

**DISABILITY AND DIFFERENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CASE OF
ACCOMMODATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE**

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Abstract

Building on scholarship in Disability Studies and Deaf Studies, this research explores the discourse of disability and deafness-related accommodations at the University of Lethbridge, by examining the university's policies, website content, and archival material. In order to examine how disability and deafness are spoken of and constructed at this institution, this study employs Foucauldian theorizing on discourse. This research shows that accommodation-related policy embraces the view that disability is an individual problem, placed in the domain of the student's personal responsibility. Furthermore, the analysis of the university's documents indicates that, both historically and at present, a medical understanding of disability is the dominant but not the only understanding employed in the institutional design of accommodation-related practices. Finally, the policy and accompanying documents are formulated in ways that place the 'normal,' able-bodied student at the centre, thus representing disabled students and D/deaf students as an exception within the university's population.

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List of Abbreviations

ACCD	Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities
ACL	Accommodated Learning Centre
ASD	Association of Students with Disabilities
GFC	General Faculties Council
UN	United Nations

A note on terminology

The terminology used in social research often differentially reflects how deafness is conceptualized by researchers within varying theoretical camps. Within Deaf Studies (Padden & Humphries, 2006), the term Deaf (capitalized) is used when referring to individuals who belong to Deaf culture, and deaf (lower case) when making a reference to those with hearing loss who do not necessarily identify with Deaf culture (and are usually more prone to define it as a disability or an impairment). I believe that it is important not to reduce deafness to those definite views, rather I have decided to follow the scholars who use the term D/deaf, which allows for different ways of defining, understanding, and experiencing deafness (Leach Scully, 2012a). Following scholars who also use this term, I believe that this notation allows for inclusion of different and diverse identities and ways of situating deafness. Furthermore, it is my intention to keep the readers aware of complexities regarding the concepts that are being used to describe and capture experiences of D/deaf people. I am also hoping that this notation would serve as a constant reminder that there is no universal explanation of how deafness is or should be conceptualized.

I am also aware that my use of these terms might be confusing at times. Although it might seem inconsistent, there is a rationale behind using one or the other in certain of the following sections. Namely, when the Deaf culture is being referred to, the first letter is capitalized in order to follow the convention of doing so within the scholarship of Deaf Studies. Also, the quotes follow the usage of the authors quoted, in order to retain that scholar's viewpoint. While it is my intention to keep the terminology complicated in order to illustrate the multiple facets of this discussion and to not commit to one particular view, I hope that it does not blur readers' understanding of the text.

Chapter One: Introduction

This research explores inclusive education in post-secondary institutions, based on a case study of policy and public discourse on disability accommodation at the University of Lethbridge. By analyzing the policies regarding accommodation and inclusion, along with accommodation-related information provided by the University to its students, I examine the way disability is spoken of, constructed, and constrained at this institution. My intention is not to point out the failures, oversights, or omissions of the current administration and university leadership in accommodating deafness and including people who identify as D/deaf into the university community. Rather, I am interested in examining how current University policies and practices draw upon and reformulate broader social beliefs regarding disability and inclusion. I am looking at the policy documents guided by the idea that, as Thomas and Loxley (2007) argue, policy is not neutral, rather, “it is very much a signifier for underlying social relations of power” (p. 94).

I am motivated to explore these issues because I have noticed that the University of Lethbridge does not have a visible presence of D/deaf students, in comparison to the University of Belgrade, Serbia, where I studied before.¹ In the first months of attending the University of Lethbridge, through informal conversations with faculty members and students, I was told that no one can recall having a D/deaf student in the classroom at the University of Lethbridge. This made me curious about how the University’s regulations and policies address the question of deafness, but also how these policies intersect with normative discourses about disability, difference, and inclusion.

¹ I do not attempt to compare these two universities in terms of the accommodation they offer to students, the fairness with which they treat them, or services they provide. Rather, I note the difference in terms of a visible presence, as available to me as an observer at these universities.

This research is informed to a great extent by discussions within Disability Studies, as well as within Deaf Studies scholarship on the status of deafness and its relation to disability. While scholars in Disability Studies argue that disability is socially produced through exclusion, stigmatization, and the failure to accommodate, Deaf Studies illuminate, more specifically, how the role and position of D/deaf people has been shaped by cultural and social circumstances. I discuss the contrast between these two positions more fully below, but in a reasonable characterization of Deaf Studies, Branson and Miller (2002) describe it as:

[a] multidisciplinary academic enterprise focusing on the development of a coherent understanding of the myriad social and cultural processes that have influenced and continue to influence the position and role of people who are deaf both within and beyond our own society. (p. xv)

Conversely, Disability Studies can be seen as an academic field that offers response to the influential and dominant views of disability (e.g. disability as a sin, disability as pathology, disability as deviance) by exploring disability as a social, material and political phenomenon (Thomas, 2002; Goodley, 2011; Goodley 2014).

These two bodies of scholarship have helped me to discuss the underlying assumptions concerning disability and deafness that shape the University's policy regarding accommodations. It is worth noting that the University of Lethbridge does not provide policies that target D/deaf students explicitly. Therefore, I offer some possible interpretations of policies concerning disability in general, and commentaries that aimed to reveal their possible implications for deafness. This step in my analysis aims to explore and probe the theoretical and practical implications of the existing policies. At the time when I outlined the theoretical and methodological framework, I expected that the material would offer me many more opportunities to comment and reflect on implication the

policies might have for deafness. However, when I undertook the analysis, I realized that this endeavour is much less fruitful than I initially expected. For this reason, in my actual analysis I comment both on disability and deafness, and I attempt to include commentaries on deafness whenever possible. I looked at the policy and its related documentation as a piece of discourse, following Michel Foucault and Foucauldian scholars who use the analytical tools that stem from his theory, as I discuss in Chapter Three. Besides looking at the most overt themes in this discourse about disability, inclusion and accommodation, I also examined more covert themes in the discourse that might contribute to the construction of disability within the university context.

I decided to examine disability policies by looking at deafness, as I believed that theoretical discussions on deafness would allow me to address the question of accommodations in post-secondary education from a unique point of entry. First, the discussions concerning the notion of deafness within the debate of disability *vs.* culture allow for inclusion to be considered from two different frameworks – the first being the one that sees deafness as a disability, which assumes that D/deaf students would need accommodation that resembles accommodations offered to other students who are considered and labeled as disabled²; the second framework that originates from the discussions about deafness allows for deafness to be understood in terms of multiculturalism, and the accommodation that stems from this view approaches deafness

² In the Canadian context it is more common to use people-first-language, while in the British context, the term ‘disabled people’ is more commonly deployed as a means of acknowledging that disability is socially produced and constructed. In my research project I utilize both versions, because much of the literature I draw on comes from authors whose work is situated within the British social model on the one hand, and because the document I analyze use the terminology of ‘people with disabilities’, and more specifically, ‘students with disabilities’. For a discussion on terminology regarding disability and its use in Canada, see for example (Titchkosky, 2008)

as a unique cultural identity. I consider inclusion by taking into account these two standpoints that are often introduced as contradictory and mutually exclusive. These two different frameworks situate deafness in a liminal space between disability and culture, which allowed me to explore the relevant policies from a point of view that does not take disability as a given.

For the purposes of my research, I do not argue for one specific understanding of deafness, and I do not engage in a search for an ideal definition that would try to capture the experiences of deafness, nor do I frame my research solely on the two dominant conceptualizations of deafness. Instead, I attempt to remain indecisive regarding the definite answer to what is the best way to conceptualize deafness, while being committed to the idea that “disability is not fundamentally a question of medicine or health, nor it is just an issue of sensitivity and compassion; rather, it is a question of politics and power(lessness), power over, and power to” (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 2). This approach allowed me to quest for the ways that policies and practices contribute to the construction of disabilities, and how they hold certain assumptions about disability as truths.

Exploring the context: policies on education and disability

Although formally designed to allow access to everyone, the ways that education operates reveal that some have more privileges than others and that political struggles are embedded in educational systems. As Foucault (1995) notes:

Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or

of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it. (p. 227)

In that sense, I looked at how a set of policies concerning accommodations that is presented as universal and equitable nevertheless limits some and privileges others. Thus, by locating how ableism and audism are embedded in the policies and other accommodation-related materials, I indicate the political aspects of the distribution of power.

As my research focuses on the University of Lethbridge, it is important to understand the wider context in which this university operates and to look at the documents that regulate it. In Canada, provincial governments administer and regulate education; thus, I also address policies and other documents regarding accommodation in higher education that are particularly relevant to Alberta. However, the broader provincial legislative framework is not my primary focus, and I only occasionally refer to it.

The document that most directly addresses accommodation in post-secondary education in Alberta is the interpretative bulletin “Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in Post-secondary Educational Institutions” (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2004). This interpretative bulletin was issued by the *Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission*, whose mandate is to “foster equality and to reduce discrimination” following the *Alberta Human Rights Act* (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2015). This document provides guidelines concerning accommodation and, as I demonstrate further in my analysis, the University of Lethbridge modeled its policies and practices on it.

Besides this provincial document that obliges the institutions of higher education in Alberta to provide accommodation for students with disabilities, Canada binds to

international agreements as well. Canada does not grant the right to equitable and accessible education to all in its Constitution, but there are international documents which oblige Canada to do so (Johnston, 2010). Canada is one of the countries that took part in drafting the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN General Assembly, 2007), and was one of the first countries to sign it in 2007 and ratify it in 2010 (Chantal, 2012). Article number 24 of this Convention directly addresses the issues of inclusive education at all levels, by stating that countries shall ensure equal access and provide support and education to persons with disabilities. Although this article focuses on primary and secondary education, higher education is mentioned in the last section of it, as follows:

5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities. (UN General Assembly, 2007)

Furthermore, the article concerning education postulates that States Parties shall ensure full participation of persons with disabilities by:

- a. Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
- b. Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
- c. Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development. (UN General Assembly, 2007)

It follows from these lines that both the view of deafness as a disability and deafness as cultural identity are captured in this document, and furthermore that Canada, as well as other countries that have ratified the Convention, agreed to provide access to post-

secondary institutions to D/deaf students through ensuring education in Sign Languages. Although the wording of the Convention suggests that member states are required to ensure education and make it available, there is no specification that students must be provided with access to *mainstream* post-secondary education.

As noted by Martin (2009), the Canadian context is unique, as Canada does not have a post-secondary institution that is fully equipped for providing education in Sign Language, as is case in the United States. Some of the Canadian provinces provide funding that is aimed to assist students in attending the institutions abroad,³ such as Gallaudet and Rochester Institute of Technology in the United States. However, not all D/deaf students choose to continue their education abroad; some of them attend Canadian post-secondary institutions, which are developing policies, guidelines, and practices in order to respond to the provincial and federal requirements for accommodation and access to education (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006).

While the overall statistics concerning the number of D/deaf people in Canada are non-existent, there are certain tools and estimations that can help us understand the prevalence of deafness in Canada. Different stakeholders, however, endorse different calculations that offer an answer to the question of how many D/deaf Canadians there are. For example, The Canadian Association of the Deaf relies on a comparison with the United States to speculate that:

[...] statistics for Canada will be one-tenth of statistics for the U.S. (based on the fact that Canada has one-tenth the population of the U.S.) By this measure, Canada in the year 2012 would have roughly 3.5 million people with some degree of hearing loss. Of those 3.5 million people, one-tenth or

³ For example, Ontario provides the Ontario Out-of-Country Bursary for Deaf Students, see (“Ontario Out-of-Country Bursary for Deaf Students Application Guide,” 2012-2013).

roughly 350,000 would be culturally and linguistically Deaf. (The Canadian Association of the Deaf, 2012)

The effects of poor educational access for D/deaf people are speculatively quite grim. As other persons with disabilities, D/deaf people are underrepresented in the labour market, as well as in the post-secondary student bodies. In their “Position Paper on Challenges and Issues Affecting Access to Post-Secondary Education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students,” the Canadian Hearing Society states that:

Statistics Canada shows that comparatively fewer Deaf and hard of hearing individuals complete secondary or post-secondary education. For example, only 3.1% attain a university degree, compared to 10.2% of the non-disabled population, a figure which falls to 1.7% among those who are profoundly deaf. It is thus not surprising that labour force participation is only 52.1%, compared to 77.9% for non-disabled peers. (Canadian Hearing Society, n.d.)

Although it is important to attempt to estimate what number of people are affected by the challenges to full inclusion of D/deaf students, this approach is problematic, as it assumes an individualized approach to social and political barriers. Titchkosky notes that these kinds of quantifying attempts frame disability as a problem, and people with disabilities as “problem” people (Titchkosky, 2006, p. 61).

As outlined above, there are policies and international conventions in place that oblige Canada to provide access and support to students with disabilities in higher education. These requirements are formulated in general documents on human rights, but also in more specific documents that address the rights of persons with disabilities. I am committed to shed light on this issue of underrepresentation of D/deaf students in an institution of higher education by looking at one specific university, while taking into account all its specificity. While my study is to a large extent empirical, insofar as it takes into account existing policies and materials, it is also hypothetical. Namely, I analyze the

policies in order to answer how the inclusion of different understandings of deafness would complicate existing policies.

In the following chapter I outline the debates regarding inclusion and accommodation in education, with particular emphasis on Deaf Studies and Disability Studies scholars' take on these concepts. I also provide a brief overview of previous research on deafness in higher education in order to depict the current state of this issue. Furthermore, I engage in a discussion regarding the binaries that dominate the discussions on disability and deafness, which include medical and social models of disability, and views of deafness as a disability as opposed to deafness as a cultural identity. These pairs of binaries shape and construct vivid debates regarding deafness, but also they are clashing models that oftentimes can be found in policies and practices regarding inclusion and disability. Finally, in order to explore the questions about underlying assumptions in policies and practices concerning deafness in higher education, I addressed the notions of identity and citizenship. These concepts help me explore more fundamental assumptions that can be found in accommodation policies: the assumptions that postulate who is worthy of rights and equality, whose responsibility it is to ensure that accommodation takes place, and how identities of D/deaf students are negotiated through the process of accommodation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Inclusive education and deafness

Since its introduction in the 1960's, the notion of inclusive education has sought to help with "rejecting exclusion and encouraging participation" (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006, p. 65) and has been supported by numerous scholars, professionals, experts, persons with disabilities and their family members (G. Thomas & Loxley, 2007). Although inclusive education originated as a movement advocating for inclusion of students from special education into regular schools, in its early stages inclusive education was designed to support all students, not only marginalized groups. Inclusive education aimed to support schools to:

- 1) Increase *access* (or presence) of all students (not only marginalized or vulnerable groups),
- 2) enhance the school personnel's and students' acceptance of all students,
- 3) maximize student *participation* in various domains of activity, and
- 4) increase the *achievement* of all students. (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006, p. 66, original emphasis)

In regards to disability, inclusive education emerged as a response to special education (also known as special needs education), which was critiqued for its reliance on the medical model and its failure to acknowledge the material origins of disability as outlined in the social model (Thomas & Loxley, 2007). The views of inclusive education advocates are located along a broad spectrum that goes from mere physical placement of student with disabilities within mainstream schools, to providing accommodating services to facilitate disabled students, to the reconstruction of educational environments (Artiles et al., 2006). My research looks at the relevant policies at the University of Lethbridge in order to examine where it stands on this spectrum, and which of these tenets of inclusion are addressed by policies and strategies.

While inclusive education has numerous proponents among scholars and practitioners, an interesting resistance toward inclusive practices, or at least the practices that are framed as inclusive, comes from D/deaf scholars who have major objections to arguments, methods, and practices related to inclusive education, and moreover to the mere idea of inclusion and the way it is articulated. For example, as indicated in one study in Scotland (Brennan, 2003), Sign Language and Deaf cultural identity are not acknowledged in inclusive practices; Brennan notes that a paradigm shift is needed in order to claim truly inclusive education. That paradigm shift would have to include Deaf identity and Sign Language into inclusive practices.

In order to provide an alternative to the pervasive view of inclusion as a gold standard of more just and equitable education, I centered my research on deafness. Considering inclusive education in regards to deafness has allowed me to present a multifaceted perspective on the inclusion of difference and accommodation, one that does not necessarily coincide with the most prevalent discourses on inclusion. I have chosen to look at deafness in order to examine the policies concerning disability; at the same time, deafness has helped me to challenge the ways in which disability is being conceptualized and discussed – as singular and comprehensive entity, or a real and enduring individual trait.

The central event informing approaches to deafness and education among D/deaf scholars and Deaf community is the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf; the first of these took place in 1878, followed by The International Convention in 1889 in Milan, which stands as an important event in the history of deafness and education (Moore, 2011). The convention in Milan is a notable event because it passed a resolution

that insisted on the use of oral methods as optimal goals of Deaf education, based on the belief that Sign Language is an inferior mode of communication that thus needs to be eliminated. This strategy was experienced by Deaf learners as extremely punitive, and has been characterized by critics as a form of assimilation reliant upon the erasure of Deaf culture (Moore, 2011). While oralism insisted on lip-reading and speech as the only acceptable forms of communication for D/deaf people, manualism advocated for the use of Sign Language, which is more fully aligned with an affirmative approach to Deaf culture (Branson & Miller, 2002). Much has changed since this event, however it serves as a historical milestone that any initiative for the education of the Deaf needs to be aware of in shaping its future goals and objectives, so that oralism would not reassert itself again. The 21st International Congress on the Education of the Deaf in Vancouver B.C. in July of 2010 offered its response to the Milan's congress, by rejecting all the resolutions that were passed in Milan. Furthermore, the congress in Vancouver issued the "Accord of the Future", which asserted commitment to respect of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as to Deaf identity, the use of Sign Languages, and Deaf culture (Moore, 2011). These seemingly clashing objectives that draw on understanding of deafness both as a disability and a cultural identity, are discussed further in my thesis through the dichotomy of deafness as disability, and deafness as cultural identity. While I aimed to offer analysis that goes beyond these binaries and challenges it, it is important to address the central role this dichotomy played and continues to play in the discussions regarding education.

Previous research on disability and deafness in higher education

There are several studies that address policies and practices regarding disability-related accommodation in Canadian post-secondary institutions (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006; Opini, 2008; Flaherty & Roussy, 2014), and my research has benefitted from the insights outlined in those studies. Hibbs and Pothier (2006) use a Foucauldian framework to critically examine accommodation processes at the University of Victoria by outlining ableist and exclusionary patterns in these practices. They draw a distinction between the proactive and reactive approaches to accommodation in a university setting which I heavily utilize in my discussion. Furthermore, Opini (2008) reviews the accessibility plan at the University of Toronto, and she discusses its strengths and weaknesses. Through discussion about the intersectionality of gender and disability, she questions the assumed homogeneity of the experiences of disabled students, which is a point that guides my discussion. Flaherty and Roussy (2014), in their study about accessibility in post-secondary education in Ontario, engage in a thorough discussion about both the obvious and less visible barriers students with disabilities face when accessing post-secondary education. These barriers include cumbersome and time-consuming accommodation processes, which I also discuss at length in the subsequent chapters.

The above-mentioned studies offer a review of accommodation practices and policies, while keeping the notion of disability central in their discussions. However, my study is designed differently from existent research in this area and, in fact, moves beyond this literature in two key ways. First, by focusing on deafness, this research looks at disability policies from a unique point of entry: one that problematizes the notion of disability. Second, my research uses a case study approach to examine the University of

Lethbridge, which is a small university in Alberta, a province wherein accommodation and inclusion practices have not been widely addressed by sociologists to date. This is especially important given the neoliberal framework, in place in Canada, in which accountability is being transferred to lower levels of government, thus producing discrepancies in quality and standards across different jurisdictions (Prince, 2009).

Among the studies that focus on D/deaf students' experiences, researchers have addressed different aspects regarding the inclusion of D/deaf students in post-secondary institutions. These include their experiences with student availability of services (Powell, Hyde, & Punch, 2014) and the role of Sign Language interpreting in the students' learning (Marschark, 2005). By focusing on these different aspects, the researchers discuss the students' experience in order to outline current inclusive practices (or lack thereof), offer suggestions for improvement of already existing services and policies, and point out the examples of good practice.

