. How do you feel about going to your classes?
8. How are your courses selected? Do you pick your own courses?
9. Do you enjoy going to your classes? Why or why not?
10. Does someone help you with your course work? Who? How?
11. What types of activities do you participate in in class?
12. How do you feel about participating in classroom activities?
13. How much homework do you do?
14. What types of activities do you participate in outside of class?
15. Have you made friends in your program?
16. What types of activities do you do with your friends at college?
17. Are there places at college where you can hang out with your friends? Please describe.
18. Do you hang out with your college friends outside of school?
19. What is the best part about coming to college?
20. What is one thing you would change about your college experience?
21. What do you hope to do after you graduate from college?
Appendix B

Interview Guide for Interview 2

1. Why are you taking courses?
2. What motivates you to learn?
3. How does attending college make you feel about yourself?
4. What would you be doing if you were not attending college?
5. How do you think other people see you? You college peers? Family? Other friends?
6. Did you choose the college that you wanted to attend?
7. How did you choose your area of concentration? Did anyone help you? Provide some reasons or examples of why you chose your area of concentration.
8. Do you feel that your program matches your interests? How did you know whether they would?
9. Are you able to make your own choices regarding your learning? Please describe.
10. What kinds of skills have you learned in your area of concentration? What are some examples of things you are doing at your placement?
11. How are your elective courses chosen?
12. What would your teachers say about your schoolwork?
13. How would you describe your level of self-confidence?
14. How would you describe your level of independence?
15. Do you have different placements each semester? Describe some of your past placements and things you have learned.
16. Do you have specific goals for your placement? Please describe.
17. What would your co-op placement say about your work?
18. Do you enjoy your co-op placement? Why or why not?
19. What are you learning in your seminar class? Is it helpful to you? What kind of help do you get in your seminar class?
20. How do you feel about working with a Learning Facilitator?
21. What types of assignments do you complete in your courses? Are they the same as everyone else’s assignments? If not, how are they different?
22. What kinds of modifications or accommodations are made to your schoolwork?
23. How well do you do in your courses?
24. Do you help your friends with college work? Provide examples. Do your friends help you with college work? How do you feel about helping others in college?
25. How do you feel about asking for help? Who would you ask for help from if you needed it? Who helps you to solve problems?
26. Can you describe your social network? Can you describe to me what some of your friends are like? Are they in your class? Do they have different backgrounds than you? Please explain.
27. How many friends do you have at college?
28. How do you feel about your social interactions?
29. How do you meet new people at school?
30. Describe some times when you feel as part of the college crowd.
32. What types of social connections do you make with your peers? Does your schedule include time for clubs? Athletic activities? Student center? Other activities?
33. Do you participate in similar activities as your friends at college? At school? For fun?
34. What are some planned activities at the college that you participate in?
35. Describe some places where you like to hang out? Who do you hang out with?
36. What types of activities do you schedule around your college classes?
37. How do you manage your schedule? How do you manage your free time?
38. What are the benefits of learning at college?
39. How can attending college make a difference in your life?
40. What are your strengths in the classroom?
41. Describe some challenges you have experienced at college.
42. Are you happy with your college experience? Why or why not?
Appendix C

Probing Questions For Photo-Elicitation Interviews

1. Can you describe this picture for me?
2. What does this picture represent?
3. How does this picture represent your college experience?
4. Why did you select this picture to share with me?
5. What does this image mean to you?
6. Why is this image important?
Appendix D
Interview Guide for Interview 3

1. Can you describe yourself to me? Can you tell me a bit about yourself.

2. What do you think of when someone says "college student"? Do you feel that these terms describe you? Why? Can you provide examples?

3. How is college different than high school or other learning experiences that you have had? Can you provide examples?

4. How did you know that you wanted to go to college?

5. What were your expectations for attending college? Did the college experience match your expectations? How so?

6. Have you enjoyed participating in this study? Why or why not?

7. Have you had an opportunity to share stories about yourself before? In what circumstances?

8. Do you see any value in sharing your story? In telling people about your college experience?

9. Did you enjoy taking pictures for this project?

10. What were your expectations for college before you started? Did your experience live up to your expectations?

11. Now that you are almost ready to graduate, what are your plans for when you are done? Have you taken any steps to achieve these goals?

