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Starowicz, Renee

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Neurodiversity and the stories we navigate with and without words

by

Renee Starowicz

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

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of the

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Committee in charge:

Professor Laura Sterponi, Co-chair

Professor Gloria Soto, Co-chair

Professor Karen Nakamura

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Abstract

Vibrant and Intricate Communication:
Neurodiversity and the stories we navigate with and without words

by

Renee Starowicz

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Laura Sterponi and Gloria Soto, Co-chairs

This research project explores the communication opportunities for individuals in a community-based transition program in the Bay Area. The study focuses on the opportunities that are made available by a program that is founded on neurodiversity and trauma-informed principles. The research questions examined how a neurodiverse framework allows for diverse forms of communication to be utilized by participants throughout their activities at job sites, academic classes and travel training trips. The second question investigated the ways that using video recording can enhance our understanding of individual and community experiences. This was particularly relevant as I used and offered GoPro cameras to wear throughout data collection.

 Nine of the program's participants agreed to participate in this study. I accompanied these individuals during their program two days per week over the course of approximately nine months. This study was halted to an immediate end by the start of the shelter-in-place due to the global pandemic. This study used observational, video, audio and photography data in its qualitative analysis. NVivo software was used to organize the data, code and analyze the findings. The first chapter describes the conceptual framework and methodological choices in detail.

 The following three chapters, chapter two, three and four each discuss specific groups of data excerpts that highlight distinct areas of findings. Chapter two uses data excerpts that closely analyze the interactional and accessibility of social space for the participants engaged in their program activities. With these examples, findings point to how the participants utilize strategies and are affirmed in their participation throughout program activities. Here, the discussion adds to socio-spatial theory and its direct relationship with accessibility. In chapter three, data examples are used to demonstrate the many ways that program participants invite interactional engagement through the use of material, appearance and proximity choices. The discussion builds on literature based on interactional engagement through shared referential material. Finally, in chapter four, data examples are used to describe how self-determination arises in the program. Both aspects related to how the program and staff support self-determination training and how the participants engage is discussed. This discussion provides examples for contextualized self-determination training in community-based programming.

This study contributes to knowledge on the implications for neurodiverse and trauma-informed service models for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The study used an interactional analysis approach to demonstrate how choices that are made between communication partners can impact the overall flow and accessibility of spaces. Finally, this study further engages with how we come to understand self-determination as a process that is embedded in the daily practices of individual.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this to M.T., T.C, and J. who changed my life and work forever. I will forever be replaying memories of our interactions in my head as I try and explain things and myself to the world.

Secondly, I dedicate this to my deceased father, Stephen Starowicz, who left this life too soon. May this world get better at supporting individuals with addiction and complex mental health.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Gloria Soto for her dedication to the development of my studies and research since our initial correspondence in November 2012. It was through her encouragement that I came to visit and worked out the details to join this program and seek out allies in disability studies work. Additionally, I would like to thank her for the opportunity to participate in research grants and co-publish with leading scholars from the fields of Augmentative and Alternative Communication and language development.

I would like to thank Dr. Laura Sterponi for her mentorship that developed my scholarly expectations of myself and my work. Her growing engagement with neurodiversity and autism research in the last five years created fertile grounds for data sessions and theoretical discussions that resonated and reside in these chapters. Finally, her ongoing guidance has transformed my analytic methods and conceptual framework to align with the underlying values of my work both academically and in practice.

I would like to thank Dr. Karen Nakamura for her academic guidance and introducing me to the organization that became the partner for this study. I would also like to thank the director of the organization, the leadership staff and the program staff who shared vulnerable moments with me throughout the process. I would like to thank the nine focal participants and every other member of the program who I came to meet and know throughout the period of initial shadowing and the nine-month observations. I continue to be excited as we cross paths by accident on the weekend or when we are out and about with our families or friends.

I would like to thank the members of my qualifying committee Dr. Susan Schweik and Dr. Betty Yu for your support in developing my theoretical grounding and confidence in pursuing a project that is meaningful and deeply engages with my core interests.