Among the literature on deafness and education, a considerable body of research addresses the question of the financial outcomes for D/deaf students in post-secondary institutions (Punch, 2005; Schley et al., 2011), reinforcing the idea that the economic success of these students and their personal financial benefits were an ultimate goal of the education they pursued (Komesaroff, 2005; Nunan et al., 2000). The emphasis on examples of successful students and their achievements as instances of an effectual, inclusive process corresponds to a liberal understanding of inclusiveness, as described by Nunan et al. (2005), where "the effect of interventions based on this position has been to maintain the status quo of power and privilege with exceptions providing the rule" (p. 65). However, the university space is more than a tool for obtaining financial stability; as Schick (2002)

argues it is the space that privileges some, and excludes others - it is the site where certain kinds of knowledge are preferred, and finally, it is the place that grants legitimacy, as well as respectability for those who occupy it. While I understand the importance of research on individual students' experiences and students' success, in my study I aim to address the question of accommodation of D/deafness as one that exceeds the notions of individual success, or individual students' experiences. Building on Schick's remark, rather than being interested in how students experience or make sense of those exclusions, I am interested in how they come into place. I aim to interrogate the assumptions about disability and inclusion that shape the practices and regulations regarding accommodation, while acknowledging that the framing of accommodation and inclusion has implications for the whole institution and for those who may not be explicitly targeted through those policies. Thus, my work has implications for more than just the (imagined) individuals who are constructed as those who benefit from the University of Lethbridge's policy, as it examines core principles that guide the work of an institution.

Although the questions I am asking draw on scholarly discussions regarding D/deaf students in the higher educational context and are largely concerned with D/deaf students' access to higher education and the quality of services offered to them by a university (Marschark, 2005; Powell, Hyde, & Punch, 2014), I argue against the idea that access to education is solely a personal concern of those who identify as D/deaf. On that matter, I am drawing on the work of scholars who engage in the critical examination of inclusion models and practices, especially in regards to deafness (Komesaroff, 2005; Nunan, George, & McCausland, 2000). For instance, in Komesaroff's research about how D/deaf students' identities are being constructed in a university setting, we are reminded that the way our

institutions are designed assumes certain modes of communication, and that “powerful institutions such as schools and universities are conducted as if ‘hearing’ interests are the only ones that exist” (Komesaroff, 2005, p. 401, original emphasis). Bearing that in mind, I discuss the concepts and practices of inclusion and accommodation that are supposed to ensure access to education, while exploring which aspects of institutional design demonstrate that the institutions privilege certain modes of communication, and thus certain ways of being in the world. By doing that I provide an example and concrete evidence for the claim that policies and institutions are not necessarily designed as neutral and equitable; rather, how institutions are organized and the principles that govern them are founded on problematic assumptions. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, to a large extent, organizational principles of the university are based on an assumption that disability is a problem, an issue, a limitation (Titchkosky, 2006).

Moving away from the binaries

As indicated previously, the literature regarding deafness contains at least two dichotomies that offer some conceptual tools for addressing the issue of inclusion in postsecondary education. Those binaries include the following: disability as a medical problem *vs.* the social model of disability (Shakespeare, 2010; Silvers, 2010); and, deafness as a disability *vs.* deafness as a linguistic minority (Hole, 2007; Hollins, 2010; Lane, 2010; Leach Scully, 2012a), each of which I discuss in the following sections. In each of these pairs of concepts, the latter is introduced as a social justice response to social inequality, promising to offer a world that is more fair, equitable, and righteous. However, rather than framing my own research by those binaries, I demonstrate that they are inadequate for addressing this complex issue, despite remaining useful for illuminating some aspects of

the problem. I argue that these binaries are of some use as tools that can assist in recognizing different perspectives in place, but can be perilous if one tends to embrace them as valid views that offer comprehensive insights regarding deafness and disability more broadly.

Disability as a medical model vs. the social model of disability

The social model of disability arose as a response to the medical model of disability, which for much of modernity has defined disability as a personal, embodied, and individualized characteristic. The medical model focused on disability as a deficit, a condition or illness that is seen as a personal trait, that thus needs to be fixed, modified, or changed (Shakespeare, 2010). To counteract such views, scholars within Disability Studies introduced a distinction between *impairment* and *disability*, to point out the difference between the physical or mental attributes of a person, and social circumstances that are crucial for defining disability (Oliver, 1990). Contrary to the medical model, the social model offered a conceptualization of disability that stresses the importance of environment, and relocates the source of the disabling factors from an individual to a society, whether it is about maladjusted working space, or about the mechanisms of discrimination which a person encounters (Shakespeare, 2010). In that regard, the social model is founded in materialist explanations for disability, as the authors who formulated it argued that disability originates in capitalist modes of production (Oliver, 2009; C. Thomas, 2002).

Expanding on the dichotomy between medical and social models of disability, Silvers (2010) urges scholars to consider two explanatory roles that these models of disability may have: one regards classification (the answer concerning who is disabled is different depending on these two models); and the other regards the cause of disability.

Namely, following the medical model, a person is seen as the naturalized source of her subordinated position, while within the social model the cause is seen as one of social exclusion and stigmatization. Consequently, these two models imply different courses of action: one addresses individualized attempts to change or improve the person, and the other one aims at pervasive social change to accommodate differences.

Considering these two models was also useful for my research. For example, in terms of accommodating students in a post-secondary context, an important question was to examine how the policies address the source of need for such accommodation – how are the policies and practices conceptualized and do they construct the perceived need for accommodation as coming from a student (or even her body), or do they acknowledge that the existing institutions are designed and organized to produce disabling circumstances for a student? Asking similar questions, Hibbs and Pothier (2006) critically examined the process of academic accommodations at the University of Victoria, in British Columbia. They indicate that the University of Victoria was a reactive, rather than a proactive institution regarding accommodation, meaning that instead of initiating the policy changes, the institution acted upon the request of the students who required accommodation (p. 197). This kind of reactive and individualized accommodation thus places an additional burden on the individual who must work for and prove their deservingness of their own accommodation. Furthermore, the University offers accommodation to an individual, rather than shaping the general standards in ways that would accommodate a broad range of differences (p. 199). Hibbs and Pothier indicate that this particular University utilized the medical, individualized model of disability, which requires a student to self-identify as disabled, and further to provide evidence for her need for accommodation. This model

operates from a position of deterrence wherein accommodation is only made available upon request or demand, and stands in opposition to an inclusive model, which would be one that provides a range of services and supports for potential students in a proactive manner.

In this thesis I inquire as to where policies at the University of Lethbridge stand on this spectrum between the social and medical models; to what extent the policies acknowledge that barriers to participation reside and originate in the student body as opposed to institutional practice; on whom the responsibility rests to identify appropriate supports; and finally, how disability is produced and reinforced through their operations. Furthermore, I am also interested in how the policy addresses deafness as compared to other disabilities, and how this relationship is expressed in the policy. This last concern has been crucial, in that it has enabled me to engage in a discussion concerning the hierarchy of disabilities (Prowse, 2009). This is one of the pertinent questions within Disability Studies, which asks how different categories of disability relate to each other. The hierarchy of disabilities – the notion that different disabilities have a different status and position on an imagined spectrum based on how includable or manageable they are in the classroom - has allowed me to compare and contrast this University's accommodations relating to disability and deafness, as indicated in the fifth chapter.

Since the introduction of the social model in the 1970's, it has served as a powerful tool in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, which has led to the recognition of societies' parts in creating adverse circumstances for persons with disabilities (Oliver, 2009; Shakespeare, 2010). However, the social model has faced considerable criticism, some of it coming from its former advocates. Shakespeare (2010) states that the social

model denies the premises of the medical model so aggressively that it disregards impairment as an important aspect of life and, as such, an important aspect of personal experience. Even earlier, drawing on a feminist stance that values personal experience, Wendell (1996) demonstrated that the social model is not able to address all conditions and experiences, chronic pain being one of them. While the notions of impairment and disability may be of some use in addressing the question of accommodation, it is crucial not to reinforce these binaries, given that as much as the social model was framed with the intention to open the opportunity for inclusion and social change, it may inadvertently create the illusion of fixed categories, stable binaries, and simplified solutions. Nevertheless, with all its limitations, the social model has helped the move from the medical model, and has provided tools for an alternative understanding of disability.

In my research the social model is used in its strongest form, as a conceptual and practical tool for questioning the normative notion that disability originates in one's body. However, it is important to bear in mind the limitations of the social model, especially in regards to deafness. The proponents of the social model often include deafness as one of the disabilities, by claiming that the negative experience of deafness is produced by lack of adequate accommodation and services offered to D/deaf people, so that exclusion is what produces D/deafness. However, Deaf scholars offer an alternative framing of deafness that differs from the one that has been imposed on the Deaf community. Lane (1999) outlines an important objection to the social model: while Deaf people are oppressed and face social exclusion, Disability Studies Scholars are missing an important aspect of the Deaf experience - that people who identify as Deaf are proud of their communities and that the experience and life that they share is of great value to them. This objection is important

for understanding the position of the scholars who contribute to Deaf studies. In order to elucidate this further, in the following section I outlined the major academic discussions concerning Deaf culture and Deaf identity.

Deafness as disability vs. deafness as linguistic minority

Similar to the binary developed within Disability Studies between impairment and disability, deafness has been discussed in terms of its construction within two dominant frameworks: one that defines deafness as a cultural and linguistic minority; and the other that is prone to define deafness as a disability, and posits that D/deaf people are disabled (Lane, 2010; Leach Scully, 2012a). As Lane notes, this dichotomy (sometimes referred as *deafness as affliction vs. deafness as difference* [Hole, 2007]) is constructed with the help of professionals, including both medical professionals and advocates of Deaf culture. The view of deafness as cultural and linguistic minority sees Deaf people as a distinct group whose members share traditions, customs, and organizations, rather than as a group of people who have a medical condition in common. As Hollins (2010) writes, “the cultural-linguistic model recognizes the Deaf world in its own right, with its own language, sense of identity and way of life” (p. 184).

The distinction between deafness as disability and deafness as culture to a certain extent corresponds to a distinction that is made within the social model of disability, where impairment as a private embodied medical aspect is contrasted to disability, which is being defined as “structural and public” (Shakespeare, 2010, p. 198). These two views of deafness play an important role in constructing Deaf identity; however, it is critical to point out the limitations of these views. By claiming a Deaf cultural and linguistic identity, advocates and theorists helped to create yet another seemingly firm and fixed binary that

excludes a range of different lived experiences, preferences of communication, and social positions. These views often essentialize the D/deaf experience, and while they are adequate for explaining the lives of some D/deaf people, they fail to address the broad spectrum of experiences. The question concerning boundaries and the varieties of experiences within Deaf culture is an important one, as the issue of Deaf identity is based on a strict dichotomy of hearing and deafness (Davis, 1995).

These notions of Deaf culture and Deaf identity have been widely critiqued. Scholars working within different paradigms have exposed the limitations of the concept (and practices) of Deaf culture, arguing for more open-ended understanding of identities, which do not rely on someone's physical characteristics or on their upbringing. Through a qualitative study Bat-Chava (2000) described the case of a man who, being born deaf and raised within hearing culture, defines himself as a hearing deaf man, arguing that "being deaf does not hold me back from being part of the hearing world" (p. 425). Similarly, Hole (2007) relies on post-structural theories to analyze different identities being navigated in the lives of three Deaf women, showing that different discourses about deafness and identity shape their personal narratives. On a more theoretical level, Davis (1995) suggests that Deaf politics, while advocating for greater recognition and respect of Deaf culture, do not provide a framework for understanding modes of communications other than those that are preferred within Deaf community, which leaves the experiences that do not comply with Deaf identities outside of the norm. This complicating of D/deaf identity and D/deaf experience is important for my research, as it questions the utility of policies in education that impose certain identities and require strong self-identification.

Despite the limitations regarding Deaf identity outlined above, the concepts of Deaf culture and Deaf identity have undoubtedly been useful for my research, as they helped me analyze how educational institutions were designed to assume certain modes of being in the world (Komesaroff, 2005). Given the prevalence of these ‘hearing’ interests in the very design of institutions, in my study I aimed to interrogate the tacit assumptions regarding students’ characteristics, preferences of communications, and the criteria of success (Nunan, George, & McCausland, 2000) that may be deeply embedded in policy and practice addressing the question of inclusion in post-secondary institutions. As I conducted my research at the University of Lethbridge, the site most readily available to me, I explored how deafness is understood within that institution’s disability-related policies, and how it is represented in the documents that address disability. The implications of my research may be broader than just for this university, as they illuminate how our institutions are not neutral spaces and sites of practice, but instead they are spaces that include some and exclude others through the ways they are designed and organized, thus enacting and constructing disability as a problem (Schick, 2002; Titchkosky, 2008). I am interested in looking at institutions and how they follow certain assumptions when encountering difference. My aim in this research has been to address how disability is constructed by looking at one particular site and the regulations and practices that constitute it.

Primarily, I examined the accommodation of deafness at the University of Lethbridge through a Disability Studies lens, however, discussions about D/deafness and the rich scholarship that addresses deafness as a linguistic and cultural identity allowed me to read the text as a productive one (Lane, 2010; Leach Scully, 2012b). By looking at deafness, I considered one specific way of being in the world that is often discussed in

terms of resisting the categorization that is being imposed on it (one of disability) (Brennan, 2003), and that specific liminal space where deafness is situated allowed me to read the document as a productive one, as a document that is producing something, while it could have produced something else – namely, it is producing deafness as disability, while it could have framed it as matter of culture. Following the scholars who work within Deaf Studies, I have been committed to examining the processes that contribute to the position of D/deaf people, particularly in higher education.

Deaf scholars share the view that the practice of audism is what disables Deaf people, rather than their medical diagnosis. Eckert and Rowley (2013), who introduce the theory and practice of audism in sociological terms, define audism as “a schema of audio centric assumptions and attitudes that are used to rationalize differential stratification, supremacy, and hegemonic privilege.” In my research, I have looked for the occurrences of practices that are based on this assumption that “one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears” (p. 105).

Identity, self-identification and citizenship

As noted previously, an analysis of accommodation at the University of Victoria offered by Hibbs and Pothier (2006) suggests that the University of Victoria in its policies and practices utilizes the medical, individualized model of disability, which requires a student to self-identify as disabled, and to provide evidence for her need for accommodation. My research indicates that, at the University of Lethbridge, self-identification is also an important part of the process of accessing and utilizing accommodation services. This can be used as an appropriate example of how power relations do not only repress, regulate or instruct behavior, but how they are engaged in the

production of certain kinds of subjects. The student who is asked to self-identify and to provide the (medical) evidence of her disability does not only behave in a certain way, but she also becomes a certain kind of subject, one who is required to take up a medically-imposed definition of herself as a disabled person. In the case of deafness, a D/deaf student in need of Sign Language interpretation would be required to identify as a student with a disability, even though she might be more prone to see her deafness solely as a part of her linguistic/cultural identity. This individualized approach not only positions accommodation as something that is the matter of an individual, but also as a certain kind of compromise, possibly even presented as a favour that is being put into effect for the particular student. In order to address the issues concerning identity, I am drawing on scholarship that addresses the boundaries and varieties of experience within Deaf culture. I argue that deafness provides a unique case that can help in examining the implications of the requirement to self-identify as a student with disability, especially given the complexities associated with D/deaf identity that are outlined in this chapter.

Issues of disability and access are closely related to the questions of citizenship: who counts as a deserving citizen, who can participate, who has right to full membership? As Rioux outlines, the notion of citizenship is closely related to the question of how the state relates to an individual, and can be understood through three aspects: access, rights and responsibilities, and belonging (Rioux, 2002, p. 216). If we were to use the case of education to explore this issue, it is reasonable to argue that when institutions of higher education fail to accommodate and support students with disabilities, those who are being excluded are not understood as full citizens. As Prince (2009) argues in his study on disability and public policy in Canada, due to the disadvantages they are facing, persons

with disabilities in Canada are “absent citizens.” Thus, I am committed to exploring whether and how policies and practices concerning disability in higher education shape and construct students with disabilities and how notions of citizenship can contribute to our understanding of the broader implications of these policies. In addition to being understood as absent citizens, people with disabilities also encounter the “achievement syndrome”- the notion that a disabled individual is successful despite her disability. This narrative, described in the literature as the “supercrip narrative” depicts disabled people as “super” in contexts where an able-bodied individual would be just an ordinary person” (Silva & Howe, 2012, p. 175). These two clashing narratives are powerful and they situate people with disabilities as either absent, not deserving citizens, or as motivated and accomplished outliers who managed to rise above their disabilities.

Besides looking for discursive formations that construct disabled students, I am also interested in exploring how normalcy is constructed (Davis, 1995). The ideal, “normal,” student is also produced through language, and it is created as a contrast to a disabled student – the former is created as self-sufficient, enlightened, rational, and deserving, whilst latter is marked as dependent and needful. Although I will use the notion of normal to demonstrate how disability is produced, I do not refer to actual students or groups of students who fall under what is constructed as normal. It would be wrong to assume that this notion of normal refers to a homogenous group of subjects. Rather, it is an abstract construction of a normal subject, and disabled students are often being compared to this imagined ideal (Nunan et al., 2000; Komesaroff, 2005; Hibbs & Pothier, 2006).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed debates regarding inclusion, disability, and deafness, and outlined how this study is situated within them. The discussions regarding deafness and disability outlined in this chapter frame my data analysis. In the following chapter, I introduce the methodological and theoretical framework that guides this research. I have also included reflexive sections on my positionality which provide insights into my motivation for undertaking this research. Finally, I include a section on the emancipatory potential of this research and a brief discussion on ethical considerations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Besides outlining the theoretical framework and methodology that I employ in this study, in this chapter I also address how I dealt with questions of sampling, as well as certain ethical considerations that are relevant to the work. For my theoretical framework, I am using Foucauldian discourse theory, which has been applied in the research of disability and inclusion by numerous scholars (Allan, 1996; Hibbs and Pothier, 2006; McWhorter, 2005).

Use of Foucauldian framework in disability research

As outlined in the previous section, discussions and debates centered on the medical and social models of disability have played an important role in shaping political outcomes for people with disabilities, but I take it that the theoretical scope of these two conceptual models is limited. While these two models claim to offer universal explanations, they fail to capture diverse and complex experiences of people with disabilities, and as Corker and Shakespeare suggested, they “end up creating totalizing, meta-historical narratives that exclude important dimensions of disabled people’s lives and of their knowledge” (2002, p. 202). Hughes (2005) notes that the limitations of the social model have prompted scholars to reach for an alternative framework, and some scholars have utilized postmodern and post-structural theories in analyzing questions of disability and inclusion, making Foucault’s framework more central to the analysis of disability. Foucault’s theoretical framework has been utilized in discussions on disability in general, and more specifically, on special needs education (Allen, 1996) and university accommodation services (Hibbs and Pothier, 2006). Allen (1996) argues that Foucault’s framework is worthwhile in approaching issues of special education for at least two reasons, the first being his historical

accounts on medicine and madness. As Hughes writes, Foucault's historical work demonstrates contingent practices concerning disability since the late 18th century (Hughes, 2005). Secondly, Allen argues, Foucault offers a potent methodological framework for analyzing official discourses as well as practices (Allen, 1996), as Foucault's discussions on power and the production of individuals that are "constructed as social subjects, knowable through discipline and discourses" (Allen, 1996, p. 220) can be beneficial to the study of inclusion. This aspect of Foucault's theory has been particularly useful for my research project. Through the process of accommodation, D/deaf students and students with disabilities in general are often asked to self-identify and position themselves in relation to disability, and these procedures can be understood in terms of producing disabled subjects (Titchkosky, 2006). In the following section, I summarized which particular facets of Foucault's theory I utilized in my analysis.

Theory and methodology

I am introducing both the theory and methodology offered by Foucault in one section, as I believe, particularly in the case of Foucault but also more generally, that methodology and theory are closely connected. The status of truth and the understanding of knowledge shape the strategies and tools Foucauldians employ in their analysis. Further, when we refer to Foucault's discourse theory, it is not one coherent set of postulates that can be accepted and utilized as a whole. Mills (2004) depicts his theory as a more flexible framework that offers a variety of intellectual tools and strategies, which I discuss more fully below. Having that in mind, in this thesis I adopted some of the tools and postulates of his theory, but I also drew on different scholars who have used his work and demonstrated its successful application to many aspects of the social world. For example,

in their study about welfare, Fraser and Gordon (1994) engage in the interrogation of underlying presuppositions concerning dependency. In a similar manner, I addressed underlying assumptions about disability, inclusion, and citizenship that were overtly and covertly embedded in the texts I analyzed. Following Fraser and Gordon (1994), I was not interested in providing causal linkages between the policy texts and the material world. Rather, I questioned our commonsensical assumptions and beliefs that sometimes were conveyed as universal and inevitable, and the expression of normative beliefs and assumptions embedded in formal documents, policies, and institutional practices.