12. Do you feel that college has been hard work? Please explain.

13. How would you describe your level of confidence in college? To try new things? Has this changed since high school? How so?

14. Do you complete assignments the same as others in your class? Or in different formats? Please describe an example.

15. Do you receive assistance from a tutor? If so, how do they help you?
16. May I ask why you chose not to write in a journal about your college experience for this study?
17. Do you make your own choices in college? Who provides you with direction?
18. How do you get through the challenging, or more demanding times?
19. Do you feel that you do a good job at school? Please explain or provide an example.
20. Do you think you will keep your college friends for a long time?
21. Do you feel a sense of belonging to the school? Do you feel comfortable with the people at college? The work?
22. Do you expect to get a job after college? What kind of work?
23. Do you feel like you have learned skills that will help you to be successful in your career? Please explain.
24. Have you made any career connections or networks while in college? Please describe.
25. What are the benefits of learning at college?
26. What is your favorite memory of college?
27. What are your hopes and dreams for the future? Do you think college has helped to prepare you for this?
28. Can you describe your personal dreams to me?
29. Have you experienced any challenges in your college experience? What is the most difficult part of your college experience? What is one thing that you would change about your college experience?
30. What could have improved your college experience? What is one thing you would have changed about your college experience?
31. What were your hopes and goals for coming to college? Do you feel that you have met the goals that you had for yourself in going to college?
Appendix E
Administrator Interview Guide

1. Can you describe your CICE program to me?
2. What are the goals for the students in the CICE program?
3. What is the eligibility requirement for entry into this program?
4. Do students require a specific diagnosis or a level to be at a certain level with the program?
5. Can you describe your admission process?
6. Could you describe a typical day for student in the CICE program?
7. How is an individualized program developed for a CICE student?
8. How are courses selected for each student?
9. How many courses do the students typically take?
10. Are there other support and resources available to assist students? Please describe.
11. What resources or documents assist you in understanding the needs of your students?
12. How are CICE students supported in the classroom?
13. Do CICE students do group work and meet with their groups outside of classes?
14. Are CICE students encouraged to participate in activities outside of the classroom?
15. What do you see as the main benefits for students participating in the CICE program?
16. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for other colleges who might be considering providing a CICE program?
Appendix F
Transcript Excerpt and Coding Sample

Coding Legend:

- Academic Growth And Development
- Interpersonal Relationships and Social Networks
- Career Development and Employment Potential
- Self-Determination

Gabe, Interview 2

Katherine: Can you maybe explain these study notes? Remember, we took a picture of this. This is yours right? Is that provided by the Learning Facilitator?

Gabe: What they do is, they go to the professor and they ask what can do to help the student out. By doing notes like that, it is just the way we study. Because I have a learning disability, I can’t take all the information that the other people are doing, so they give us a little, whatever is on that test they give us the study notes from it. For example, this study note instead of giving us 50 questions, they give us 20, so it is modified for us. So we understand what is happening on that test basically.

Katherine: Oh, I see. That is great!

Gabe: So each program that we are in…so for me, for example, I am in the Child and Youth Worker program. So they go to the professor and ask can we have a copy of your test, and what they do is they take those questions that are on the test and they give us study notes from it. So each program will have that.

Katherine: Okay, so they do it for everyone?

Gabe: They do it for everyone. In the office, we have a mailbox. Our name is on it, and our notes will be in there. We just take it like that.

Katherine: So you just take it from there.

Katherine: Okay, those are more notes; they do a variety of different types?
Gabe: What they do is, they ask us to do it for homework [fill in the blanks], and look into your notes to make sure you have the right answers. Then we take it up in our tutorial and if it is not the right answer they go over and over it again until you know your stuff.

Katherine: Okay good. Do you find that helpful?

Gabe: Very helpful, yes. Right now, if I didn’t have it, I don’t know if I would do so well in college.

Katherine: I see. And that is?