From the Graduate School of Education at UC Berkeley, I would like to give thanks to Dr. Zeus Leonardo for his support in the pursuit of DisCrit and bringing Critical Disability Studies to courses. I also want to thank Dr. Anne Cunningham for her introduction into doctoral studies, peer review and guidance on how to navigate higher education spaces.

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Closest to the action, I thank my partner, César Daniel Verástegui, my family, my friends and the students I am fortunate to work with. Our moments together during the daily routine of life have brought true joy, challenge and growth to this process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction
The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN) was founded in 2006 as part of the disability rights movement in response to the lack of public voice and representation of Autistic perspectives in the national dialog. This organization advocates for policy, develops cultural activities, and trains autistic self-advocates to hold leadership positions (About-ASAN). The creation of this organization responded to a growing need from the Disability Rights Movement. Similarly, an organization, referred to as Bay Area Adult Transition (BAAT), in the Bay Area of California developed to uplift the voices of autistic and neurodivergent people through leadership positions in a program working with individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

In a panel discussion hosted by ASAN about transition, the director, Ben Wells (a pseudonym), describes the program as "We are 100% community based." Ben moves his hands widely in an outward shape before continuing, "We focus on self-determination skills, … this is the only program I think, and I ask it all the time, I think it's the only program of at least the ones that is that I know about of that is both designed run by an openly autistic person of its kind in the United States and the leadership is all autistic too and most of my staff is neurodivergent" (Caplan, 2020, 6:18-6:44). This dissertation study is an opportunity to expand on the elements discussed by Sara Acevedo and Laura Harrison in their work with this program. Sara Acevedo's (Acevedo Espinal, 2018) study focused on neurodiversity-leadership within the grassroots organization. Laura Harrison's (2019) project contextualized the program and described the Neurodivergent Education Model (NEM) this program developed and uses.

This dissertation approaches the organization through a third area of interest. This project uses an ethnographic approach to examine the interactional happenings in the daily experiences of its participants. Building off the work of Acevedo (2018) and Harrison (2019), this project presents detailed information about the participant experiences and opportunities for communication. Specifically, this project focused on the communicative opportunities, the expressive possibilities and the ways that self-determination can emerge when a program is founded, directed, and staffed with neurodiversity principles at its core. Through a disability studies in education lens (Baglieri, et al., 2011), this dissertation utilizes discourse analysis to offer insights about how multimodal communication strategies enrich the potential for accessibility and self-determination.

This study grounded itself in two key constructs of interest: (1) the interactional opportunities in neurodiverse communication and (2) how the use of video can affect our understandings of communication.

Conceptual Framework
Young adults engage in the use of a diverse body of semiotic strategies (Engel & Li, 2004) in interaction with familiar and unfamiliar communication partners (Ochs, 1996), as they develop and navigate multiple identities in the trajectory of learning self-advocacy. A close look into their interactional happenings can demystify the confusion, conflict and helplessness that sometimes arises. Interactional conversation space can provide opportunities or limitations for successful message passing, dialogue and identity development (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). It can enable socialization (Ochs, 2002; 1996) and interaction between partners with varying communication abilities (Goodwin, 2000) or disable an individual through turn-by-turn mechanisms (Fasulo & Fiore, 2007; Rapley & Antaki, 1996). When considering a broad range of communication strategies that include verbalizations, gestures and the use of materials, it is critical to consider that some individuals with communication related disabilities are supported through augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Research examining their

interactional experiences (e.g., Clarke, et al., 2017; Ibrahim et al., 2018; Müller & Soto, 2002; Wilkinson, 2019) and its relationship to identity development (Hynan et al., 2015; Wickenden, 2011a; 2011b) offers a foundation for examining how the interactional patterns of communication can be leveraged to understand identity development and presentation. Neurodiversity is used as the guiding principle to clarify and understand the processes occurring within these interactions.