Mills (2004) outlines three definitions of discourse offered by Foucault, and in my work I take them into account when referring to discourse. The first, a very broad one, refers to "all utterances or texts which have meaning and which have some effect in the real world" (p. 6). This framing of discourse is particularly important for my research, as I am interested in what effects statements about disability might have on the lives of students with disabilities. The second definition posits discourse as "an individualizable group of statements" (p. 6), which refers to the group of claims that are regulated and which, as Mills states, share force and coherence. The statements in the documents I am analyzing are relying on discourses that share normative force and coherence, biomedical discourse and seemingly real categories of normal/not-normal among them. The third definition Mills discusses refers to discourse as a "regulated practice which accounts for a number of statements" (p. 6). She notes the importance of the rule-governed nature of discourse, namely, "the rules and structures which produce particular utterances and texts" (p.6), rather than the claims themselves. In the analysis of policy outlined in this thesis, it is important to take into account this definition of discourse, as policies such as those

regarding students with disabilities shape practices, and both reflect and produce discourses about disability.

For my analysis it is crucial to bear in mind that a Foucauldian notion of discourse does not refer to text or signs only. Rather, as can be seen in the second definition outlined above, Foucault is interested in how discourses produce the objects they address (Mills, 2004). This is a particularly important aspect of his theory that I have considered in this thesis, as the discourse on disability does not refer to some objective, existing reality; rather, utterances and claims produce disability, and more specifically for the purposes of this thesis, a student with disabilities who normatively encompasses certain obligations, expectations and limitations. This productive power of discourse allows me to talk about disability as a product of discursive practices, some of them embedded in the policy I am analyzing, but also in other documents and practices that derive from this text and that sit outside of this text, and certainly outside of this particular university. Thus, although I have analyzed documents that are local inasmuch as they regulate the practices at one university, the implications of those documents, and their connections to broader normative discourses are a part of my analytic framing.

As Mills (2004) explains, not only ways of being, ideas, and concepts are being produced, but so is the truth, as outlined by Foucault. Foucault is not interested in truth in a way that corresponds to reality, or how it might be related to some set of statements. Rather, he is interested in how the truth relates to power, and how is it being produced and deployed (Foucault, 1984). Foucault introduces the concept of regimes of truth that reflect the types of discourse that are held at the certain time. The biomedical explanation of disability is one that can be used as an example of a regime of truth – the explanation of

disability as something that originates and is fixed in the body, and an understanding of social phenomena relating to disabled subjects is presented in this discourse as doubtless. However, this does not mean that other frameworks for defining disability (or deafness) are not offered; knowledge about disability is, in Foucault's scheme of things, as suggested by Mills, a result of "power struggles" (p. 19). Having that in mind, I have decided to use deafness as a point of entry for analyzing the policies regarding disabilities, as I believe that the contesting views regarding deafness help us identify these power struggles that are central to Foucault's thought and those who build on his framework.

Unlike some theorists, Foucault does not offer a set of instructions to follow in order to approach discourse. While this allows for an open-ended application of the concepts and methods he introduced, I find that it can also leaveroom for arbitrary and unfounded applications of his analytical tools. However, he does offer a set of instruments we might apply in order to see how the knowledge is being created, and how institutions produce certain kinds of subjects, although there is certainly no instruction manual (Allen, 1996). One of the strengths of Foucault's theory and the tools for analysis he offers is the possibility to analyze what is not being explicitly said in the text. One may argue that the policy analysts also address what is lacking or the omissions in the policy document; however, they do that in the form of recommendations or suggestions for improvement of the policy. On the contrary, Foucault addresses silences and absences in the text on a more theoretically interesting level: he is interested in exclusions within discourse that say something about the discourse itself, and that are not just omissions; rather, they are crucial for understanding discourse in terms of what can and cannot be said, who can and cannot

speak, and what will and will not be deployed as truth within a given discursive formation such as disability and inclusion (Mills, 2004b; Laurendeau & Adams, 2010)

Another point that Foucault makes that is important for my analysis is that discourse is limited by certain rituals that set the rules about how discourse is produced (Mills, 2004b). In the case of the sources I have analyzed, it is important to note that the ritual that produces policy includes assumptions about who is able to speak, where they are able to access speech, and how they may speak in terms of the development of policy. The way this ritual is situated includes some and excludes others, and certainly guarantees that it will be shaped by people who hold institutional power, while being negotiated and challenged by different parties.

Method and Sampling

I analyze four text-based sets of sources, chosen for their direct relevance to the University of Lethbridge, and also for their governing principles in the context of post-secondary accommodation in the province of Alberta. Each of these sources is introduced with more details in the following two chapters. The sources I based my analysis on are the following:

1. “Students with Disability Policies” (University of Lethbridge, 2006), which is a document that came into effect as of October 18, 2006, issued by the Board of Governors. This document addresses the responsibilities and duties of students, as well as the University’s employees in accessing and providing accommodations.

2. I also examine the content of the web page of the Accommodated Learning Centre (“Accommodated Learning Centre,” 2015), which is a department in charge of

providing students with ‘specialized support’. This webpage is the first source of information available to the (potential) students, and is thus an important site where the policies are communicated, and practices are explained in detail.

3. I have examined the University’s archival material that includes meeting minutes, magazines, meeting briefs, and other documents used for internal communication relating to disability and accommodation. These document allow me to discuss history of development and implementation of accommodation policies, and moreover, the changes in discourse over time.

4. Finally, I include some of the documents used in the day-to-day operating of the Accommodated Learning Centre (a listing of all documents analyzed is attached in Appendix A) that serve as more recent and more immediate evidence of the ways in which disability and accommodation are being discussed.

I did not analyze these texts as if they are self-reliant, rather, I looked at how they relate to each other, as well as how they relate to the other documents that are relevant to the issues of education and accommodation in the province, and how they relate to broader discourses on disability. By including these assorted set of documents, I incorporated sources that are diverse in terms of intended audience and of their purposes. Since the policy itself dates nine years back, I have also included the content of the webpage of the *Accommodated Learning Centre* (2015), which offers a more recent interpretation of policy and practice at the University. While the official documents can tell us how the idea and practice of accommodation is conceived and conceptualized, the content from the website can testify about how the accommodation is presented and operationalized on an everyday basis. I did not assume that the actual services outlined on the website perfectly correlate

to existing practices. However, I argued that it is reasonable to assume that the information provided on the website, to some extent, outlines the available services and/or the practical institutional approach to disability and deafness.

Because of possible changes to the content of the website, I downloaded all the available data on the Accommodated Learning Centre's website on the date of my proposal defence, which I used as a preliminary 'data set'. In order to ensure consistency, in the final stage of my research, I have downloaded all the documents again on October 1, 2015.

It is crucial to note that although I am interested in policies, I did not approach these documents as someone who might be interested in policy analysis. To be exact, a policy analyst might be interested in looking at whether or not this particular policy has the potential to address its goals, or to what extent an institution has the capability to successfully implement that policy. Instead, I am interested in examining these particular documents as a discourse. I explored how these documents create and construct disability (and deafness), how they convey inclusions and exclusions in its language, how they locate and name disabled or accommodate-able subjects. Rather than looking for an overarching strategy or direction that the university is undertaking in relation to accommodation practices, I located different discourses that could be recognized in the documents that are held to be true.

One of the main questions in my work has been the relationship between discourse and practice. I attempted to answer this question throughout this thesis; however, it is worth noting that my general stand is that what matters is what the possible consequences of discourse are on producing disability in this particular university setting. Although I do not attempt to discuss actual practices in terms of implementation of policies, I am interested

in how discourses may affect lives and how they leave real marks in the world (Titchkosky, 2006).

Coding

When I approached the coding of the texts for my analysis, in order to outline the recurring themes, my analysis was shaped both by the text itself and by the literature that addresses notions of disability and deafness. Through the analysis of the listed documents, I came across notions, understandings and discussions of disability and inclusion that may seem contradictory or logically inconsistent, and that draw on different conceptual framings. This sort of clashing of discourses is not unusual, as discourses do not exist in a vacuum; they are in constant struggle with other discourses “and other social practices which inform them over questions of truth and authority” (Mills, p. 17). Furthermore, Mills states that Foucault understands the discourse as “something that produces something else (an utterance, a concept, an effect), rather than something which exists in and of itself and which can be analyzed in isolation” (p. 15). When it comes to contesting views, we can recognize that there are different ways of defining, understanding, and making sense of disability, such as the medical, social, human rights, and charity models, and these are reflected and expressed in the documents I analyzed. That said, what Foucault would be interested in is how one discourse becomes pervasive, while others are silenced; thus, he would be interested in interrogating the claims to truth that produce some discourses as more valid than others. For example, my data indicates that the medical model is situated as the central framework, given that it is used to define disability in the Students with Disabilities Policy (University of Lethbridge, 2006), but the medical framework is certainly

not the only model that is drawn upon, as some other discourses found their place in these texts.

Based on my research questions and the literature review, and on the concepts raised in the texts themselves, I formulated the following five broad themes that I used in my coding:

- *Models/understanding of disability*: occurrences (explicit or implied) of different conceptualizations of disability/deafness (e.g. social, medical model, deafness as an identity)
- *Proper citizen*: Who is deserving of accommodation? Students portrayed as responsible? How is neoliberalism contributing or fostering (enabling) this image of an active and mature student?
- *Hierarchies of disabilities*: How do different disabilities relate to each other in the sources? Is there an imagined or established order of disabilities? Are some disabilities presented as better or more deserving than others?
- *Identity*: self-identification; what kind of subject is assumed throughout the policy?
- *Ableism, audism* – the occurrences of statements or concepts that could be understood as examples of audism or ableism (a set of beliefs and attitudes according to which D/deaf and disabled people, respectively, are seen as inferior and less worthy than hearing and able-bodied people).

The themes that became apparent in my reading of these texts may not be located by someone else's reading. Unlike critical analysts that work within a linguistic framework, or critical discourse analysis, I do not argue that the text has one meaning that can be pinned

down (Mills, 2004b). I do not expect complete intersubjective agreement when it comes to the interpretation of this piece of discourse, but this does not mean that my analysis is arbitrary or unfounded, as I attempted to provide arguments for my interpretation, and offer possible different readings of these texts. That being said, I am not situating myself as a naïve or objective reader – I am drawing on the body of literature that addresses disability in particular ways, and my aim is not to offer an analysis that is free of invested interest. My interpretation is also to a large extent shaped by my deep commitment to disability rights and social justice, and in that sense I recognize that I am both a researcher and an activist (Grue, 2015). That dual position certainly has important implications for my research project, and I believe that it created tension in every aspect of this research. I discuss this in the following section on positionality, and I further elaborate on this twofold role in the concluding chapter.

Positionality

I share the view that “knowledge is valid when it includes an acknowledgment of the knower’s specific position in any context, because changing contextual and relational factors are crucial for defining identities and our knowledge in any given situation” (Maher & Tetreault, 1993, p. 118). Keeping that in mind, I reflect on my experiences in regards to my research topic, hoping to outline where my interest for this topic comes from and how my previous experiences shape and influence my thinking about it. Furthermore, I describe what makes my position unique, and what interests I have that might not necessarily be shared by others.

Before coming to Canada, I was studying in Serbia, where I was active in the non-governmental organization, the *Association of Students with Disabilities (ASD)* located in

Belgrade, whose platform is largely informed by the social model of disability. People involved in the ASD advocate for students with disabilities in Serbia, and passionately work towards creating more inclusive policies and services at the University of Belgrade, as well as other universities in Serbia. Through my engagement in the work of the ASD's board meetings, workshops, seminars and outreach activities, I have often encountered the idea that inclusive education is something that Serbia (and other neighboring countries) as a developing country should strive for, while it is already accomplished in Western, more developed countries. This is one of the reasons why my look into policies and practices in Canada is quite unique, as I am constantly coming across contradictions between my preconceived notions of Canada as one of the pioneers of inclusive education, and the actual practices that I am encountering at the University of Lethbridge. This is not to say that Canada or Canadian universities are not inclusive or adhering to social justice principles, but rather to point out that there are complex and nuanced ways in which one can talk about inclusion and an analysis on the ground has moved me beyond my former, naïve labeling of a country as inclusive.

My interest in examining the issue of inclusive education through accommodation of deafness is also not accidental. While being involved in the work of the ASD, I was also active in the local Deaf community, through participation in (Serbian) Sign Language courses, work on a theater play in Sign Language, as well as through more informal encounters with members of the Deaf community and sign language interpreters. Through these experiences, I was able to see the tension that arises between disability activists and Deaf culture groups regarding the status of deafness, and broader questions about inclusive education and accommodation. At the time, I was surrounded by friends and acquaintances

who belonged to the Deaf community, and preferred to identify as Deaf rather than as persons with disabilities. On the other hand, through my activist work with the Association of Students with Disabilities, I participated in programs that promote disability rights and include deafness in their programs; thus, inadvertently claiming that deafness is indeed a disability. These tensions mirrored the debates that are represented in the literature regarding disability and deafness, while intersecting with the discourses of human rights, citizenship, and identity. Both my experiences regarding inclusive education and my involvement with the group of students with disabilities, as well as with local Deaf communities, situate me as a unique knower and shape my understanding of disability and inclusion.

Furthermore, my view on disability, as well as my epistemological stance, plays an important role in the design of this research project. My aim was to address how disability is constructed by looking at one particular site (the University of Lethbridge) and the regulations and practices that constitute it. I employ a methodology examining the lines of “social infrastructures of oppression, injustice, and marginalization” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 119), and I tend to see the problem I am addressing, the absence of deafness in the university context, as historical, rather than newly occurred; organic, rather than accidental.

Research concerning disability is often formulated and presented as emancipatory, or at least, researchers present their motivation and intention in relation to the emancipation of persons with disabilities (Mercer, 2002). I can not argue that the outcome of my research would lead to the empowerment of persons with disabilities, which is an objective that is often set as central to disability research (Mercer, 2002). However, the emancipatory potential of my research is situated in my attempt to challenge the models of inclusion

offered in the policies I analyzed and to outline the hidden exclusions embedded in the notions of disability and accommodation that they convey. It was my hope that in the process of researching, presenting, and writing about this research I could foster critical conversations about inclusion and accommodation practices in post-secondary settings including the University of Lethbridge.

The research design of this study, the questions I am interested in, as well as my choice of methodological framework are greatly influenced by Scott (1991), who urges us to look beyond the actual experience, and to focus on how the experience and subjects are being produced, rather than taking the presented categories in discourse for granted. Thus, I explore how existing policies and procedures construct notions about persons with disabilities, and more specifically D/deaf individuals.

Ethical considerations

Although institutional bodies that regulate ethical approvals within academic institutions focus mainly on research that includes human subjects, there are certainly ethical issues to be considered in this research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Firstly, I believe that my position as a researcher does have ethical implications, as I tend to see that epistemological positions and ethical concerns are intertwined. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest, “[t]he way in which we know is most assuredly tied up with both what we know and our relationships with our research participants” (p. 123). Even though my research does not include research participants in the strict sense, it does address imagined (rather fluid and unstable) groups of people who identify as D/deaf and/or disabled, or those who are in any way excluded (or simply not considered) within the current policies and practices in post-secondary education. I would like to put forward the argument that

even though my research explicitly addresses deafness, it is not exclusively about one group of people or about solely one potential group of students. Rather, I argue that policies and practices that shape and construct disability and deafness are acts that contribute to the production of all subjects, in this case, to the production of all actors in higher education. Namely, as McWhorter (2005) writes in the foreword of the book *Foucault and Government of Disability*,

the power-knowledge networks that produce and regulate disability also produce and regulate ability, ableness, and normality. The practices and institutions that divide, for example, the “able-bodied,” “sane,” and “whole” from the “impaired,” “mentally ill,” and “deficient” create the conditions under which all of us live; they structure the situation within which each one of us comes to terms with ourselves and creates a way of life. (p. xv)

Concluding remarks

In the last two chapters I provided an overview of scholarship on the main concepts I am interested in this study, and I have introduced the theoretical and methodological framework for my research. In the following two chapters I present the findings while engaging simultaneously in a discussion about theoretical and methodological aspects of my work. In Chapter Four I introduce the historical context of disability services at the University of Lethbridge, as well as the procedures and events that led to forming the Accommodated Learning Centre, whose work is central to providing services to students with disabilities. I attempt to describe the discursive analysis of the positivity of a discourse by mapping a unity that goes beyond individual texts, and also to outline the enunciative field, that is the network of all statements (explicit and unspoken) that make particular

utterances possible (Foucault & Smith, 1995). However, my primary goal in the Chapter Four is to provide a historical context for understanding the current accommodation policy, and I engage in a more fine-grained discourse analysis in the Chapter Five. At times, the narrative that I am offering here can appear as though it is being told from the position of a truth-teller, where truth is attainable and universal history is possible. However, following Foucault, I am interested in what kinds of statements are possible and permissible, what can be claimed to be true or false, and what conditions have to be satisfied to make certain utterances intelligible. Foucault defines *episteme* as a system of knowledge and thought in a certain period of time. In that sense, I am trying to depict an *episteme* of the period rather than to describe a real set of events of truths (Burchell & Foucault, 1991).

Chapter Four: History of accommodation services at the University of Lethbridge (from 1963 to 2014)

As outlined earlier, the focus of this research project is on current policies of accommodation and disability at the University of Lethbridge, as well as on the assumptions and beliefs about inclusion and disability that are embedded in these policies. However, it is important to provide a historical context for the current policies, to make evident the evolution of these regulations, and to explore the factors that have played a role in formulating documents and policies in regards to disability at this institution. By looking at the four sets of documents outlined in the Methodology chapter, I analyse commentary, discussions, and key events and changes in regards to accommodation services at the University of Lethbridge. Along with being interested in the discourse relating to disability-related offices and accommodation services on campus, I have searched the archives in order to find examples of how disability is conceptualized and constructed in these texts and “what are the limits and forms of sayable” (Foucault & Smith, 1995, p. 59) and thinkable about disability. Following Foucault, I have read the material available to me while focusing on who is speaking (who is a qualified speaker, what is their status and social position?), the institutional site (whether it is a governing body, student magazine, or a student) and finally, how the particular speaker relates to others and what kind of knowledge they are in a position to claim. My primary goal in this chapter is to provide a historical context for understanding the current accommodation policy and I will engage in a more fine-grained discourse analysis in the subsequent chapter.

Overview of the documents

In order to illuminate these transformations, I have examined four groups of sources that were available through the University of Lethbridge websites and The University of Lethbridge Archive. Those include the academic calendars, meeting minutes of the University's two governing bodies (Board of Governors and General Faculties Council), university publications and newspapers, documents related to the work of two committees (President's Advisory Committee on Disability Access and The Special Needs Advisory Committee), and the intake forms and brochures created by the offices in charge of disability.

The Academic Calendars ranged from 1967 to 2016, and they provide an overview of available services and offices relating to disability issues at the university. Academic Calendars allowed me to locate turning points in the university policies in regards to disability and inclusion, because they include changes in names and policy, as well as lists of available services for respective years. Furthermore, they are an important source of information as students are supposed to consult them should they have any inquiries about the services on campus, and more importantly, about their rights and responsibilities. Thus, the Calendars are not only meant to inform students about the rules, regulations, and available services, but to serve as a point of reference in the case of dispute in terms of rights and obligations.

The meeting minutes from the Board of Governors, a body that governs and operates the university (University of Lethbridge, 2015a) as well as meeting minutes from the General Faculties Council (GFC), whose responsibilities include approval of the University's Calendar, academic programs, academic policies, and admission policies

(University of Lethbridge, 2015b) were explored to learn more about policy-making regarding disability. I have consulted all of the meeting minutes available. I have requested The University Archivist, Mr. Mike Perry, to provide me with the Board of Governors meeting minutes prior to December 2006, as that year is crucial for the disability policies at the university. Despite that request, these materials were not available at the time when the collection of material for my analysis was completed. In the case of the Board of Governors, therefore, the materials collected and analyzed include the period from December 2006 to June 2015 (60 meeting minutes), and for General Faculties Council from January 2001 – May 2015 (131 meeting minutes). Meeting minutes of these two governing bodies range from 4 to 30 pages. While Board of Governors meeting minutes are shorter on average, they contain more details on particular agenda points, and seem to include more records of spontaneous discussions that take place in the meetings, whereas GFC meeting minutes were more official in content. While the meeting minutes that I have reviewed reveal much about the procedures that led to the policies that are currently in place at the University, they also depict the broader historical and institutional context in which these policies and practices occurred.