Gabe: That is our library, they call that the dungeon. The reason why they call it the dungeon is because you have these long stairs going down and you can be noisy in the library here. They just did this last year, because they were finding the students who go to the library were making too much noise and sometimes it is hard to whisper or talk to your partner when you are doing your projects. So this is why they made this area down there.

Katherine: Do you go down there?

Gabe: I do when I have a major assignment. But not all the time because sometimes it is hard, it is in another part of the building. Sometimes I do use the library a lot for my different studying stuff, like if I have a major project that is due. But I don’t use it that often. I usually do my work at home. It is quieter, and I have everything all over my desk and I know where everything is.

Gabe: This is our cafeteria. We have 4 or 5 different places we can eat.

Katherine: Is there? I have only found one.

Gabe: The other one is called the South Cafeteria, on the other side of the building. Most of the people in res go there. But because I am not in res, I can still go there, but you do pay 10.50 for the meal, and it is all you can eat.

Katherine: Oh that is pretty reasonable.
Gabe: That is where I hang out more of the time, because I find it quiet and relaxable in the main cafeteria. I find it is nice, but it is not as cozy. And you can’t find a spot when you want to go in there. Sometimes, if I am on the run I go there, but usually I don’t.

Katherine: So how far away is the other place?

Gabe: If you go through the north wing, and take those steps down there you can find it right there. That is the CICE office, I don’t hang around that office too much because I find you know when you are going in for surgery with those walls, it is just not cozy in there, hanging around the office is just not cool. They are trying to do their work you know what I mean.

Katherine: I saw some people hanging out there, though.

Gabe: Some people do, because they have nowhere else to hang out I guess. I am trying to get them away from the office, but it is a challenge sometimes.

Katherine: So what do people do there, then?

Gabe: They do stuff in there. They do counseling, if you need it. But it is like I said, it is just people waiting for their tutorials to start. That is what I do, I do hang around there if I have a tutorial, and then I am gone. The reason why, is because from here and onwards they can hear everything that you are saying in the hallway. That is why I go and sit on the other side.

Katherine: Yes, to have some privacy.

Gabe: Yeah, now this is our main campus hall. Meaning it is just down here from beside us. Mondays, Tuesdays they have people playing the piano.

Katherine: Yes, good. I have heard them playing.

Gabe: It is a nice area at Christmas time. We have a tall tree there, but um it is… I do go there sometimes but I don’t go there all the time. I walk through there on my way to classes. I go through the west wing. If you go to class here, it is our marketplace cafeteria and along here is our student association office. So that is where I took my grad pictures on Tuesday.
Katherine: Nice. I notice a lot of other people sit there. It looks almost like a bus stop doesn’t it?

Gabe: It does. It is for people that are visiting the school. They tell them to meet there if they have an appointment with someone.

Katherine: That is where we are now.

Gabe: That is where we are now. They do the testing there and the study rooms, they do their studying in there for a test or an exam. They do group work in there. They have meetings in there for different things.

Katherine: Do you have to book these rooms?

Gabe: You do have to book them in advance.

Katherine: Uh oh. You do? I haven’t booked it so…

Gabe: That’s okay. But I think they used to book them last year. I don’t know if you have to book them this year. They are always open so people are always in there to use them.

Katherine: Do you ever use them?

Gabe: I used them a couple of times last semester for a test and for a quiz.

Katherine: With your tutor?

Gabe: Yup with my LF. This is the third floor where one of my classes is. Social policy is up there. I have other classes up there too. I have my sociology class up there and my psychology up there. So, it is a nice cozy hall, and I am always up there too waiting on my classes. Sometimes I sit on the benches.

Katherine: Now is this new?

Gabe: This is new. They built it for all the classes last year. The first year that I was here, they were just re-doing everything. But it actually re-opened this year and each summer they work on it some more up there. This summer they put in the benches and stuff they didn’t have benches up there so that is pretty new.

Katherine: So people could hang out there. It is pretty new.
Gabe: And the reason people like to hang out there is they can get signal for their cell phones or internet. (laughing) And this is one of the computer spaces.

Katherine: Is it for student help or something?

Gabe: It is like a work room where anybody can go and work. Classrooms are okay for that too.

Katherine: Do they all look like that, pretty much?