To examine how issues of disability were discussed beyond the meetings of governing bodies, and how they were presented to and received by the student body, I have consulted University newsletters and student magazines. These publications covered the period from 1963, when the first magazine and newsletters at the University of Lethbridge were published, to 2012, which are all the records of this sort available in the University archives. The publications I reviewed include, but are not limited to the *Meliorist* (1967-2012), *Medium* (1976-1986), *Aperture Weekly* (1989-1996), and *Legend* (2001-2012).

Meliorist is a student-led monthly magazine that still exists, while *Aperture Weekly* was a campus newspaper published by the Office of Communications and Public Relations. *Legend*, on the other hand, is a campus publication with an aim to “strengthen communication within the university” in general, and is not specifically directed to students (University of Lethbridge, 2016b). These publications differ when it comes to the way the accommodations for students with disabilities have been portrayed: *Meliorist* purports to offer a student perspective, including student experiences, challenges and obstacles, whereas *Aperture Weekly* and *Legend* offer more enthusiastic and positive views on campus events in regards to disability, particularly in the promotion of disability-related services. When read comparatively, these publications help us understand the dynamic of power relations, and the resistance and agency of students, especially students with disabilities. In all publications I have searched for the following terms: ‘accommodation’, ‘deaf’, ‘deafness’, ‘disabilities’, ‘disability’ and ‘inclusion’. This resulted in 103 relevant issues relating to my topic. For example, I considered the term accommodation, if it referred to ‘residence’ or ‘place to stay’ as irrelevant; ads for personal assistants for people with disability are another example of irrelevant references; the usage of deaf in a phrase ‘to turn a deaf ear’ (meaning to ignore somebody’s requests) was also considered irrelevant.

I have also analyzed the meeting minutes and accompanying documents from the President’s Advisory Committee on Disability Access, which was founded in 1992. These documents are crucial, as they testify about the first major, and I would argue, the most substantive initiative on the part of the administration to provide comprehensive services to students with disabilities, which will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Furthermore, I reviewed the documents relating to The Special Needs Advisory Committee, a body founded in 2005 that introduced the current Students with Disabilities Policy.

Finally, I have examined the intake forms and brochures available through the University Archives. These documents will be discussed in comparison to the current forms and brochures. In examining all these documents, I have observed how they relate to each other.

Due to the frequent changes of departments and their structure, but also changes in terminology, tracking down the materials that address disability was not an easy task. Because of this, I made sure to use synonyms when searching, as I discussed above. I relied on ample support of the University Archivist Mr. Mike Perry in order to locate relevant events and documents, while he also directed me to certain broader events within the university, investing extraordinary effort to help me track down the disability related material.

University departments and offices in charge of accommodations

The review of Academic Calendars from 1963 to 2016 indicates that the first department whose role was to accommodate disabled students was The Office for the Handicapped, which existed from academic year 1981/1982 to 1984/1985, which indicates that the University has a long history of addressing disability issues, despite the sense of novelty and innovation with which some of the subsequent policies and programs were introduced. That the establishment of the first office at the University of Lethbridge providing services for students with disabilities was established in 1981 was not purely a

coincidence. The year 1981 was celebrated as the United Nations International Year for Disabled Persons (IYDP). In Canada, this initiative resulted in the creation of the “Obstacle” report, consisting of descriptions of the experiences of people with disabilities, which fostered country-wide discussions and actions in regards to the disability rights in Canada. The efforts of disability rights activists eventually lead to the inclusion of rights of people with disabilities in the section 15 in the final draft of *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1985 (Stienstra, 2012). Since the inclusion of disability in the Charter was a result of long-lasting and tenacious efforts of disability rights movement activists to have people with disabilities regarded as equal to other citizens (Malhotra, 2012), the advent of the first office dedicated to persons with disability could also be understood as in keeping with these broader political and activist efforts.

Although there are no official University records that describe the services offered by The Office for the Handicapped, the university magazine *Medium* in a short article titled “Help for Disabled?” (1983) provides a description of services offered to the students with disabilities. The staff member of this office, Dick Varga, said that there were usually about twelve to fifteen disabled students on campus each year who had come to Lethbridge from all over the province. His job was to assist them in finding any specialized accommodation required, obtaining financial assistance and generally help them get settled into University life. In addition to these services, Varga was in charge of arranging study assistants for disabled students, and his work also led to the modification of laboratories that made these spaces more accessible for students with disabilities. Although the main focus was on students who use wheelchairs, this article also indicates that The Office for the Handicapped also worked on providing support to blind students. Furthermore, the duties

of the office were not limited to providing assistance in classrooms and testing, but they also included social events organization. According to this short article, the first disability-related office served 15 students a year, which comprised 0.51% of the student population at the time; according to the University of Lethbridge Archives the fall enrolment for 1983/1984 was 2894 students (University of Lethbridge, 2016b).

Although the Office for the Handicapped was providing various services to numerous students, the office was closed in 1985 for reasons unknown to me. After that, it took eight years before the University established a new department dedicated to the questions of disability and access. It is not clear whether during this time the services were offered to students through some other office. The reason for an eight-year long absence of the office for disability services, coinciding as it did with the UN decade dedicated to disability (1982-1991) is not clear. One could argue that the change of Peter Lougheed's to Don Getty's provincial government could perhaps explain the cessation of the disability office, as there were cuts in spending in regards to health, education, and social services (Rennie 2004). However, that claim is only a speculative one, as I did not come across any internal documents that could explain the closure of the office in 1984/1985.

During these eight years without a dedicated office for students with disability, references to accommodations for students with disabilities or disability in general were scarce. Besides an article featuring a hockey player, Terry Baustad, who is described as being "deaf in one ear," there were no other direct references to disability or deafness in the student magazines (Gillette, 1990). The article depicts Baustad as a dedicated mentor and hockey player and applauds his involvement with a summer camp, where he will be mentoring a deaf boy. Overall, the articles like this one, in which students with disabilities

are presented as active and involved agents and where a disability is not necessarily presented as an obstacle but as a mere difference, are few and far between. In most cases, the discussions about students and people with disabilities in general include the narrative about a superhuman who rises above her disability and accomplishes extraordinary success (although my use of the feminine pronoun “she” could be deceiving here, as the subject in question is usually male). That type of representation includes a “supercrip narrative”, as the successes that are attributed to students with disabilities would not be perceived as successes for someone who is not perceived as a person with disability (Silva & Howe, 2012).

The turning point in the University of Lethbridge policies was the establishment of the President’s Advisory Committee on Disability Access in the fall of 1992. This new body consisted of faculty members, staff, a student and a community member, both of whom were wheelchair users. The committee worked on developing new policy in regards to disability access. In order to assist in the design of that new policy they reviewed already available resources, engaged in consultations with other universities about possible services, and worked towards promotion of awareness in regards of disability. The available documents indicate that the Committee itself put an extraordinary amount of work into proposing new solutions to disability access. Furthermore, the Committee’s documents were also important in setting the foundation for longer-term policymaking, as one of the reports clearly stated that “The University of Lethbridge is committed to the promotion of full and self-directed access for persons with disabilities into its post-secondary educational programs and community outreach components” (President’s Advisory Committee on Disability Access, 1993, p. 1). This seems to be the first succinct

formulation of the University's commitment to ensuring disability access. In the same report the committee announced that it is dedicated to the principles outlined by the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD), a cross-disability organization that has advocated for right of persons with disabilities in Alberta since 1973 (Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities, 2016). These guiding principles included: "Individuality, Accountability, Equality, Integration, and Full Participation" (President's Advisory Committee on Disability Access, 1993 p. 6). With this announcement, the committee made a commitment to work with and alongside persons with disabilities themselves and respect the attitudes and recommendations that are coming from the disability community⁴.

This committee proposed some policy solutions that assume an individualized approach to accommodations, which will be discussed in the subsequent sections. Here, however, it is important to note that the Committee acknowledged the importance of disability community in its reports and meeting minutes. In doing so, the Committee recognized the existence of the community nominally, but there is evidence indicating that the Committee also approached different disability-related organizations in the city. These organizations were consulted and asked to come up with propositions in regards to the university's disability policies. This was an important change, as together with hiring a student with disabilities to work on the Committee, these efforts were shaped by the disability movement requirements embodied in the slogan "Nothing about us without us" – a motto expressed by disabled activists who claimed that they are the experts who possess authority and knowledge in addressing issues of disability and access (Stienstra, 2012).

⁴ By using "disability community" I do not assume the existence of one uniform community that would consist of all people with disability. Rather, I utilize this term to denote (formal or informal) groups of persons with disabilities that are acting as disability rights movement activists.

This stance challenged the view that medical, educational, psychological and social service professionals are authorities in regards to disabled people's lives.

Second-year Psychology student Caprice Hogg and her community member assistant Donalda Erickson – both wheelchair users – were hired as research assistants over the summer to support the work of the President's Advisory Committee on Disability Access. Their task was to “help plan campus awareness events, work on community liaison activities, catalogue resource information, draft preliminary policy information and act as a resource person” (“Students hired to assist with access for disabled,” 1993). This was a crucial step forward in approaching disability issues on campus. As Caprice Hogg explained in one interview “I am so glad they asked me to be on this committee [The President's Advisory Committee on Disability Access]. It's expected that an able-bodied wouldn't think of the things disabled persons experience every day” (“Committee working on better access for disabled,” 1993).

This involvement of a student who identifies as disabled could be understood as informed by identity politics, which was an influential trend in the 1980s and early 1990s amongst the disability rights movement. Identity politics approaches assume that people with disabilities have a shared experience of oppression based on essentialist ideas that disability is something embodied, universal, and unchangeable. This kind of essentialist approach has been criticized for these very reasons – one of the critiques pointed out that identity politics rely on problematic categorizations of disability as embodied and individually based ways of claiming a disabled identity (Davis, 2013). The major limitation of the essentialist approach is that it assumes that people are either disabled or able-bodied, and that disabled people experience the same daily exclusions and oppressions, regardless

of their particular embodiment or social positioning. Further, this position assumes that once a person is identified as disabled, she can express all disabled persons' needs and can act as a representative of the imagined group of disabled people. In practice, this kind of totalizing identity-based perspective fails to address unique, rare, or underrepresented disabilities, such as deafness, which then become omitted from accommodative considerations. It is often the case that the type of disability that is associated with the disabled 'representative' who engages with disability policy-makers can influence the decision-makers to consider one type of disability as crucial and in urgent need of accommodating; further, this disabled 'representative' has typically been embodied as an intellectually gifted, male, heterosexual, white wheelchair user (Somerville, 2006).

In the case of the University of Lethbridge disability accommodation of the early 1990s, the individuals involved as 'stakeholders' were indeed people with physical disabilities and their input focused on mobility, as recognized in one article published at the University of Lethbridge in 1993 which stated that "physical access is an obvious focus" ("Committee working on better access for disabled," 1993). This corresponds with evidence that in terms of disability representation in general, mobility disabilities are often the most dominant disability when it comes to both representation and accommodation regarding access and services. The scholars who contribute to the field of (critical) Disability Studies often direct this objection to the social model of disability. The examples that proponents of the social model utilize, as well as the way in which it was developed suggest that physical disability (and especially the image of a male, white, middle-class wheelchair user) is central to the social model (Somerville, 2006). The ubiquity of disability both represented and accommodated as though 'disabilities' were synonymous

with a young, white, often male, straight wheelchair user has cumulatively meant that hidden or underrepresented disabilities stay invisible and omitted from the decision-making procedures and the accommodations that result from them. At the University of Lethbridge, by placing physical disability in the focus of decision-making and in turn providing access to campus for students with physical disability, the result was that it appeared as if the issues of access were addressed, resolved, and adequately accommodated. In practice, however, it is possible that significant gaps remained. Equally important, the inclusion of students with disabilities, while perhaps not actually accomplishing meaningful representation or resolution, nevertheless works to legitimize the actions of those who are in charge of accessibility – in this case the President’s Advisory Committee.

In many other instances, the President’s Advisory Committee utilized conceptualizations of disability that aligns with the social model of disability. The most illustrative example was the report addressed to the Board of Governor’s (President’s Advisory Committee on Disability Access, 1993), stating the need “to discuss issues related to the participation of disabled students, and thereby to examine the systemic, structural and attitudinal barriers which may negatively affect the full participation of persons with disabilities in the U of L community.” Furthermore, in the summary of the same document, the Committee states: “The Committee expects to proceed vigorously to identify those structural and attitudinal barriers (physical and psychological on the U of L campus) which restrict the full integration and participation of disabled students” (p. 5). These two quotes indicate that the Committee’s work was based on the social model of disability, rather than on an understanding of disability as a matter of individual traits

(medical model). As outlined in earlier chapters, the social model frames disability as a consequence of structural barriers and is concerned about the ways in which social institutions and relations produce disability (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2010). I argue that these quotes indicate that the language of these documents suggests that there was a need more encompassing changes in the very structure of the university, thus aligning with the social model of disability. Yet, the summary also contained recognition that the development of these services is “tempered by an examination of their appropriateness relative to the University’s mission, size, and ongoing financial exigencies” (p. 5). Here we can see a contradiction in discourse at play – the recommendations were both necessary and impossible and, as noted in the report, “practical realities” were seen as obstacles for full implementation of recommendations (ibid). In Foucault’s taxonomy, this contradiction could be understood as an extrinsic one. Rather than being an internal contradiction within the bounds of discursive formation, external contradictions are those that “reflect opposition between distinct discursive formations” (Foucault & Smith, 1995, p. 35). In this case, the contradictions arise between the social model, in which accommodations are necessary, and the logic of neoliberalism, a belief system which is skeptical about the efficiency and effectiveness of social services and which to great extent shapes Canadian politics and policy (Prince, 2009). As Prince further argues, neoliberalist approaches amount to a discourse in which accommodations are rendered impossible. As we can see, because of the costs associated with the implementation of principles of the social model, the genuine implementation of these recommendations – regardless of how limited they may have been – was predestined to fail.

Despite the views expressed by the Committee that aligned with the social model, the practice that the Committee introduced undermined the idea of disability as a structural and systematic problem, instead situating responsibility for change at the individual level. For example, the President's Advisory Committee introduced a policy that services were to be provided to all students who made a request for them, insofar as students provided documentation proving their disability. This procedure is not only challenging for students who do not see their needs for accommodation through a medical lens of diagnosis and pathologization, but it can also cause difficulties for students who live with disabilities that are rare or hard to document. Moreover, this process can be lengthy and can place financial burden on the student. For students who identify as culturally Deaf, this procedure is particularly problematic because it denies the possibility of a positive understanding of difference, focusing only on deficit and need.

This requirement to 'prove' one's diagnosis and accommodation seemingly also existed in other post-secondary institutions in the province, whose practices the Committee carefully examined in the course of their policy formation. This approach could be understood as symptomatic of the neoliberal state which, as Prince states, is characterized by

individualizing and objectifying people as cases – treating the needs and circumstances of people narrowly by ignoring applicants' and recipients' full social and economic location and translating their life experiences and circumstances into administrative terms and program imperatives (Prince, 2009, p. 77).

In practice, this required students to ensure medical documentation that proves their disability, and this requirement remains extant in the policies to this day.

This approach to accommodation services also suggests that accommodation is something that is the responsibility of an individual, and that is the case for any disabled individual, regardless of their understanding of their identity. The Disability Office required students seeking accommodations to do a considerable amount of work prior to accessing the services. Although students in general need to meet certain requirements to access the university and its services, the policy as written subjected students with disabilities additional procedures and pressures that most of their peers did not need to satisfy. Through this policy, students were asked to ensure possession of relevant documents that would prove that they were in need of accommodation. Nowhere in the official documents is there a recognition of the cost, effort and time students might incur in order to meet these requirements, although this was indicated in an article that appeared in a student-lead magazine that was critical of a published draft of the policy (Shaw, 1999).

Different conceptualizations of deafness can help us think through the specific implications of this particular requirement. Namely, the two dominant understandings of deafness – one that frames deafness as disability, and one that indicates that deafness is a cultural identity – would offer disparate explanations as to why one needs to be accommodated. In the case of understanding deafness as disability, accommodation can be explained in terms of health and medicine, while in the second case, one gets to be accommodated based on her distinct cultural and linguistic identity. However, it is clear that the policy itself adheres to a narrow disability-deficit position in which a Deaf student requiring Sign Language interpretation would be required to identify herself as a student with a disability, even though she might be more prone to see her deafness as a part of her linguistic/cultural identity. Therefore, in addition to the overall problem of placing

responsibility for disclosure onto individual students, the language of the policy, through its presence of disability-deficit language, and its absence of disability-difference language, sets the stage for a failure to accommodate students who do not identify with the medical model (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006). Here, refusal of the disabled identity would mean deprivation of the benefits that come from accommodation services. The policy requires that students embrace a certain kind of identity, thus producing the student who is characterized as in need of accommodation and special supports. In that way the policies in place can be seen as productive of a particular conceptualization of disability, identity and accommodation (Titchkosky, 2006).

One article published in the university magazine *Meliorist* in 1993 gives credence to the claim that understanding deafness as a unique cultural identity is not merely a theoretical consideration, but that it shapes Deaf people's lives and reflects the way in which they understand the world. The article announced the beginning of lessons in Sign Language and a celebration of Deaf culture in the University students' pub. In addition to introducing the concepts such as Deaf culture and Sign Language, the authors of the article reflect on an understanding of deafness as a culture and education:

Canada has long been a country that celebrates its Multiculturalism. This is in theory at least: in practice, our Canadian efforts sometimes fall short, and I believe that this is evident in our education system. As the Canadian government makes progressive movements towards celebrating multi-culturalism, it will soon realize that it must begin in the schools. (Cattoni & Layhe, 1993)

This appeal for inclusion of Deaf students in post-secondary education is a unique one, laying a claim that deafness is not a flaw, defect or failure, but rather, an identity that is legitimate, historical, and to be celebrated and respected.

Since The President’s Advisory Committee on Disability Access was established in 1992, the University has had a continual presence of disability service, with different offices in charge of providing service to students with disabilities, as presented in the table below (table 1.). Counseling services included services for students with disabilities from 1994 until 2008, when a distinct office named Disability Resource Centre was formed.

Table 1. Overview of the offices in charge of providing services to students with disabilities (1963-2016), according to Academic Calendars

1963/1964 to 1980/1981	None
1981/1982 to 1984/1985	Office for the Handicapped
1985/1986 to 1993/1994	None
1994/1995 to 2007/2008	Counseling Services
2008/2009* to 2013/2014	The Disability Resource Center
2014/2015 to present	Accommodated Learning Centre
*The Graduate Studies Calendar was first introduced in the academic year 2010-2011	

Regardless of the particular offices offering services outlined in Table 1, the Academic Calendar is the document which serves as a key point of reference for students, faculty and staff seeking to learn what kinds of disability services are on offer at the University. All Academic Calendars from 1994/1995 to 2014/2015 contain two similarly-worded descriptions of the scope of services offered throughout the period under the rubric of disabilities. The description was very slightly changed from year to year, without significant shifts in meaning. The exception is the year 2003/2004, when a seemingly small textual change was made that nevertheless had important implications for the services that

were offered, or at least for the services that were guaranteed by the University. The first section in the second paragraph of the Academic Calendars prior to 2003 under the section Disability states, “Student Counseling Services can support student requests for *special testing and lecture or registration* [emphasis added] procedures once their disability has been documented”. In 2003, a significant change was introduced in an otherwise identical text, with the first sentence of the second paragraph now stating, “Counseling Services can support student requests for *special testing or registration* [emphasis added] procedures once their disability has been documented” (The University of Lethbridge, 2003, p. 426). Therefore, according to the Calendar, Counseling Service has since 2003/4 no longer guaranteed accommodation in lectures, limiting its services to exam and registration accommodations. One can speculate that this discursive exclusion has had parallel exclusionary effects in actual classrooms for students who are D/deaf.

Accommodations in regards to lectures have not found their way back into the Academic Calendar since, so the services described in the Calendar for the period of the past thirteen years appear to have been limited to the most basic services in terms of registration and testing. However, it is important to note here that I am looking at the Calendar and what is outlined in them. They only referred to having the office offer assessments of students’ knowledge and performance, but not to the lectures and other academic endeavors such as student group work and seminar and studio engagements, that are arguably crucial elements in student learning. Also not discussed in this overview of services are accommodations in regards to other aspects of academic work such as textbooks and other written materials, assistance in accessing office hours, doing group work, or providing large-print, or Sign Language interpretation or materials in Braille. It is

impossible to speculate on the motivation for this change; the decision was not discussed in the available meeting minutes of Faculty General Council, although this body would be responsible for changes in the Academic Calendar and for agreeing that its membership would deliver such classroom-based services should they be required. The information in the Calendar can only be read as a standard for a minimum guaranteed level of services, but it would not be accurate to understand the Calendar as corresponding to actual services offered to students each year. However, even when read like this, this change is still crucial. The danger with this limited framing is that, unforeseen circumstances (e.g. budget cuts) could cause reduction in services. Further, this language of exclusion and absence may operate to dissuade students whose accommodations would extend beyond the bare minimum of exam accommodation may exclude themselves in the face of this discourse. Thus we can speculate that the discourse is not only productive of a compliant, examinable disabled student, but that it also produces a non-participating student whose ‘needs’ fall outside the normative bounds of accommodation discourse and practice at this university.

In 2005 the Special Needs Advisory Committee was formed in response to a call from the General Faculties Council, one of two governing bodies of the University. This Committee was formed shortly after the introduction of the provincial bulletin titled “Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in Post-secondary Institutions” (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2004) and it is reasonable to surmise that it was a response to it. This Committee was comprised of faculty members, representatives from Dean’s Council, as well as from the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association, and students who were nominated by Student’s Council and approved by the General Faculties Council. Based on their meeting minutes and other documents available in the archive, this

Committee drafted the Students with Disability Policy and also worked closely with other University representatives to address the rights of students with disabilities on campus. The documents also indicate that the work and activities of this Committee were extensive, although at the end, they did not translate into a voluminous policy document. Rather, the policy that resulted from work of this Committee is brief and laconic, leaving much to interpretation. The Students with Disability Policy (2006), available in the Appendix, is a 5-page document, two of which are table of contents and a blank page. The policy is divided into nine different sections which do not provide details as to what kinds of accommodations will be provided or how they will be implemented. Rather, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, the statements listed in the document are broad and intangible.

The finest example of the discrepancies between the Committee's work and the actual final product which is the Policy, are the earlier drafts of the document, which included more detailed description of services. However, in the drafts some sentences are crossed and ultimately left out from the Policy. For example, in the draft from May 23, 2005, the following sentence in the section on Academic accommodations is struck through:

Accommodations can be made in one or more of eight categories: instructional methods, course content, course assignments, physical environment, instructional atmosphere, supplementary instruction; selection of instructors; and instructional resources and tools. (Students with Disabilities Policy, DRAFT, March 23/05, p. 4)

This scope of services can be understood as a broad one that takes in a culture of learning, given that it includes references to physical environment and even the selection of instructors. In that way, the services it lists, go way beyond exam accommodation and note taking. Here we also see intimations of the social model rather than the medical model of

disability, wherein there is an understanding of disability as a consequence of the structural organization of an institution, since physical environment and instructional atmosphere are listed. This sentence also indicates that disability is not merely an individual trait or condition but a structural one, thus aligning with the social model. However, for reasons unknown to me, this sentence did not find its place in the final version of the Policy.

Furthermore, my review of various documents indicates that there is no consistency between different University documents – the official Students with Disability Policy that was introduced in 2006 and the University Calendars in subsequent years were not harmonized. While according to the Policy, the university is obliged to take steps toward ensuring access to education, the Calendars continued to guarantee services on a minimal level which is below what the University is obliged to do according to its own Policy. Namely, the Policy stated that “[a]ll units within the University have the responsibility to provide access for students with disabilities” (University of Lethbridge, 2006, p. 3); as outlined earlier, the Calendar only listed certain specific services and there was a tendency to reduce the guaranteed supports. Furthermore, when read together with other sections in the Calendar that address the Policy, even more contradictions emerge. It was only in 2013, seven years after introducing the Policy, that the University listed the duties of instructors. In the following year, 2014, the Policy was introduced in the Calendar for the first time. Prior to that, there were no indications in the University Calendars that the Policy was being implemented nor that students were being informed about their rights and responsibilities as outlined in the policy. Although the Policy itself will be further discussed in the following chapter, the point to take from these examples is that the changes in accordance to policies were slow and not always coherent.

Disability services compared to 'regular' student services

My review of University Calendars indicates that in the 1960s and 70s, a handful of services were offered to all students. These services typically included a bookstore, food services, and the library. In subsequent years, there was an augmented growth of services available to all students that was simultaneous with the growth of the student population. In 1968 the University of Lethbridge had 1381 students, while that number grew to just over six thousands in 1999, and over eight thousands in 2012 (University of Lethbridge, 2016b). From only those three to four services offered in the University's early years, the services listed in the current academic calendar include thirty-six distinct departments whose purpose is to provide service to students by addressing various aspects of academic life. The services currently listed include: bookstore, chaplaincy, health centre, housing services, and international student services and many others. This evolution of additional student services may reflect institutional growth, interest in and a response to students' needs, and changing attitudes towards student life on campus. It seems that today, campus is seen not just as a place where students go to study, attend classes, and take exams, but rather, there are a variety of activities on offer to them, each of which contributes to more fulfilling experience. Some of these services, such as on-campus childcare, even go so far as to tacitly acknowledge that students' lives extend beyond classrooms and examinations. However, there has not been a strong and parallel growth in disability services over the same period.

Although my research does not include an analysis of University spaces, one example inform the layout of student housing may illustrate the point I am trying to make in regards to the lacking of more encompassing services for students with disabilities.

Namely, the family housing units on campus in Siksika House include one unit that is designated as accessible for someone with a physical disability, in particular, a wheelchair user. However, all the other units surrounding it are not accessible, as they can only be reached *via* a significant number of stairs. While the ‘accessible’ space does provide a living space for a student with a physical disability, access to student housing is limited to her living space, and she is not able to visit her neighbors and friends, which would be considered an ordinary practice and level of access for the rest of the student population. This housing arrangement could isolate a student with a disability from the rest of the student community, depriving her from a fulfilling student experience. In this particular instance, the students who need accommodations are defined solely through limitations of their bodies, which aligns with a medical model of disability (Shakespeare, 2010). Furthermore, this type of accommodation is an example of minimal service for students with disabilities which, although ostensibly providing accommodation, fail to actually include. The focus on accessing disability as special and a source of need, rather than imagining a campus that is accommodating for all, means that such accommodation is only partial at best. And the policy and its related documents, from the beginning, fail to include language that could imagine the kind of accommodation that is truly inclusive.

Accommodation services as a threat to academic integrity

The question that needs to be addressed is what makes accommodations in regards to disability different from other services. The argument I would like to put forward and that I will build throughout this and next chapter is that accommodations that are offered to students are often posited as a threat to academic integrity, and to the excellence that is associated with post-secondary education. The way most of the texts concerning

accommodation are phrased, it seems that disability accommodations are perceived as a threat to academic excellence. This is not conveyed directly but restrictive rules about who can access accommodations telegraph that there is a concern that someone who does not have a right to accommodations might benefit from these services. There are three ways in which we could discuss these concerns: the first refers to accommodations as an avenue for deceiving (i.e. taking advantage); the second in which accommodations are understood as a form of favoritism that is simultaneously detrimental to students who do not claim disability; and the third that relies on the notion that people with disability are less worthy, or less capable than people without disabilities and their inclusion in the system will eventually lead to a decline in the quality of higher education. The first sense in which accommodation is seen as a tool for taking advantage is extensively discussed in the literature, especially in regards to affirmative action debates (although I do not argue here that accommodation services are to be understood as an affirmative action), and is common in policies that try to ensure better representations of a minority or to overcome results of past discriminatory practices (Herring & Henderson, 2012). The view that students with disabilities are being favoured and that it will result in damaging the students who are considered non-disabled, is also a common one and can be raised in relation to other differences. I argue here that the third view is more complex and is specific for disability, reflecting a broader discourse about disability. While the first two are concerned with anyone cheating and breaking the rules (and it is particularly concerned with nondisabled students taking advantage that they do not “deserve” and “regular” students being denied service), the third one assumes that people with disabilities are not capable of achieving high standards in education, and that inclusion of disabled students would lead to a decline

in quality and overall deterioration. For that purpose, the University introduces the procedures that ensure that accommodations are only provided when necessary and that they do not diminish academic quality. In that sense, as Goodley (2014) suggests, “[e]ducation’s obsessive relationship with academic standards and school performativity becomes destabilised or crippled by disability” (p. 104). Behind the resistance to questioning academic standards and criteria for academic excellence is “a supposedly neutral humanist ideal” (Young, 1990, p. 47), expressed in the belief that education practices as they are today, such as assessment, are value-neutral, objective, and necessary and that they are not designed so as to privilege a certain subject (in this case an able-bodied subject) in the first place.

Facilitating “passing”

Since the first initiatives to accommodate disability at the University of Lethbridge, there has been a designated office in charge of accommodations. I argue that having only one specialized office that is solely responsible for accommodation of a student who is characterized as a deficit and in need of special remedies, releases the liability of other actors within the University to accommodate students with disabilities. This way of organizing accommodations has implications for the ways in which disability is addressed in procedures and talked about in this University today. An illustrative example appeared in GFC meeting minutes (“General Faculties Council Meeting Minutes #497,” 2014). A faculty member raised the question of early deadlines for students to apply for accommodated testing, stating that a student missed the deadline to apply for the accommodation for test-taking. The deadline was two weeks prior to the exam, and therefore the faculty member had to make his own accommodations. In the meeting he

requested a review of accommodation policies that would not allow for this to happen again. This example not only conveys that it is clearly the student's work to facilitate such accommodation, which is not a responsibility of other, non-disabled students, but it also indicates that accommodation is seen by at least some University actors as an inconvenience that is disturbing to regular or normal university regimes. Further, because the request was not requesting a broader review of the procedures in place, but instead sought a tightening of disability policy through the Accommodation Office, there is a clear sense that disability accommodation is, for some faculty, not a duty but a burden. Finally, it would seem that, for this member of the staff at least, the best way to include students with disabilities in the academic setting is to ensure that there is a specialized office that will mediate the relationship between instructors and students with disabilities, rendering students with disabilities invisible, ensuring a 'regular' academic schedule and minimizing any effort on the part of the professoriate. In sum, this brief exchange outlined in the meeting minutes exposes how disability in this University's academic environment is being portrayed similarly to how it is often seen elsewhere – as a deviation from the norm, a problem in need of a solution, a disturbance and anomaly, and a difference that disturbs our image of the typical student (Titchkosky, 2006; Goodley, 2014). Furthermore, we could think of this event as an example of what is within the limits of what is sayable. As the request from the faculty member did not foster further discussion among faculty members, we could read this event as an indication that, within the discourse, it is possible to formulate meaningful statements about disability as a burden without causing resentment.

In a sense, then, it seems the role of accommodation services is to help students "pass as able-bodied". While "passing" is usually understood as a set of techniques and

strategies used by an individual with an aim to hide or disguise her difference in order to appear as “normal” (Goffman, 1986; Hole, 2007), I argue that the accommodation services facilitate this process on both the level of an individual and of an institution. As a result, the student does not appear as a student with a disability in front of her peers or her instructor; rather, for most part, she “passes” as able-bodied. On the other hand, the disability is not visible on campus, and the needs for accommodations are hidden, which makes the University appear as an inclusive space. This passing of the institution and its students reinforces the idea that everyone in the university is equally present and included.

Finally, the decision for the most recent change of the name of The Disability Resource Centre to The Accommodated Learning Centre was discussed at a GFC meeting in terms of this change ensuring more inclusive language (GFC, December 2013, p.2). However, a further explanation for this change was not offered in the meeting minutes. The name of the office, The Accommodated Learning Centre – the office that will be in the centre of analysis in the following chapter – indicates erasure, and is, again, making disability invisible. Paradoxically, the word ‘disability’ stays in the Academic Calendar as a subheading immediately following the title “Accommodated Learning Centre”. Hence, if the rationale was to exclude the word ‘disability’ because of the stigma it can carry with it, this has not been fully accomplished. However, this erasure through the name change, most probably without anyone’s intention, makes it harder to navigate the Calendar to locate information about disability services, as it is not obvious that the Accommodated Learning Centre refers to disability-related accommodations.

The notion of disability that has been used since the inception of accommodation services at the University of Lethbridge is narrow and often refers merely to physical

disability, and particularly, to wheelchair users. While wheelchair accessibility is an important issue, as noted earlier, it does not encompass the full range of disabilities or their necessary accommodations, including deafness. This tendency to understand disability as a primarily physical limitation that is located within the individual can be traced back in one of the first audit procedures of The President's Advisory Committee on Disability Access in June 1993. Namely, the audit of the university consisted of procedures and checks related exclusively to physical disability, as the checks included – accessibility to phone booth, elevators, and doors, from a perspective of someone who uses wheelchairs. In that audit, it seems that physical disability was seen as the crucial type of disability needing to be accommodated, and in fact the focus was not even on a range of physical disabilities, but specifically disabilities requiring the use of wheelchairs. Student Union engagement in the Special Needs Advisory Committee also testifies to its incorporation of this pervasive view of disability. For example, one of the main activities in promoting disability awareness and the project of campus accessibility in general was a Student Union-sponsored wheelchair basketball competition, which was also praised in the Board of Governors meeting minutes for March 2013 (University of Lethbridge, 2013). The following brief sentence found its way in the meeting minutes: “Gender, Equity and Diversity Week - The president played wheelchair basketball this morning in honour of this week and his abilities in this area need improvement” (p. 2). This indicates that the event that was supposed to raise awareness did not foster broader discussions about rights of persons with disabilities. The way in which this event was recorded in the meeting minutes, indicates that it was constructed as entertainment, rather than an opportunity to discuss and reflect upon inclusion practices.

The governing bodies responded in their meetings to on-going problems relating to accommodation and inclusion in regards to students with disability, as such the University can be seen as taking a reactive role in approaching disability (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006). The very way that the university offices were structured from the beginning, with the task to respond to students' requests, situates the University as a rather reactive institution when it comes to accommodation and inclusion. Over the years, the important changes were introduced in University's approach toward students with disabilities. Still, most of the changes could be explained in terms of external pressures, coming from legislation and provincial requirements. For example, at a routine General Faculties Council meeting, a member reminded their colleagues of "the University of Lethbridge's duty to accommodate students" ("General Faculties Council Meeting Minutes #425," 2004). Shortly after this meeting, a development of the policy on students with disabilities was introduced. It is fair to presume that the University of Lethbridge acted in this instance as a reactive institution, rather than a proactive one (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006).

Students' voices

There is rich evidence that students, at least in the early years of University policy-making on disability and accommodation, expressed concerns about the University's approach to the questions of disability and accommodation and the scope of services that the University offered. The student newspapers testify to the dissatisfaction that was expressed by Student Union members, who demanded a more comprehensive approach to the issues of campus accessibility. An article that addresses mobility problems on campus faced by a specific disabled student ends with a negative overview of disability access on campus: "Some dissatisfaction with progress on the disability access issue were expressed

at the SU meeting. It was felt the answers proposed at the present for wheelchair accessibility were not acceptable” (Thurston, 1999). Articles with titles that expressed objections in regards to disability policies, such as “U of L Disability Draft Guidelines Vague and Inadequate: Where is the Accountability?” (Shaw, 1999) were not rare in the 90’s and early 2000’s. A dozen articles concerning disability provided critical overviews of the services for students with disabilities, and of the approach to disability issues in general. These articles also include information on disability rights and disability awareness. Negative remarks expressed by students in regards to services proposed by administration had to do with the critique of a one-on-one approach, wherein it was being proposed that the issues of accessibility would be solved on an individual level. Further, students expressed concern about the process of assessment which assumes that students need to provide documents concerning their disability and provide recommendations for accommodations, both of which indicate that the student would be made responsible for initiating and managing the accommodation process. Students questioned the ethics of having to initiate and manage their own accommodations; they claimed that this was particularly vexatious when thought about in the context of the right to access education that is guaranteed by policy documents and international conventions. Examples from University publications in which students raised their voices about disability-related practices demonstrate that the Policy and other legally binding documents create a framework in which students can claim and demand their rights; these documents offered students language and rationale which informed and constructed their demands for equal access and better accommodation services. As I will discuss in the following chapter, the

practices that required students to take responsibility for their accommodations, is not something that has been left in the past at the University of Lethbridge.

My review of the student's magazines and other materials that testify about public debates on this campus indicate that although discussions about accommodation appear in waves (usually at the time when there is an important change in policy); in general, there has been a long-term decline in public discussions of accommodations, especially discussions that would problematize or challenge approaches to accommodation. While earlier public commentaries in University publications have discussed whether the direction that the University is taking is a right one (Shaw, 1999), the tone of more recent remarks on accommodation in the record are optimistic and positive, and lack a critical standpoint in regards to accommodation practices. Issues of the University magazines and newsletters prior to the 2000's provide insights into experience of students with disabilities, who largely reported on their experiences of inaccessible parking, harsh encounters with security staff representatives and lack of access in general. There has been a shift in the tone in discourse and such complaints are non-existent in more recent publications.

However, when trying to understand the students' voices in the development of the policies, it is important to remember Foucault's remarks on the archive – in addition to indicating what is sayable, the archive also provides insights into “the limits and forms of conversation” and “the limits and forms of memory” (Burchell & Foucault, 1991) which provide laws of existence of statements. One can only speculate why these silences and shifts in the discourse occurred. It could be that in more recent years disability rights and accommodation services have become seen as being complete and accomplished.

Conclusion: Discontinuity and an individualized approach

In this chapter I provided an overview of the history of the institution, based on my archival research, with an aim of providing context for the next chapter that will look more closely into current policies at the University of Lethbridge. By analyzing the documents that testify about the history of accommodation at the University of Lethbridge I have outlined two arguments that will be further developed in the following chapter. First, having been formulated through GFC discussion and then poorly translated into a final policy, and then having the responsibility for policy implementation transferred from one office to another over the years, there are many discontinuities in institutional discourse. Furthermore, the scope and quality of services and the minimum level of guaranteed services has varied largely from year to year and been limited to a narrow scope of what is understood to be accommodation or service. Secondly, the University has been addressing the issue of disability through accommodation services that operated on case-to-case basis, embracing the view that disability is a ‘problem’ of an individual. This view is reflected in the way the departments in charge of disability were structured: offices in charge of disability services – and the range of services they are held responsible for delivering – have been conceived as an external part of the overall academic activities of the University, and given the gaps in the existence of these offices, they were not always seen as essential to the university functioning.

In addition to these two main arguments, both of which pertain to explain the internal rationale of the institution, the archival research revealed that the understanding of disability was shaped and constructed by numerous actors. The students (including students with disabilities) were involved in drafting the Policy in the early 1990s, members of the

University administration and faculty members outlined and implemented different versions of policies, local disability activism brought awareness about disability rights into play, and ultimately truncated pieces of this work found themselves written into a Policy that bears little resemblance to its contributors' earlier arguments. Also the broader provincial, national, and international framings of disability shaped the discourse, but here as well, notions of disability citizenship and inclusive participation seem to have become diluted as they made their way into matters of policy that limit themselves to physical access and examination accommodation. Furthermore, the findings indicate that students were not passive, but sought to perform acts of resistance utilizing "many, localized circuits, tactics, mechanisms and effect through which power circulates" (Hall 2011, p. 50).

Epilogue

Caprice Hogg, who worked as a summer research assistant for the President's advisory committee on Disability Access, in her report to the committee (Hogg, 1993) reflects on the problems that occurred in her work. She writes how after extensive preparation to give a presentation at a Physically Challenged Session (intended for new incoming students with disabilities), her presentation was canceled because no student registered for this session and her supervisor advised her to take a day off. One wonders if the limited and limiting discourse relating to disability and accommodation in the University's discourse may not have been at least in part accountable for such a low level of disability participation. Disappointed by this cancelation, she expresses hope that the future work of the Committee will result in attracting more students with disabilities. This illustrates the way that Hogg perceived the role of the committee – as a body that would assist university in attracting more students with disabilities, hence, in acting as a proactive

institution. The subsequent events in regards to disability offices and development of accommodation services stand in opposition with Hogg's enthusiastic view of the University's role in regards to students with disabilities.