Gabe: Most of them do, but not all of them. On the third floor, there are brand new desks and chairs, so they don’t look like this at all. We do have like a theatre class room.

Katherine: The lecture hall? I have been in that, it is huge!

Gabe: So each room is different. This is the old school furniture that we had left over I guess, and they just put it in there. But usually it looks like that, but not all the time.

Katherine: How many people would there be in your classes?

Gabe: 40-100. It depends on that block, how many people pick that block. Usually I have 40 in my class.

Katherine: Wow, they need a bigger classroom than that!

Gabe: Yes, we start out at about 65 and most of them drop out afterwards. This is our commons computer lab I use that all the time to check my email and get my notes. I know I have my laptop with me, but sometimes it is just convenient to print them off.

Katherine: Can you just pop in there and print them off?

Gabe: You can just pop in there and print them off. If you want to use the computer, you have to put in your student number and stuff like that.

Katherine: So would you hang out there with your friends?

Gabe: I have in the past but because of my schedule it is so hard to fit everything in.

Katherine: I know. When you're concentrating on your schoolwork, it's hard to hang out.

Gabe: But I do hang out. I don't call that really hanging out.

Katherine: Ah, right, more for working?
Gabe: It’s a workplace, but I do go there all the time to print off my notes or whatever for my next class. The student center is awesome now. I am always there. That is my party place on Friday night or Saturday.

Katherine: Oh is it?

Gabe: They usually have some things going on for the month. Starting tomorrow, we have the power of pink. The whole campus is pink for breast cancer. They put that on. Each department does something. We are going to be selling daffodils, I believe, and we wear shirts saying booty on it or whatever.

Katherine: And that goes to the student Association…student center.

Gabe: Oh, we have a picture of my bar? [laughing]

Katherine: [laughing] So, is that your bar?

Gabe: Yes. We have a good time there. I go there just to listen to the music and mellow out for a bit and get everything off my mind… We do have different events happening in there all the time. We had an event called “In the Blast” at the end of the year for all the students are graduating, you know.

Katherine: So, is that where you would hang out with your friends?

Gabe: Yup, I hang there all the time.

Katherine: That's okay in between classes and homework right?

Gabe: Just the place that I can just hang out and relax they have couches in there. It's just a nice relaxed place to chill out. It is noisy so I will not do my homework in there, but I just hang out for a couple minutes before class.

Katherine: Would you hang out with friends from your class? What class?

Gabe: I would hang around with all my classmates there. We say we’re going to the pub, do you want to come? And they say oh yeah. And we make a big group of us. We look at the time and they all know classes darting in 10 min. and the like that.

Katherine: (laughing) Okay, I'm going to go through some of these questions now.

Gabe: Sure

Katherine: Can you please describe yourself to me?
Gabe: Okay, I am a person that likes to help people. When I was a child, I had a learning disability, you know what I mean. This past summer I went to a trailer up north and a grandmother and grandpa had a five-year-old granddaughter who had a learning disability. And I said, I need to help this kid. And here I am today, and I'm doing my schooling to try and help other people get through life and stuff like that.

Katherine: Very nice, and how does attending college about yourself?

Gabe: I feel proud of who I am being at college because it makes me feel that I can do things for myself. Like I don't have to lean on other people for other things. They just make me feel welcome when I walk through the doors every day and it's amazing feeling.
Appendix G
CVS CICE Program Description

ONTARIO COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY
CREDENTIALS VALIDATION SERVICE

APPENDIX B - PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** (including occupational areas where it is anticipated graduates will find employment)

This two-year program is designed to provide individuals with developmental disabilities and other significant learning challenges with the opportunity to experience college life with modified programming and enhance their academic and vocational skills. Participants choose a program focus from the college calendar and depending on ability complete up to five courses. Academic courses taken with college peers could include, and are not limited to Early Childhood Education, Business, Photography, Travel and Tourism, Social Service Worker, Law and Security, Personal Support Worker, Hospitality, and Broadcasting- Radio and Television. Program participants will have access to a Learning Facilitator who will assist and support the course modifications including note-taking, tutoring, etc.

In addition, core programming common to all CICE students includes topics such as numeracy, communications, job skills, life skills, computer skills, human relations, recreation and emergency response skills. In year two of the program, participants will also benefit from participation in a work placement intended to help develop or enhance vocational skills and involvement with the community. The program will enable participants to function more independently in their community and ideally transition to volunteer, or paid employment on a part-time or full-time basis.

**VOCATIONAL PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:

1. Participate successfully in college programs and activities.
2. Apply self-management and interpersonal skills to perform as a team member.
3. Develop and utilize functional skills to support daily life.
4. Implement on-going personal development strategies and plans to improve academic and vocational opportunities.
5. Function (work) with increased levels of independence within the college and community in order to contribute to a positive, safe environment.
6. Use community agencies and partners as resources to support volunteer and employment opportunities.

**ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:**

- 19 years or older with a developmental disability
- Ontario Secondary School Diploma, Ontario Secondary School Certificate or equivalent
- A level of independence that precludes constant support
- Ability to manage transportation to the College and to the field placement
- Participation in an interview

The interview process will be carefully designed to screen applicants for cognitive and behavioural abilities that are determinants of success in the program.
Appendix H
Approval from Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, Letters of Information and Consent Forms

September 1, 2011

Ms. Katherine Gallinger
Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty of Education
Duncan McArthur Hall
Queen's University
511 Union Street
Kingston, ON K7M 5R7

GREB Ref #: GEDUC-569-11; Romeo#6006214
Title: “GEDUC-569-11 Going to College: A Phenomenological Study of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education”

Dear Ms. Gallinger,

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GEDUC-569-11 Going to College: A Phenomenological Study of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementations of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.
Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, PhD
Professor and Chair
General Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. Ann Marie Hill, Faculty Supervisor
Dr. Lesly Wade-Woolley, Chair, Unit REB
Celina Caswell, c/o Graduate Studies and Bureau of Research
Letter of Information-CICE Student
Going to College: The Story of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

This research is being conducted by Katherine Gallinger under the supervision of Dr. Ann Marie Hill, in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

What is this study about?
The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the post-secondary educational experience of students who are participating in a Community Integration Through Co-operative Education (CICE) college program. This study will explore and explain the personal stories of students who are participating in a CICE program to describe (a) their college experiences; (b) how they interact in their classes and course work; (c) their college friendships and social networks; and (d) their participation in college activities.

The study will require you to participate in three interviews over a four-month period. Each interview will take approximately one hour of your time. You will be provided with a digital camera and asked to take pictures of your college experience, and these pictures will be the focus of the interviews. You will be provided training on how to use the camera, and the camera will be yours to keep at the end of the study. You will also be asked to write a journal of your college experience. The total time involved in participating in this study is nine hours over a four-month span. There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with this study.

The first six, eligible participants who return their signed consent forms to me will be selected to participate in this study.

Is my participation voluntary? Yes. You are not required to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You can withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your standing in school.

What will happen to my responses? Your interview responses will be audio-recorded and written out word-for-word. Quotes from your responses may be used in the research findings. Your responses will be kept confidential to the extent possible. You will choose an alternate name to be used in the data to disguise your identity. Only myself as the lead investigator, and my supervisor, Dr. Ann Marie Hill, will have access to your information. The information you provide in this study may also be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will not breach confidentiality. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.

What if I have concerns? Any questions about study participation may be directed to the research investigator, Katherine Gallinger by email at 7kg19@queensu.ca (number one, not letter l). Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 1-613-533-6081.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen’s policies.
Consent Form-CICE Student

Going to College: The Story of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

Name (please print clearly): ________________________________________

1. I have read the Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I will be participating in the study called Going to College: The Story of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education. I understand that this means that I will be asked to participate in three interviews between October, 2011-January 2012 of approximately one hour in length each. I understand that I will be asked to take photographs of my college experience to discuss at the interviews, as well as record a journal of my college experience. I understand that I will be provided training on how to use the camera and send photographs to the researcher electronically, and this training will take an additional hour of my time. I understand that the total amount of time involved with participating in this study will be approximately three hours of interviews, one hour of photograph training, two hours of taking photographs, and three hours of journal writing, for a total time of nine hours over the four month span of this study.