Hogg further explains one other problem that she faced during her time with the Committee:

Another problem which arose was when I was not paid on time. I was not paid for the month of June until the end of July, at which time, I received one lump sum for both months. This caused a tremendous amount of problems because I am on a government program. Due to the fact that I only received one cheque from the University instead of two, the government did not pay me \$60 which I would have otherwise received had I been paid on time. The government also stopped my monthly cheque from coming because they knew I had been working but since I had been paid late by the University, I was unable to bring in my cheque stubs on time. Obviously, I had problems paying my rent when my cheque had not arrived. Therefore, I must stress that when the University hires a disabled student that is on a government program it is crucially important that they get paid on time (Hogg, 1993 p. 6-7).

The point that Hogg makes goes beyond the reminder that an institution needs to make sure that its employees are paid on time. Rather, it is a reminder that the institution needs to take into account that, beyond the campus grounds, persons with disabilities live under specific and often problematic systemic and structural circumstances. I do not suggest here that because of this structural configuration their reality is fixed and immutable; rather, I argue that the systems, spaces, and relations that shape lives of students with disabilities consist of complex and complicated circuits of power. Offering services that merely facilitate "passing" indicates oversight of these complexities.

Chapter Five: Tracing ableism and audism

Overview of the material

In the previous chapter I provided an overview of archival documents, including University Calendars, meeting minutes, pamphlets, and University magazines from 1963 to 2014, in order to paint a picture of the historical context that preceded and shaped current accommodation policies and practices. In this chapter I focus on the variety of sources that will help me depict how accommodations, disability, and deafness are talked about today. These include the text of the Students with Disabilities Policy (2006), promotional material and intake forms that I have obtained through the Accommodated Learning Centre (ACL, in this text also referred to as the Centre), and the material posted on the ALC's webpage as of October 1, 2015. The table that follows contains a detailed overview of the documents:

Table 2. Overview of the resources analyzed in Chapter Five

Documents	Description	How to access it
Students with Disabilities Policy	A 5-page document that is created by Board of Governors (2006)	It can be found on the University website
Promotional material	A pamphlet with the description of services	It can be obtained through the ALC office and is widely distributed across campus
Forms	Intake forms including New Student Intake Form, Consent for Exchange of information, Agreement Regarding Audio Recording of Lectures, and Notice of ALC Policies: Fall:2015	Students obtain these when they first access the Centre
Website pages Accommodated Learning Centre	The data analyzed is accessed on October 1, 2015 When downloaded, the material contained 64 pages, some of which are external content	These are part of University of Lethbridge website.

Each of these materials has different purposes and intended audiences. The materials were chosen because they were publicly available, and because these documents speak directly to students, but also to the instructors and University staff. Furthermore, the materials comprise an overview of current practices and procedures. As my research looks at discourse on disability and not at actual practices, I am focusing on language and the description of services and procedures, rather than services themselves. In this research I am not interested in examining how the services are being delivered and what are the actual practices. Rather, building on the theoretical framework I outlined earlier, I look for descriptions of services, overview of procedures and regulations in order to examine how disability is conceptualized and what can be said about it, and to explore how different conceptualizations of deafness fit into the description of inclusive practices. Although these sources often contain descriptions of services and procedures, I am not in a position to claim that the procedures and protocols in any way correspond to the actual practices. Still, my interpretation rests on Foucault's attempt to "overcome the traditional distinction between what one *says* (language) and what one *does* (practice)" (Hall, 2011, p. 44 original emphasis). In that sense, I am interested in the objects of knowledge that are being constituted through discourse. Throughout this thesis I argue that using a different conceptualization of deafness, as an example of a way of knowing and being in the world, can help us think about disability and accommodation without subscribing to the view that disability is a neutral category that is real prior to the creation of social meaning through social relations. As Michalko (2002) notes, "[disability] is a phenomenon that exists in the complex web of society, in the midst of social relations. How a society is organized shapes

the appearance of disability. What counts as both a disability and its meaning are fashioned within the framework of societal organization” (p. 144).

The Students with Disabilities Policy (University of Lethbridge, 2006) is the central document that instructs the University staff how to provide accommodation services, informs students about their rights and responsibilities and directs them on how to request accommodations. While the Policy itself is now ten years old, the promotional material and forms that are distributed to students through the Accommodated Learning Centre provide more recent information on available services. In addition to the promotional materials, in order to illuminate how disability is being understood and to uncover nuanced meanings that are conveyed, I analyzed the content of the ALC website. The website is a complex network of pages, and it serves multiple purposes: it informs students about their rights, the available services, and instructs them how to access them; it provides guidelines for instructors on how to make their teaching more accessible; and finally, it informs a general audience about the University’s commitment to ensuring services to students with disability. As I will be discussing later on, it is not always clear who is the intended audience of particular sections on the website, and different purposes and various tones of the text are often intertwined.

Guided by debates within disability studies and scholarship within Deaf studies outlined earlier, I have looked for recurring themes in the documents I analyzed. Assumptions about disability are contained in explicit mentions of disability, but also in descriptions of accommodation procedures and practices, and in the silences and absences that are located within these discourses. While the following sections provide an overview of the recurring themes I located in the abovementioned documents, it is important to keep

in mind that these themes are interconnected and can only be understood in relation to each other. For instance, while features of specific models of disability and assumptions about disability are important for understanding how these policies and practices construct disability, these assumptions also shape the understanding of who is imagined as a student at this particular university.

Absence in discourse

In 2006, the word “disability” was removed from the content of the University Calendar, as I have outlined in the previous chapter. However, although the University documents do not talk about disability explicitly, there is an implicit understanding of what disability is that stems from the types of accommodations that are offered to students. Similarly, deafness is not discussed explicitly, but descriptions of services and procedures that are outlined in the documents and on the website contain an understanding of what deafness is and how “it” will be approached should someone request that type of service. For example, the web page titled “Hearing Loss. General Etiquette” on the Accommodated Learning Centre’s website contains instructions on how one should approach D/deaf students and these instructions contain references to deafness as disability, as well as to deafness as a cultural identity (University of Lethbridge, 2015c). Although these instructions suggest that D/deaf students are needing accommodations because they do not hear, there are also indications that their cultural identity is to be accommodated (e.g. there are references to Sign Language interpreting and communication preferences).

Foucauldian theorizing about absence in discourse can help us understand this change in wording from ‘disability’ to ‘accommodation’ and the sustained exclusion of deafness from the discourse. Namely, exclusions tell us something about the discourse,

what kinds of truths can be deployed and what kind of statements can be found in a discourse (Mills, 2004a; Laurendeau & Adams, 2010). In this particular case, exclusion of the word ‘disability’ signals that disability is not in the focus of the University organizing, what disability is and how one can understand it is not relevant, instead, the focus is on accommodations. However, this exclusion of the word ‘disability’ does not mean that disability is not present and represented in the discourse, mainly through descriptions of accommodations. Over and above the elision of an explicit discussion of disability in general, the omission of any detailed discussion about deafness could be understood as an attempt to keep the discussion about disability as general and as abstract as possible, rather than to open it up as a nuanced, complex, and diverse set of social relations. In that way, any nuances of D/deafness and implications that would have for accommodations are excluded and they do not disturb the established dominant representation of disability in the discourses, which portrays disability as an individual trait that produces need for accommodation.

The ACL website is not rich in visual representations of students and services; for this reason my analysis of the website is text-based. Still, these absences of imagery also deserve our attention; they are important for understanding the discursive formation of disability, as they also construct it through their absence. Pictures that are included in the ACL website, which are few and far between, are neutral and do not show students or services, but rather stand for abstract concepts, such as test-taking and time management, represented with a picture of a clock. The image of a clock on the Centre’s website could be interpreted as indicative of students with disabilities as something that can and will be managed in a systematic and measurable way. While the rest of the University’s website is

rich in visual content and in presenting images of students, I find that it is indicative the ACL pages do not include pictures of students with disabilities or services that are designed for them. The absence of pictures that would in any way represent students with disabilities could be interpreted as a representation of what is considered a ‘typical’ and common accommodation – additional time for examinations, which is a low-cost accommodation with low impact on overall workflow of the university. Also, absence could be understood as a lack of images related to disability and accommodations on campus in general, as many services take place in the places intended for the purpose of accommodating disability and disability is constructed as a private issue. According to Mills (2004), Foucault introduces three kinds of exclusions: prohibitions or taboos, those that concern irrationally, and knowledge that is perceived as false. Following on that, I would argue that the absence of representation of students with disabilities on the Centre’s website is closest to a taboo, as representing one’s disability would be breaking established rules that disability is to be managed and dealt with, but not actively present and represented in the discourse. The privacy policy also contributes to the understanding of disability as something that is not to be shared, presented, or discussed in the public sphere, as it is seen as a personal flaw and a matter of shame. Furthermore, this absence of images of students with disabilities and of the accommodation services that are being provided on campus could be read as a message that students with disabilities do not fit into the image the University is attempting to create through its website, which is the image of a happy, healthy, carefree student.

Building on the argument outlined in the previous chapter in regards to the University’s attempt to facilitate “passing,” this lack of representation could be understood

as yet another way in which accommodation services are making disability hidden and seemingly non-existent. If the University had a rich archive of disability presence in terms of disability events, services, and students' activities, and examples of accommodations on campus, they would surely be included in the ACL's web page. So, for example, for users of Sign Language, a picture of an interpreter in a classroom would indicate that these services are present on campus; instead, the website's concise and abstract description of Sign Language interpreting services indicates the service as an abstract, text-heavy possibility rather than providing evidence that Sign Language interpreting has ever occurred on campus. With this lack of imagery, disability (as well as deafness) once again stays invisible and impossible to envision. In so doing, disability is constructed as a private concern of an individual. By providing a text-heavy content that is lacking imagery, the University takes up commonly-held notions that disability can and should remain invisible and simultaneously conveys a message that disability does not belong in a public institution such as a university.

In addition to invisibility, privacy and confidentiality are deployed in Foucauldian ways. These constructs are referenced on the website through the claim that the University will preserve confidentiality, unless there is a "legitimate need to know," ("Accommodated Learning Centre," 2015) which silently codes that University staff and faculty can access information about the type and scope of one's disability. The intake form also, in addition to sections about personal information, contains a section entitled "Disability Information". This indicates that disability is yet another fact that can be known about someone, and further that such a status conveys a certainty about someone's way of being in the world. This request implicitly draws on a medical model of disability whereby students are

required to provide the factual proof about their disabilities upon which student requests and entitlements to accommodation can be made, based on a limited and limiting diagnosis from a medical or psychological authority. Here we see another contradiction, in that while the University is committed to protecting students' confidentiality and privacy, the importance of disclosure is also constructed and presented as necessary. In their web material, accommodation services construct themselves as a liaison between the student and the other units of the University by accessing and conveying student information that would under any other circumstances be considered private. One could argue that in this way students with disability are constructed as external to the University in two ways. First, their right to privacy is formulated as less than that of 'other' students, and secondly, they can only be fully included once they agree to disclose their disability and by extension, to confirm their status as 'special' or 'in need'. In terms of deafness specifically, this means that student who is Deaf can only access services once she subscribes to the view of deafness as disability. For students who identify as Deaf, this might pose a problem, but this is also a challenge for those who do not fully subscribe to the view of deafness as cultural, nor to the view of deafness as a disability, as outlined in the earlier chapters.

The requirement for disclosure, on the one hand, poses the construct that disability must be made public in order to be accommodated. Conversely, the discourse poses a different understanding of disability and privacy, one that conveys subtly the idea that disability ought to be kept private rather than be made public. Namely, both policy and the website refer to a separate privacy policy several times, pointing out that all student's privacy will be protected. The intake form, for example, states:

We adhere to a strict policy of maintaining confidentiality regarding your involvement with our services and support. The personal information on this form will not be provided to any third parties unless required by law. (Accommodated Learning Centre, n.d.)

In several instances, this idea that disability is a personal concern and a private issue is reinforced, which if read literally can be seen as a simple assurance of confidentiality. However, the repeated commentary about privacy protection, coupled with the absence of any images or direct visual acknowledgment of disability or difference on the website, constructs disability as a private issue that is to be kept in a personal sphere. It also telegraphs the message that disability is something that should be kept secret and that one would not prefer to share their disability (or identity) with others, in turn normalizing and naturalizing disability as stigma. Finally, this issue of privacy gets braided to the medical model view that accommodations are needed because of personal traits of students who do not fit in, rather than recognizing that the accommodations are needed because the University procedures are not accessible in the first place and thus produce the disability. To use an example of deafness, if the university had Sign Language interpreters as a service offered to all students and available through accessible booking, there would not be a need to protect a student's privacy, as students would not need to request service, provide a rationale and justification for requesting it, and go through a complex and regulated procedure about accessing services. Further, if Sign Language were offered routinely in all classes, the question of D/deaf visibility would be rendered moot – there would be no reasons for D/deaf students to declare themselves, prove themselves through providing their diagnosis, or be rendered invisible. Thus, in the spirit of my previous argument about

how the University's accommodation services facilitate the "passing" of students with disabilities as normal, the privatization of disability permits the university to "pass" as accessible while simultaneously making individual students do the work of fitting in or being 'special.' By keeping all the requests, claims, and testimonies in one office and under the constraints of 'privacy', disability is not made to be present in the public realm of the University and it does not disrupt the (imagined) normal flow of education. Conversely, this permits the institution to appear inclusive, and as though it is successfully managing the demand in regards to disability and its accommodation. Due to this construction of privacy concerns, the actual rate of accommodation attempts is not publicly knowable, disability is made to disappear, and examples of accommodation successes and failures are not presented publicly. With the lack of presence of disability and deafness in the public sphere, the University is able to not reveal its barriers to access, and it gets to construct itself as an institution that operates smoothly and inclusively.

The procedures outlined in the documents seem to direct all issues related to disability into one office, where the student is promised she will be provided with a solution for her "problem." In that way disability gets concentrated in one particular place in the University that prevents it from leaking out and interfering with the regular flow of the University, which is imagined as a set of processes and practices that educate and train highly functioning bodies and minds that can follow certain procedures and keep within the existing order. When accommodations are not possible, the student is advised to reframe her student life, and thus to accommodate the institution. This is best seen in the example of a page titled "Students Tip Sheet." This page advises students to keep in mind

the time needed to move from one part of the campus to another and to select their courses accordingly. It reads as follows:

Ten minutes between classes does not leave adequate time to travel between the upper and lower campus for people with a mobility disability. (University of Lethbridge, 2015d)

The meeting minutes of the Special Needs Advisory Committee, reveal that this short break between classes was questioned by one of the faculty members. As noted in the meeting minutes, this faculty member noted that “the 10 minutes rule between classes is not sufficient time to reach another class and would like senior administration to respond to this” (Special Needs Advisory Committee, 2007). However, this rule was never changed, and the student is still advised to plan her schedule by taking the lack of accommodations into account. It is not uncommon for students to schedule courses during the same day. Students with mobility disabilities for whom it might not be possible to move quickly throughout the campus would need to reconsider their schedule, which potentially could result in longer time needed to graduate; nevertheless, within this current construction, accommodation and accessibility are still seen to have been offered and accomplished.

Assumptions about disability and deafness

As outlined in Chapter Two, the studies about accommodations and disability in higher education tend to suggest that the universities embrace the biomedical model (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006; Komesaroff, 2005; Nunan et al., 2000; Opini, 2008). Using the example of the University of Lethbridge as a case study, I argue that the use of the medical model in the policies is not straightforward and uncomplicated. The documents that I reviewed indicate that the University incorporates multiple discourses when approaching disability (medical model, social model, charity model, cultural model, disability/human rights

model), which results in conflicting and often incompatible claims and proposed practices about disability. In the case of the University of Lethbridge, the medical model is situated as the central framework, given that it is used to define disability, but it is not the only model, as some other understandings found their place in the documents. As Grue (2016) argues, most institutions' definitions or models of disability recognize two components of disability: social and bodily, and they mainly differ in the weighting they give to these components. In a way, the University of Lethbridge policy and documents recognize this complex interaction between social aspects and (assumed) bodily difference, insofar as they do not only convey the idea that accommodations services seek to change, cure, or assist an individual, but the documents also indicate that changes in overall structures have been made. Although one could argue there is a strong commitment to a definition that emphasizes the medical model, it is important to recognize that the accommodations are situated within these complex networks of meanings.

Although the documents I analyzed contain rationales that indicate different models and understandings of disability, they are not a clear transfer of a certain model; neither are they a perfect transfer of overarching provincial and government policies. Rather, they illuminate the complexities that disability as a social phenomenon carries with it, and the challenges disability poses to notions of access to education, disability rights, and inclusion in the higher education context. The documents I analyzed prompted me to further discuss the questions such as: who is perceived to be an ideal subject of education policies and how can equality in education be achieved?

While the Students with Disabilities Policy reflects different understandings of disability, it cites the “Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act” definition of disability as its guiding definition (II. Definitions).

Physical disability means any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes epilepsy, paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, muteness or speech impediment, and physical reliance on a guide dog, wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.

Mental disability means any mental disorder, developmental disorder or learning disorder, regardless of the cause or duration of the disorder. (University of Lethbridge, 2006, p. 3)

This definition relies on the medical model of disability, as it is based on the understanding that disability is an individual trait that can be found in someone’s body. I will demonstrate, however, that other understandings of disability have also found their place in this document. Discourses can and they often do contain contradictory claims, and as exemplified in this document, some contradictions can be found in the section addressing the responsibilities that are assigned to the University of Lethbridge under this policy. For example, when the policy states that the University is responsible “to continue to address accessibility in its facilities, buildings, and services” and “to initiate activities that promote a climate of openness and tolerance for students with disability” (University of Lethbridge, 2006, p. 3), these statements are based on understandings of disability that resemble the social model, claiming that disability is located in the space and environment, rather than insisting on modifying a person’s body (Shakespeare, 2010). The social model implies that in order to provide access to people with disabilities, it is necessary to address the special and organizational characteristics of a given institution, as noted in the quote above. As we

can see, this stands in contradiction to the opening definition in the document, which indicates disability is located in the body and solely lists certain conditions, thus indicating that disability is a consequence of a person's condition.

One other understanding embedded in a statement about a "climate of openness" resembles the view of disability as a minority or culture. 'Openness' and 'tolerance' are not the words usually used when one talks about somebody's health (as a medical model would suggest), rather, it is much more common to say that we are open and tolerant to different cultures or cultural backgrounds. This can also echo the charity model, in which people with disability are seen as in need of compassion and other people's care and empathy (Goodley, 2011).

I use these examples to show that this text contains more than just the one, most common and pervasive, medical model view of disability. While the policy is designed in order to ensure guaranteed rights of persons with disabilities, the language deployed suggests that disability is a question of medical conditions, that is further subjected to and reliant upon the compassionate acts of University employees. This sort of clashing of discourses is not unusual, as discourses do not exist in a vacuum; they are in constant struggle with other discourses "and other social practices which inform them over questions of truth and authority" (Mills, p. 17). Furthermore, Mills states that Foucault understands the discourse as "something that produces something else (an utterance, a concept, an effect), rather than something which exists in and of itself and which can be analyzed in isolation" (p. 15). This reliance on multiple understandings of ways of speaking about disability constructs disability as a complex issue, and in a way silently reveals that this institution is not designed with disability in mind. Namely, in order to accommodate

and include disability, what is needed is a reorganization on multiple levels – reconstructing of buildings and services, change of staff’s attitudes, and an abandonment of seeing accommodation as a charitable act. However, instead of working to address all of the levels of organization that construct disability as a problem, the most pervasive discourse at this University relating to disability are medical, based on assumptions about disability as a personal characteristic.

While the documents contain some diverse meanings of what disability is, the procedures that the documents outline nevertheless seem to strongly rely on the medical model. In the Students with Disability Policy (2006), it states that one of the responsibilities of students is “ to provide current, relevant psychological or medical documentation to Counseling Services to qualify for consideration for accommodations” (p. 3), and thus it is clear that experts outside of the University are positioned as able to define disability and to claim that a person is in need of assistance based on their medical knowledge and professional judgment. This quote indicates a strong reliance on the medical and professional opinions about disability as something natural, real, and embodied that in turn, presumably, shapes the University practices of administering supports. Here we see a continuity, as this requirement for documentation has been present since the first disability-related initiatives. There are no indications that an alternative imagining of disability outside of diagnosis and expert confirmation is possible, so this requirement for documentation reinforces the idea that disability only counts if it is legitimized and confirmed through certain bureaucratic and professional knowledge and practices.