3. I understand that my interview responses will be audio-recorded and written out word-for-word. Quotes from my responses may be used in the research findings.

4. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time with no effect on my standing in school. I can withdraw from this study by contacting Katherine Gallinger at 7kg19@queensu.ca (number one, not letter l). I understand that I am not required to answer any questions that make me feel uncomfortable.

5. I understand that every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data now and in the future. I understand that an alternative name will be used instead of my real name on all paper documents to protect my identity. I understand that all identifying information in photographs used for this study will be blurred to disguise my identity. I also understand that all information will be kept in Katherine Gallinger’s research office in locked cabinets, and that only Katherine Gallinger, and her supervisor, Dr. Ann Marie Hill, will have access to the information.

6. I understand that the data, including photographs, will be presented at academic conferences, at college presentations, and in written publications and reports. Any such presentations will be of general findings and will not breach confidentiality. If I am interested, I am entitled to a copy of the findings.

7. I am aware that if I have any questions or concerns about study participation, I may contact the research investigator, Katherine Gallinger at 7kg19@queensu.ca (number one, not letter l); project supervisor, Dr. Ann Marie Hill at 613-533-6000, extension 77432, or by email at annmarie.hill@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this research:

Signature: _____________________________________   Date: _______________________

I agree to have my interviews audio-recorded.

Signature: _____________________________________   Date: _______________________
Letter of Information—CICE College Administrator
Going to College: A Phenomenological Study of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

This research is being conducted by Katherine Gallinger under the supervision of Dr. Ann Marie Hill, in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

What is this study about?
The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the inclusive post-secondary educational experience of students with intellectual disabilities who are participating in a Community Integration through Co-operative Education (CICE) college program. This study will describe the personal stories of students who are participating in these programs to explore and explain: (a) their college experience in developing and pursuing their interests; (b) how they contribute to and interact in their learning environment; (c) how they develop friendships and social networks; (d) their participation in recreational, social, and cultural activities of the college environment; and (e) the meaning derived from these experiences.

The study will require you to participate in one interview of approximately one hour in length in January, 2012.

Is my participation voluntary? Yes. You are not required to answer any questions that you may find objectionable or make you feel uncomfortable. You can withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences.

What will happen to my responses? Your responses will be kept confidential to the extent possible. You will choose an alternate name to be used in the data to disguise your identity. Only myself as the lead investigator and my supervisor, Dr. Ann Marie Hill, will have access to this information. The data collected in this study may also be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will not breach confidentiality. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.

What if I have concerns? Any questions about study participation may be directed to the research investigator, Katherine Gallinger by email at 7kg19@queensu.ca (number one, not letter l) or project supervisor, Dr. Ann Marie Hill at 613-533-6000, extension 77432 or by email at annmarie.hill@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 1-613-533-6081.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.
Consent Form-CICE College Administrator
Going to College: A Phenomenological Study of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

Name (please print clearly): _______________________________________

1. I have read the Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I will be participating in the study called Going to College: A Phenomenological Study of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education. I understand that this means that I will be asked to participate in one interview of approximate one hour in length in January of 2012.

3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time with no consequences. I can withdraw from this study by contacting Katherine Gallinger at 7kg19@queensu.ca (number one, not letter l). I understand that I am not required to answer any questions that I may find objectionable or make me feel uncomfortable.

4. I understand that every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data now and in the future. I understand that an alternative name will be used instead of my real name on all paper documents to protect my identity. I also understand that all information will be kept in Katherine Gallinger’s research office in locked cabinets, and that only Katherine Gallinger, and her supervisor, Dr. Ann Marie Hill will have access to the information.

5. I understand that the data will be presented at academic conferences, at college presentations, and in written publications and reports. Any such presentations will be of general findings and will not breach confidentiality. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.

6. I am aware that if I have any questions or concerns about study participation, I may contact the research investigator, Katherine Gallinger at 7kg19@queensu.ca (number one, not letter l); project supervisor, Dr. Ann Marie Hill at 613-533-6000, extension 77432 or by email at annmarie.hill@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this research:

Signature: _______________________________   Date: _______________________

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