In terms of deafness, the medical criterion would be looking at the individual’s medical documents that address deafness as a condition, rather than taking into account a

student's preference to communicate in Sign Language or the upbringing that formed her identity. We can see here that it is not only the defining of disability that is based on the medical model, but that the medical model is foundational to the procedures that are outlined in the policy document. Thus, for someone who would want to claim a Deaf identity and Deaf accommodations, there is no way to do so without relying on medical discourse. It is also evidenced in the intake forms – both from the early years and those that are used currently – that the University is assumed to be defined and legitimized through medical opinion.

There are numerous instances of privileging able-bodiedness and hearing in the content of the Centre's website. For example, this understanding is contained in the remark found on the website that students should pay close attention to the “qualifying skills and personal qualities” needed for a certain program of study. This remark could be understood as one reminding students that they need to make sure that they qualify in terms of their capacities and skills, and that some programs will *by nature* be too difficult for disabled students to take on. The presence of such commentary on the Accommodated Learning Centre's website suggests that there is an implicit assumption that students in need of accommodation might be lacking some skills or qualities that other, ‘normal’ students naturally possess. This is, again, to be understood as a relational characteristic, as categories such as “qualifying skills and personal qualities” are always defined in relation to an (imagined) able-bodied, hearing subject or an imagined ideal citizen.

Throughout this thesis I have provided examples where the disabled student is defined as a contrast to an ideal student – one that is independent and capable to respond to the requirements of higher education. The normative modern subject is in the centre of

this construction, serving as an ideal type of what a student should be like - responsible, self-reliant, and capable for self-actualization, as a sovereign of their own destiny (Giddens, 1991; Reindal, 1999). This notion is particularly important as it serves as a marker and reminder that the University as such is a place of enlightenment and rationality. Embedded in these ideals of both the citizen and the university is an implication that disabled students are NOT responsible, self-reliant, capable or sovereign, and further, because of the qualities of University life, they are constitutionally unsuited to University life, and on the other, their very presence in the University poses a threat to these ideals of autonomy and responsibility. Often in my discussion I turned to the notion of a white, male, able-bodied, heterosexual, neurotypical subject who is central to the regular flow of the university. In doing that I did not refer to an actual group of students nor did I claim actual existence of such a subject. Rather, I provided examples of descriptions of services and procedures that assume categories of self-reliant and responsible individual. In that sense, individualism is central to construction of all parties in higher education, and it is framed as absence of dependence (Reindal, 1999).

In keeping with the medical model, the website consistently conveys the view that disability is something real, fixed and enduring, irrespective of the structures in which one finds oneself and the meanings that are created through social processes. The ACL website contains instructional strategies that indicate that the needs of students are stemming from their (dis)ability, and that categories of disabilities are relevant for the accommodation process, so that the body and its differences are seen as the drivers for accommodation, rather than that the University's practices are exclusionary or challenging in and of themselves. Entire pages are dedicated to listing different categories of disabilities, such

as: Communication Disabilities (Speech Difficulties, Hearing Loss), Learning Disabilities, Mobility Impairments, Non-visible Disabilities, Temporary Disabilities, and Visual Impairments. Moreover, these categories are put in relation to each other for explanatory purposes. In that way different disabilities are compared and evaluated in relation to one another, creating a rubric of how difficult it is to accommodate these varying ‘conditions’. It is not only that these comparisons make sweeping generalizations about what a specific disability category ‘means’, but they also assume ideal types and abstract categories as tangible and substantial for the process of accommodation. For example, in a section dedicated to non-visible disabilities, it is stated that “it is not uncommon for a student with an invisible disability to have greater need for accommodations than a person with a visible disability such as paraplegia” (“Accommodated Learning Centre,” 2015). Another example refers to temporary disabilities, stating, “the actual accommodations required are usually the same as for individuals who have long term disabilities with similar handicapping manifestations (e.g. mobility impairments)” (“Accommodated Learning Centre,” 2015). These examples indicate that there is a hierarchy of needs and a corresponding perceived level of ‘appropriate’ services (as expressed in “*greater* need for accommodation *than*” and “the actual accommodations required are usually *the same as for*”). These instances of comparing and contrasting different disabilities reinforce the notion of a hierarchy of disabilities (and a hierarchy of needs), in which some disabilities are greater or ‘easier’ than others and the level of needed services depends on the presumed type of disability. As indicated in these examples, disabilities get to be categorized according to how hard or complicated it is to provide accommodations.

In the guidelines for instructors that can be found on the Centre's website, the language seems to suggest that the normatively understood flow of higher education is not being challenged by the inclusion of disability (or deafness). Rather, the services are offered to individual students in order to accommodate their needs, but the existing 'normal' procedures, regulations, and practices of the University are seen as fixed and central, in addition to being constructed as neutral and necessary for maintaining high quality education and protecting academic standards. Thus, some (imagined) groups of students continue to be perceived as being peripheral and having greater needs than the 'average' or normative student, which is indicative of a lack of institutional accommodation in general to a diverse student body.

Although these documents include statements that overtly indicate a deep commitment to making the University accessible, it is important to note that the overview of documents I outline here cannot tell us for sure whether the University programs are or are not being redesigned with disability in mind. However, we could use Foucault's notion of reversals (Foucault & Smith, 1995; Allen, 1996) and consider for a moment the idea that the University is indeed dedicated to ensuring equal education and that it takes into account disability when developing its programs, procedures, and requirements. If this was the case, there should surely be an overarching plan for inclusion, and there would be no need for an office dedicated solely to accommodations. An office that provides disability services would be obsolete in a university that is dedicated to making all of its programs and procedures accessible.

One section on the website on learning disabilities ("Accommodated Learning Centre," 2015) does step away from the medical model briefly, and recognizes the social

and historical construction of disability by referring to the history of adverse educational experiences and exclusions for non-normative students. This discussion, together with the other notions of disability outlined here, indicates that the University's language concerning disability does not take up one notion of disability, but is a network of different meanings, patchwork of ideas about what disability is and what it could be. In addition to being read that disability is not a given, but a result of structural injustices, this can be read as a message of hope that once we create inclusive practice in education, disability will be differently constructed (or cease to exist). This claim about the historical construction of intellectual disability is, however, absent for other (imagined) categories of disabilities.

Who is a student?

Under the section "Responsibilities," when listing what are the responsibilities of the University, the policy reads: "(3) To ensure faculty members identify course objectives and consider *accommodations that do not compromise academic objectives*" (University of Lethbridge, 2006, p. 3, emphasis added). The assumption that the inclusion of students with disabilities might contribute to the declining quality of academic programs is a common one and it builds on the medical understanding of disability in which disability is characterized as a deficit, and persons with disabilities are presumed to be less capable and unable to reach (seemingly objective) normative standards. The disabled subject is here being constructed as one who could undermine the academic enterprise simply by being included. At the same time, this language of "compromising academic objectives" reveals that the institution's objectives and standards are shaped and formulated by having an (imagined) 'normal,' able-bodied citizen in mind. Once these expectations are formulated for the normal student, the policy is deployed to protect these standards. The implication

that accommodations could possibly jeopardize these standards indicates that those standards were not inclusive or equitable in the first place, that they were not formulated with equity or inclusion in mind. Instead, in this formulation, disability is an appendage or addition to an already established set of normalizing claims about what needs to be known, how one should perform, and which outcomes of education are valuable. Deafness is particularly important in this case, as another way of knowing and communicating that threatens the dominant way of being in the world, and thus brings into question the normative epistemology and a 'hearing world' view that is firmly situated in the centre of University functioning (Bauman & Murray, 2014).

One way that the rights of disabled students in higher education are constructed in all the pivotal documents is through a commitment to ensuring equal rights. As listed in the provincial bulletin on accommodation, accommodation is a "method for ensuring that persons with disabilities have equal access to post-secondary education" (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2004). Thus, accommodations seem to serve as an instrument that would ensure to students with disabilities the access that is already provided to other students. As explicated in the quote above, the students are to be provided with 'equal' access, and the question here is: "equal to whom?" Disabilities only exist in relation to the notion of a normal subject, and a D/deaf student only exists in relation to a hearing student. The able-bodied, hearing student that is placed in the centre of education reinforces, produces, and constructs disability as real and other. Equality is a relational concept, and to meaningfully say that someone is equal is also to imagine them as equal to someone else. Here we can see that the (special) rights of students with disabilities are measured against (ordinary) rights of able bodied students, where an (imagined) able-bodied student

is set as a standard and a norm, thus the disabled student does not deserve more or less, nor will the entitlement of 'normal students' alter in this equation. The inclusion of students with disabilities does not assume that the centre of education and its practices will be challenged and change significantly, rather it will stay the same as it is, and the institution will make sure that the academic standards and procedures are protected. Accommodations will bridge the two – the imagined students with disabilities and the well-defined standards and procedures. It is not clear whether accommodation is supposed to ensure that the student will also achieve equal success. What is not obvious here is that disability is produced as a deficit through the very procedures that are designed to accommodate it. However, one can also understand through this construction that accommodations are needed because inaccessible procedures and practices are at the core of higher education (i.e. traditional exam-taking, formal lecture-giving, rigid classroom temporal and spatial arrangements, etc.).

In the section about Non-visible Disabilities in the policy, it is stated that "...some form of accommodation may be essential in order for individuals to compete equally in the educational environment." To probe this idea of equal access and competing equally, we could attempt to specify whose experiences are used as standard measure for equality. Namely, is a Deaf student supposed to be equal to a blind student? Or is an international student whose first language is not English supposed to have access to same rights and services as a First Nations student? The policy is not framed in the way that ensures equality among all these groups of students. Rather, it is an (imagined) normal student that is at the centre, that we can speculate is a white, able-bodied, neurotypical, heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon, middle class student that is imagined to be at the core of the quality education,

standards, and procedures, while all the other (constructed, imagined) groups of students must strive to be equal to them. In that sense, within this rights-based approach, equality is imagined as accessing the set of privileges that a person would be able to access if they were not a member of a particular, non-normative group (Withers, 2012). Further, at its core, the notion of education as competition and struggle is held intact by a discourse that frames the other as a threat to competitive excellence and that claims the role of education is at its core, an exclusionary system of winners and losers engaged in a Hobbesian game.

A flyer that is distributed to the students who visit the Accommodated Learning Centre, indicates that due to increased workflow, the centre is not accepting drop-in visits. On a material level, this suggests that the increased workflow was not followed by appropriate increase in funding or personnel. On a discursive level, this statement about scarce resources and overworked staff conveys that accommodation is in actuality not a right, but a privilege that is stretching the 'real' system thin. One could therefore understand this as a message of dissuasion and exclusion that counters the explicit claim to the provision of accommodation services. As a result, although provincial documents and policies indicate that the University is responsible for ensuring that *all* services (credit and non-credit) are accessible to students with disabilities, the front page of the website indicates that the pivotal aspect of the accommodation process are exams – booking exams is in the centre of the website presentation.

As outlined earlier, an analysis of accommodation at University of Victoria offered by Hibbs and Pothier (2006) suggests that the University of Victoria in its policies and practices utilizes the medical, individualized, model of disability, which requires a student to self-identify as disabled, and further provide evidence for her need for accommodation.

At the University of Lethbridge, self-identification has been and still is an important part of the process of accessing accommodation services, and students are asked to consider disclosing their disabilities and prove them to be ‘real’. This can be seen as an example of how discursive power relations do not only repress, regulate or instruct behavior, but how they are also engaged in the production of a certain kind of subject, and a certain kind of subjectivity, that of the deserving disabled person. These expectations and understanding are also conveyed in the University of Lethbridge’s discourse.

The Students with Disability Policy is framed around the notion of individualized rather than institutional responsibility. The introductory part of the policy encourages students “to act responsibly by striving to be as self-reliant and as independent as possible, and be fully engaged in their academic endeavors” (University of Lethbridge, 2006, p. 3). As we can see from this quote, responsibility is individualized in a sense that the student is responsible for her own success or failure; further, independence is valorized as a quality that all students – even disabled ones – can and should ascribe to. This corresponds to the neoliberal model of services, in which the individual is required to be proactive and responsible for accessing the services (Prince, 2009); it also corresponds to a neoliberal notion of citizenship in which the good citizen is characterized as one who does not rely on others but is instead self-motivated and self-regulating. As outlined in the previous chapter, the history of accommodation services is one that reflects a valuation of independence and individualism in the modern citizen. This framing assumes that education serves as a vehicle for individual gain and it elevates the autonomous, independent citizen as an ideal. In that framework, being prone to dependency is seen as a negative trait. The policy, website, and the brochure all take up and reproduce the notion

of a responsible, self-reliant individual who ensures their own success by being compliant to procedures and yet takes an active role in the process. It is common for person with disabilities to be expected to prove that they are worthy of efforts that others make to accommodate them and to evidence that they are well-behaved and deserving of resources, and these messages are subtly conveyed in the text of the ACL web page list of what a student needs to do prior to requesting services. The list includes “have research and resources available to help the accommodating person or institution put the accommodation in place.” This indicates that those who are worthy of services are expected to be well-prepared and acquiescent subjects who possess certain qualities: they are cooperative, well-behaved, and disciplined; further, they are expected to ask, but not for ‘too much’ by helping others to help them. This requirement for compliance and appearing deserving also extends beyond qualifying for services. Once entitlement to services is ascertained, for example, the policy indicates that students are responsible to “participate in developing appropriate strategies, and to be open to trying proposed solutions” (University of Lethbridge, 2006, p. 3).

The above examples paint students with disabilities as responsible subjects and, above all, as willing and engaged self-advocates. When we use the example of deafness as a lens for examining the expectations about self-advocacy embedded in these policies, much is revealed. One thing that is not expressed or acknowledged in this discourse is that it may be a challenge for someone who is asking for accommodations in regards to communication to negotiate for them, because she might be lacking the very tools with which to do so. The paradox of requiring students with communication differences to negotiate with the hearing world for hard-pressed and grudgingly conferred

accommodations is elided in the university discourse; the ACL texts presume an autonomous, skilled communicator who is able to negotiate her position. Moreover, I would like to argue that there are some more sophisticated and complex problems in place. Through insisting on an assertive attitude, persistence, and active participation, a proper subject-recipient of accommodations is being modeled. This also provides a framework for imagining who is includable and what kinds of behaviours and attitudes are expected and rewarded. In that sense, accommodations are framed as a reward for those who deserve them and who are ready to work hard to earn them. This notion of a vocal, assertive, and forceful subject capable of negotiating with the institution and its officers is based on a notion of able-bodiedness. I would like to note here that I am not positing that a disabled student cannot be vocal and assertive or that an able student necessarily can, but rather, I argue that the way the assertive and self-advocating subject is constructed in this document is made without consideration of the privileged position able-bodiedness occupies, or of the lack of privilege that disability occupies culturally and socially. The process of accommodation as it is described in the document assumes ‘successful’ communication, which reflects some assumptions based on audism. Namely, for someone who is D/deaf, the means for achieving successful communication might not be available in this University, given that the communication assumes hearing practices. And interestingly enough, this contradiction is recognized on the website, as it states – in a seemingly sympathetic overture, that it is not uncommon that friends and family engage in negotiations for accommodation (“Accommodated Learning Centre,” 2015). Here we can see a tacit acknowledgment that the system is set up in such a way that a student with disabilities will not have means to access the services without the help of friends and

family, who are here constructed as allies. This remark is posed in contradiction to the statement cited earlier, stating that the student needs to be as “self-reliant and independent as possible”. Thus, while independence is a normative and ableist golden standard, the disabled student is at the same time presented as someone who will need able-bodied’s help to access the services. On a materialist level, this raises the question of whether disabled students’ access to supportive networks, rather than their entitlement to service, actually determines the quality and scope of accommodations offered. And finally, by naming the process “negotiation,” the Centre suggests that accommodations are something that needs to be fought for and conquered. A reasonable question one would ask is: why would one need to negotiate rights that are guaranteed by the legislative framework in place?

Instructors and accommodation guidelines

The pages on the website are organized in such a way that it is not always clear who the audience is - is it a student with a disability or an instructor? Or is it an imagined auditor, a party that would objectively judge whether the University provides quality services to students with disabilities? That said, some pages *are* specifically designed for instructors and they contain guidelines on how to approach students with disabilities, as well as detailed descriptions of different disabilities. These descriptions rely heavily on medical discourse. For example, the section on Mobility Impairments lists the possible causes of orthopedic impairment: “A congenital anomaly (e.g. clubfoot, spina bifida); the result of disease (e.g. muscular dystrophy, arthritis); result of trauma or accident (e.g. amputation)” (“Accommodated Learning Centre,” 2015). It is not clear how this information would benefit students or instructors in the context of accommodation in higher education, and it

would be plausible to argue that there is no benefit to these categorizations in regards to specific classroom accommodation. Rather, these categorizations of disability are presented as evidence of disease, trauma and tragedy. What is being implied here is that students with disabilities are accessing the education after some tragic and traumatic or disease-related events that caused their disabilities. Instead of being presented as students who have right to equal access, the students with disabilities are portrayed as survivors and tragic figures who essentially are damaged and injured. Reading between the lines and beyond the silence, we can presume that the invocation of sympathy and horror invited by such lists of disease and disaster may have been thought necessary to convey to instructors that – *through no fault of their own* – these are students who have suffered much, who are worthy of sympathy and thus should be accommodated. One might even speculate that the inclusion of this kind of narrative is made so that faculty, who might otherwise resist providing accommodation, will agree to it. Moreover, as this and similar lists are available on a public website, this is also available to students who might be searching for accommodation-related information. Thus, while trying to access the University’s rights and services as everyone else who is in the University setting, the students may come across these descriptions of themselves as abject, diseased or victimized.

From the instructions that are intended for faculty members, we can see that instructors are imagined as able-bodied subjects who can adjust, be flexible, and cater to student’s needs as charitable benefactors. In these texts the instructor is always, at least overtly, characterized as ready and able to adapt and provide service to students with disabilities. Some of the guidelines include advice such as “consider sitting at eye level with the person in the wheelchair;” “maintaining eye contact with the person;” “speak at a

normal volume” (University of Lethbridge, 2006). This construction conveys not only that one person in this instructor-student dyad will be “normal” and able-bodied, but it also constructs students with disabilities as passive, dependent, and needful. Portraying instructors as able-bodied conveys that a person with disabilities cannot be imagined in a role of instructor. Furthermore, in these instructions students with disabilities are clustered in groups that are based on their categorization within the framing of a medical diagnosis and it is assumed that the needs of students with disabilities and the accommodations provided will naturally stem from and be predicted by their assumed disability category. Furthermore, these instructions and guidelines for instructors suggest that presence of students with disabilities at the University is a novelty, despite the presence of students with disabilities-related services for over three decades. Once more, through these instructions for faculty members, the accommodation-related material suggests that students with disabilities are external to the process of education, and thus special guidelines on how to include them are needed.

Furthermore, these instructions also send a message that instructors are expected to be compassionate, flexible, and open to ensure student’s success. What is implied here is that the success of students with disabilities is not possible within the regular operating of the institution, so everyone needs to alter their ways of functioning to accommodate and serve students with disabilities. In that way, the students with disabilities are constructed as a special group that requires exceptional treatment, and instructors are constructed as charitable actors who are not delivering services from the perspective of all students’ rights, but from a position of being beneficent towards (deserving) but exceptional students who rely on this goodwill.

Finally, the fact that these guidelines for instructors are displayed publically can be seen as condescending and patronizing, as the pages that are guidelines for instructors are largely based on generalizations and ideal types of disabilities. It also sends the message that students will face challenges in accessing post-secondary education, as it portrays instructors as uninformed about the ways in which to communicate with students with disabilities. The page titled “Hearing Loss. General Etiquette” contains instructions such as “Ensure that you have the person’s attention before speaking” and “Speak normally without ‘over-enunciating’ or speaking loudly unless the circumstances require it” (“Accommodated Learning Centre,” 2015). Finally, this careful instruction on how to deal with the ‘other’ presumes that a disabled student, and particularly a D/deaf student, is an exceptional student in the university setting, and that faculty (who are presumed to be ‘normal’) will not have experience in dealing with such “exotic” others. In a sense, these instructions tacitly affirm the University as a non-inclusive space while simultaneously indicating that it should be.

This discursive production of an ideal student on one hand and disabled or D/deaf student on the other, contributes to the construction of University as a place of rationality and sanity. The language that is used to describe instructors contributes to this notion, as they are described as exemplars of these modernist ideals. In this discursive formation where the institution is marked as a place of thought, the ideal student as someone who is self-sufficient, the instructor as a capable and powerful individual, and both are seen as intellectual, even disembodied actors. In this construction, the messiness, dependency and embodied spectacle of disability and the possible inclusion of students with disabilities is presented as a threat to the stable and coherent order.

While I aimed to address the social origins of disability, it is pertinent to note that ability is equally as socially constructed – ability does not exist as a real category that produces disability. Rather, a rational, potent, and capable subject is also produced socially – through material and discursive practices that sustain and reinforce notion of normality as something real and fixed. Social constructions of disability and deafness can only be revealed when the social origins of ability are recognized. The notions of dependency and independency illustrate how ability is produced through discursive formation – most importantly, students who are constructed as disabled are required to demonstrate a high level of independence and self-reliance. This notion is founded on the premise that an ideal student acts as an independent actor in the university setting, which may, in fact not always be a reasonable premise. Not recognizing that non-disabled student’s presence in the university setting is enabled through a complex network of (inter)dependence allows for the construction of disabled student as dependent and less-than.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I outlined many of the messages about disability that are conveyed in the Students with Disabilities Policy (2006) and in the material available at the Accommodated Learning Centre’s website. I read these two documents in relation to the history of accommodation-related services outlined in the previous chapter, and by keeping in mind the theoretical and methodological framework that I introduced earlier. I was particularly interested in outlining the presence of ableist and audist notions that are embedded in these documents.

The analysis in this chapter suggests that the language in use abounds in privileging ablebodiedness and hearing, and that the manner in which procedures and practices are

described suggests that disability is still being understood as an individual tragedy that is to be kept private. However, in addition to pointing out examples that cleave to the medical model of disability, I have demonstrated that the discourse contains many more models and conceptualizations of disability: such as the social and charity models. Throughout this chapter, I have used the understanding of Deafness as a cultural identity in order to challenge, probe, and to inquire into the understanding of disability that is contained in the University's documents.

Conclusion

Overview

In this thesis I used multiple understandings and models of disability and deafness in order to examine discourses on disability accommodation and services at the University of Lethbridge. I was especially interested in implications of these discourses on the University's approaches to deafness, but in that endeavour I also looked at broader discourses on disability. Rather than committing to one definition of disability I explored complex and nuanced understandings of disability that are conveyed throughout the texts I analyzed. To this end, I employed a Foucauldian framework, in which truth is not understood as a given, and meaning and knowledge are produced through complex power relations.

In Chapter One, I introduced my research interest, situated my studies along the lines of Disability Studies and Deaf Studies and I briefly outlined the legislative framework that governs the accommodation policies in Alberta. As outlined in that chapter, my research question focused on exploring how current University policies and practices draw upon and reformulate broader social beliefs regarding disability and inclusion. Throughout my research I sought instances of how disability is conceived and spoken about, and consequently, what that tells us about who is included and includable, and who is excluded and normatively excludable. The language in the policy and other related discursive materials revealed multiple and often contradictory portrayals of an imagined disabled student. I was particularly interested in unraveling these images, and further exploring what they tell us about who is deserving of accommodations, which accommodations are manageable, and which are beyond imaginable.

In addressing those questions I was guided by a body of literature that belongs to Disability Studies and Deaf Studies, two academic fields that are interested in the social and cultural production of disability and deafness, respectively, as outlined in Chapter Two. While Disability Studies comprise various contested and nuanced views on disability, many of which can help us understand deafness, Deaf Studies, on the other hand, offer a conceptual framework in which deafness is understood as a cultural identity, and Deaf people are recognized as a linguistic minority. By placing these two broader frameworks in conversation I revealed complexities and contradictions within both of these approaches. Together, however, these two paradigms challenge the “common sense” view of disability – that disability is a characteristic of an individual. Throughout this thesis, I invoked these multiple understandings of deafness in order to probe and problematize the messages conveyed through the texts I analyzed.

Chapter Three introduced the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this project. In this chapter I provided an overview of the documents and materials examined in this thesis. I also provided a rationale as to why discourse analysis is the most suitable approach for this project. The use of the Foucauldian notion of discourse allowed me to examine what is implied and understood as truth and also how silences in the discourse could be interpreted. The Foucauldian notion of discourse as a cluster of statements that have effects in real life was a suitable framework for addressing these issues, as I was interested in exploring how these policies and the notions of disability they evoke could possibly affect the lives of students with disabilities. In this chapter I also considered ethical implications of my work, and I reflected on issues of positionality by outlining the reasons

behind my interest in this topic and a brief discussion of the emancipatory potential of this study.

In Chapter Four I analysed the historical context in which the University's accommodation services emerged. By reviewing the meeting minutes, University publications, and the University Calendars, this chapter pointed to changes in the discourse on accommodations, and examined how disability has been discussed in the University documents. The overview of these documents indicates that at this University, the language and policy relating to accommodation has conceptualized disability as an individual issue that is to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. There were also important shifts in the tone of the discourse over time: while the earlier public commentaries in the 1990s included numerous critiques – both from students and from faculty members – on the University's approach to accommodations, the later developments were followed by more optimistic or unquestioning attitudes. My initial intention was not to engage in an analysis of these materials, but rather to provide an overview of key events and materials. However, I found that discourse analysis was helpful in examining some of the messages conveyed in the earlier documents, and in this chapter I often went beyond providing an overview, as I used some of the Foucauldian tools to discuss the findings.

Finally, Chapter Five examines more recent policies and documents, especially the content of the Accommodated Learning Centre's website. The analysis of these materials builds on the notion of disability as an individual matter that was outlined in Chapter Four. Furthermore, in this chapter I discussed different kinds of models of disability that are embedded in the discourse about accommodation services – primarily medical model, but also tones of social and charity models. In addition to explicating which models are present

in the discourse, I also demonstrated how ableism and audism found their discursive place in talk about procedures and practices, as presented in these materials. My analysis pointed out examples that suggest that the language in use privileges a certain kind of subject, one that is able-bodied and hearing, whether that subject was a student, or – surprisingly – a faculty member. In this chapter I relied on an understanding of Deafness as a cultural identity, in order to question the common understanding of deafness as a disability to imagine a different set of accommodation practices.

Discussion on findings

In my analysis of two bodies of materials, one relating to the development and history of accommodation services and one that embodies current practices, I discussed the discontinuities, recurring themes, and different conceptualizations of disability and deafness embedded in these materials. My research indicates that the representation of disability in the discourse of accommodation draws on individualized and medicalized approach to disability. Namely, the way accommodations are spoken of relies on the notion of disability as a real, essential and totalizing trait of an individual, and is largely anchored in the understanding of disability as a matter of deficit, flaw and personal tragedy. However, in some instances, other models of disability found their place in the discourse, as I demonstrated through discussion of examples of the social and charity models. However, despite the presence of other conceptualizations of disability, medical vocabulary continues to be the main point of reference for discussions on disability. The use of the notion of deafness as a cultural identity in this research allowed me to challenge the medical reasoning about disability throughout this research and to demonstrate one possible alternative model for imagining accommodation services.

Furthermore, this research demonstrates that the discourses on disability and accommodation services are built on the notion of a 'normal,' able-bodied subject, who is discursively placed as the centre of the University's practices and procedures. In that way, disabled and D/deaf students are constructed as a deviation from a norm and exceptional to the University setting. Placing the 'normal' student at the centre of the education implies that students who are constructed as in need of accommodations are visitors or guests to the education processes. In that way, the need for accommodations produces a vicious circle; this need is built on the notion of a 'normal' subject and the general practices are not being questioned for their embedded ableism and audism. Rather, students with disabilities seem to be held to the standards and expectations that work in favour of and are created for an imagined able-bodied student. These standards and expectations are presented as neutral and unbiased, thus continually producing a student with disabilities as a student who is not performing on a satisfactory level and who is thus in need of special treatment and special accommodation practices.

Because of this 'special' status that students with disabilities have, which depicts them as outsiders and non-members, these students are asked to do additional work in order to prove their right to and demonstrate their commitment to obtaining accommodations. Additional labour that students are expected to put into accessing accommodation services includes providing evidence about one's disability and complying to robust bureaucratic procedures, and the language that depicts these processes portrays students with disabilities as potential frauds. Furthermore, descriptions of these processes of accessing accommodation services suggest that disability is a fact about something that can be pinned down and that is one's enduring and stable trait that prevents equal participation. Thus,

equal status, participation and inclusion are presented as something that could only be achieved through generous accommodation practices that nevertheless impose significant burdens of proof and deservingness upon their recipients.

I also intended to explore whether the University of Lethbridge can be understood as a proactive or a reactive institution in terms of accommodation and inclusion; this is to say I asked whether the University seeks opportunities to enhance its accommodation services generally, or if it merely relies on requests coming from students and requests from other institutions and legislative framework (Hibbs & Pothier, 2006). I have argued that the University of Lethbridge could be described as a reactive institution, as the description of its practices suggests that requests from students are what must initiate the process of accommodation, and there were no indications that the University is taking initiative in accommodating a general, imagined diverse student body based on presumed disabilities and differences.

Further, I was interested in gauging this institution's commitment to inclusion of students with disabilities that goes beyond mere access to education. The definition of inclusion I introduced earlier defines inclusive education as ones that aims to support schools to

Increase *access* (or presence) of all students (not only marginalized or vulnerable groups), (2) enhance the school personnel's and students' acceptance of all students, (3) maximize student *participation* in various domains of activity, and (4) increase the *achievement* of all students. (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006, p. 66, original emphasis)

If we were to estimate this institution's commitment to inclusive education based on this definition, one could say that these tenets of inclusive education are not being accomplished or even discussed through accommodation services. The University's

accommodation-related material does not suggest that there is an attempt to increase the access of all students, regardless of their perceived disability, or that disabled students' participation in different domains of student life is being encouraged. Accommodation-related services are defined in a narrow manner, one which mostly focuses on individual student and her expressed needs for accommodations in the classroom, and often, only in the examination room.

The decision to use a Foucauldian framework for this research came from my interest in exploring how we talk about disability, and what we assume about it in that talk. I was interested in the language that contributes to the understanding of disability as something fixed and real. While the Foucauldian framework allowed me to address these aspects through discussions on discourse, I also encountered certain limitations of this framework. Namely, my primary focus was on language and how it produces and constructs disability, but I also wanted to discuss actual practices and procedures. However, discourse analysis did not allow me to easily make this transition from discussing language to drawing conclusions that refer to practice, which I often attempted to make. Furthermore, some limitations came from the type of sources I chose to analyze. Since I focused on textual sources, my knowledge about actual practices was quite limited. The interest in actual practices stems from my commitment to disability rights, which I anticipated as one point of tension in this research. That tension was persistent and present throughout this research, as I often struggled to reconcile my own views and beliefs about disability rights with the theoretical and nuanced analysis I engaged in.

Recommendations

The way that accommodations are construed in the University's documents suggests that disability and the need for accommodation stems from an individual with disability and perceived difference in her body, her preferred mode of communication, or assumptions about her abilities. However, the underlying argument that connects all these chapters is that disability is a product of social relations, and thus the need for accommodations is socially produced. Although the purpose of this thesis was not to offer recommendations, several reflections stem from this project on what it would mean for accommodation services to be structured with the social construction of disability in mind. Allowing for disability and accommodation services to be more publically present would potentially create the spaces for challenging the ableism and audism that are built into many institutions such as universities. In terms of accommodation services, this would mean expanding them beyond one specialized office, and instead making accommodative classrooms, public and private spaces, and social processes a normalized part of university life. Secondly, providing at least some services for students with disabilities without asking them to go through complex set of procedures would demonstrate the institution's mandate to build an inclusive environment. And finally, presenting accommodations in a way that would reiterate that the need for accommodation stems from the University's structure, rather than from one's body and personal traits, would potentially encourage a reassessment of University's procedures and a reimagining of programs and accommodation-related practices. Together, these initiatives would potentially also produce a more inviting culture for disabled and non-disabled students; and might

encourage a more diverse student body, which in itself is a form of cultural accommodation.

One could argue that these recommendations are formulated as a utopian project that is unattainable within an institution such as a university. Such an argument would consider the ways in which universities are organized, and how they are operated and funded, perhaps claiming that such accommodation would be institutionally burdensome, or as noted earlier, might lower 'standards'. However, I would argue that the supposed implausibility of these recommendations testifies to what extent ableism and audism are entrenched and normalized in our institutions, and thus made to seem natural, acceptable and inevitable.

Future research

The arguments developed in this thesis are heavily based on textual sources; however, the relationship between texts and practice is not straight-forward. Looking more closely into the issue of how institutional organizations allow for disability and deafness to be imagined and possible in the context of education, additional examination of space within the institution would build on the arguments presented here. Namely, not only an analysis of space organization would be necessary, but also lighting, distances, and the ways in which space creates, and is a reflection of social relations. A study of disability and deafness as imagined in that space would complement the textual analysis presented in this thesis. Furthermore, for a project of larger scope, it would be valuable to look at documents and texts that are not officially intended to be about disability and deafness, but still incorporate and build on some understandings of disability. Finally, there is much research to be done on the experience of students with disabilities, whether through

document analysis and/or in-depth interviews. While the research on students' experiences with accommodation services is growing in Canada, most of the studies focus on larger universities in urban centres. The University of Lethbridge is specific as it is a smaller campus and has smaller student population, while differences could also be in terms of presence of a disability community on campus (or lack thereof).

Epilogue

In this thesis I examined the documents and web pages related to disability that I accessed in the fall semester of 2015. However, changes to these web pages were introduced in the spring semester of 2016, when the website incorporated new content, significantly changing the tone of the language, and offering a more personable and engaging approach. In addition to more informal language and a more student-centred approach⁵, there are also many other changes in its content and form: the new layout introduces different parts of the website and includes sections that are intended for different parties including students and professors; the disabilities are not listed as categories - instead, categories denote different services; and finally, the overall focus seems to be on the services offered, and not on students and their disabilities. The new website also does not include detailed descriptions of disabilities, which is a significant departure from the medicalized approach to disability that was present in the earlier form of the website. It is important to note that these changes in the layout of the website and descriptions of services were not preceded by a change in policies. Rather, the new website refers to the same set of policies and legislative framework and is presented as a logical extension of these. Thus,

⁵ For example, the section titled "Students" opens with "At the Accommodated Learning Centre you are not just one of our students, you are part of our family!" (University of Lethbridge, 2016a)

we can see that the policies in place are flexible and open-ended; they do not prescribe a certain set of practices. The possibilities for creating accommodation services that are justified by these policies seem to be diverse enough to produce different (and often contradictory) sets of practices. It remains to be seen whether this changed language will have any effect on the culture and climate of ableism that remains entrenched in the foundational documents – and arguably – the broader institution.

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Appendix 1: University of Lethbridge Students with Disabilities Policy (2006)



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

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AUTHORITY:	RESPONSIBILITY:	EFFECTIVE DATE:	RELATED POLICIES:
Board of Governors General Faculties Council Sept. 12, 2005	Vice-President (Academic)	October 18, 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidentiality of Student Records

I. PREAMBLE

The University of Lethbridge will take all reasonable measures short of undue hardship to promote full access to all services for students with disabilities in its post-secondary education programs (credit and non-credit) and community outreach components. For their part, students are encouraged to act responsibly by striving to be as self-reliant and as independent as possible, and by fully engaging in their academic endeavours.

II. DEFINITIONS

A **student** is an individual who is admitted into a program of study or is studying via the 'unclassified' student route.

The definition of a **disability** follows the definition in the *Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* (Section 44):

“Physical disability means any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes epilepsy, paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, muteness or speech impediment, and physical reliance on a guide dog, wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.

Mental disability means any mental disorder, developmental disorder or learning disorder, regardless of the cause or duration of the disorder.”

Services for Students with Disabilities are provided by Counselling Services at the University of Lethbridge.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

Students with disabilities have the following responsibilities under this policy:

- (1) To communicate their unique needs and give sufficient notice to allow the University to make appropriate accommodations. The student is responsible for requesting accommodations from an instructor at least two weeks in advance of the evaluation date.
- (2) To provide current, relevant psychological or medical documentation to Counselling Services to qualify for consideration for accommodations.
- (3) To participate in developing appropriate strategies, and to be open to trying proposed solutions.
- (4) To meet the deadlines set by the University.

The University of Lethbridge has the following responsibilities under this policy:

- (1) To promote greater understanding of disabilities and the need for accommodations by educating faculty, staff, and students.
- (2) To initiate activities that promote a climate of openness and tolerance for students with disabilities.
- (3) To ensure faculty members identify course objectives and consider accommodations that do not compromise academic objectives.
- (4) To continue to address accessibility in its facilities, buildings, services, and programs with Counseling Services - Students Disabilities office who will liaise with appropriate personnel.
- (5) To provide financial and administrative support to the service units, appropriate to the demand, as approved by the Board of Governors.
- (6) All units within the University have the responsibility to provide access for students with disabilities.

IV. ADMISSIONS

Any student who meets admission requirements for general admission will be considered for admission to the University of Lethbridge.

Persons with disabilities who believe they have been refused admission to a particular program due to their disability; based on submitted documentation supporting this disability, may appeal the admission decision. Appeals should be directed to the Dean's office of the relevant Faculty or School, accompanied with any appropriate supporting disability documentation.

V. PROGRAM ADVISING

Program advising for a student with disabilities has three main objectives:

- (1) To ensure that students meet the program requirements, and that any program adjustments are appropriate and reasonable, short of undue hardship (see section VII for the definition of *undue hardship*).
- (2) To ensure the student is informed of the qualifications, skills, and personal qualities required to complete an academic program successfully.
- (3) To ensure that a student with progressive and/or fluctuating disabilities is informed that adjustments to accommodations may not be possible in cases of undue hardship.

Each faculty will designate one person to be responsible for disability matters, including program advising. The advising will be done in consultation with Counselling Services.

VI. INSTRUCTION

Relative to instruction in relation to this policy at the University, Instructors, Department Chairs, and Deans have three responsibilities:

- (1) To urge students with disabilities to self-identify.
- (2) To obtain a copy of the Students with Disabilities Policy for students with disabilities.
- (3) To take all reasonable steps, short of undue hardship, to ensure that the instructional needs, as determined by the assessment undertaken by Counselling Services, of students, who have self-identified, with disabilities are met for the duration of the course or program.

While it is the responsibility of Counselling Services to provide Deans with lists of students with disabilities, who have self-identified, enrolled in courses offered in their respective Faculties and Schools and the Deans are then to advise the appropriate Instructor, students are responsible for communicating directly with their Instructors. Specifically, students are responsible for informing their instructors of their disability and their instructional needs stemming from their disability in a timely manner.

As a result of the assessment undertaken by Counselling Services of the students who have self-identified a disability, Counselling Services will recommend an appropriate accommodation to the Dean to reasonably accommodate the student.

VII. EVALUATION

The student is responsible for requesting accommodations from an instructor at least two weeks in advance of the evaluation date in accordance with the University of Lethbridge academic schedule. The instructor and student are jointly responsible for arranging the resources needed for the evaluation process, in accordance with established deadlines set by Counselling Services.

VIII. **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

The University of Lethbridge will make reasonable academic accommodations, short of undue hardship, to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the institution and the opportunity to succeed in their programs of study. Undue hardship includes, but is not limited to:

Financial cost that hurts the viability of the service, program or institution. To be considered an undue hardship, the financial cost of an accommodation must amount to a significant part of the University's applicable program budget.

The existence of health and safety concerns for the student receiving the accommodation, for other students, or for other service providers. Safety and health risks that contravene legally required occupational health and safety and workers' compensation requirements may be considered an undue hardship.

Students have the right to appeal their appropriate accommodations as identified by Counselling Services to the Associate Vice President (Student Services) and Registrar whose decision will be final and binding. Students have the right to appeal a perceived failure to apply their appropriate accommodations to the Dean's Office of the relevant faculty or school.

IX. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

As with information about any student, information about a student's disability is confidential, and is shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know. Aside from this, the student controls his or her own information and authorizes its appropriate release.

Appendix 2: List of cited sourced obtained through the University of Lethbridge Archive

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