Neurodiversity and Communication

Judy Singer coined the term *neurodiversity* in her thesis commenting that neurological differences serve humanity in a similar way to biodiversity (Craft, n.d.). The implications of neurodiversity on communication are the nuanced focus of this study. "Communication isn't just the use of words," (2015) director Ben Wells writes as one of the core principles of BAAT on his blog. He goes on to emphasize what this means:

> Communication is deep and complex. Words are limiting, but
> watch someone communicate with their environment by using their
> body, or flapping their hands or arms. Listen to the language of
> stimming- it is often more beautiful than words (Anonymized
> Director, 2015).

The first aspect of this project focuses on the exploration of the multiplicities of semiotic (i.e., communication) resources that are used to create meaning in interaction. The second aspect of this project uses video to capture, review and dialog with the participants about these moments of communication. This research builds on the existing work related to communication access for individuals labeled minimally verbal from the fields of communication disorders (e.g., Ganz, 2015; Shire & Jones, 2015), critical disability studies (CDS) (e.g., Ashby et al., 2015; Woodfield & Ashby, 2016), discourse analysis (e.g., Goodwin, 2000; Ochs et al, 2005; Wilkinson, 2019), and education (e.g., McSheehan et al., 2006; Nind & Hewett, 2012). The focus on neurodiversity rather than CDS alone is intentional due to its specific implications relating to research on autistic language practices (Sterponi & Kirby, 2016; Sterponi, Kirby & Shankey, 2015; Sterponi & Shankey, 2014), the role of non-verbal communication as meaningful (Goodwin, 2000), and its larger necessity for the acknowledgment of how diverse disabled peoples including those "… who identify as: Mad; psychiatric survivors; consumers; service users; mentally ill; patients; neuro-diverse; inmates; disabled…" (McWade, Milton & Beresford, 2015, p. 305) are important contributors to our broad understandings of human differences and value. Although all of these components fit within the larger CDS framework, neurodiversity as a conceptual tool and a call-to-action for educators, offers a depth to the critiquing of deficit communication assumptions. The field of CDS will continue to offer insights into calls for education that can support diverse communication (Apler, 2017), and imagine practices that push boundaries to envision equitable education for those who communicate differently (via typing, the use of images or an iPad selections) (Erevelles, 2000).

Participant-centered

This research project uses participant-centered recording modalities to move closer to the first-person experience (Lahlou, 2011; Lahlou, Le Bellu, & Boesen-Mariani, 2015). This modality resists the assumption of an observer, assumptions of incompetency and existing narratives of vulnerability. The participants are recentered through the methodological choices. This approach attempts another form of ongoing work that uses cameras inserted into participant classes for subjective evidence-based ethnography in the United Kingdom (Fauquet-Alekhine et al., 2018; Lahlou et al., 2015). By bringing the camera into the interactional practices in a

location close to their field of vision (glasses) or reference (bodycamera) new insights about subjectivity are possible.

The research project assumes that the participants have histories, knowledge and wisdom to share through their choices. (Freire, 2018). Their perspectives and their choices emerging at program are understood in the context of adult services. The existing field of research related to adult transition services has continued to develop over the course of the past two decades as person-centered transition planning expanded (How Person-Centered Planning Works for You, 2011; My Plan, 2016) and self-advocate organizations formed (Green Mountain Self-Advocates).

Interactional Analysis through Habitus

Habitus became a critical tool for understanding and describing the semiotic resources used by this study's participants. Habitus is "… a system of *dispositions,* that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of *long-lasting* (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action" (Bourdieu, 2017, p.43). Bourdieu describes habitus as the repetition of language and social practices that build someone's way of being in the world (Bourdieu, 2017; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). In *Limitations and transformations of habitus in child-directed communication,* Ochs, Solomon and Sterponi (2005) shine attention onto how the make-up of the communication strategy can affect interactional outcomes. The paper outlines a model of Child-Directed Communication (CDC) that points out three key features. First the model engages with a diverse population of children from infancy through adolescence. Second the model includes verbal and multi-modal communication. Third, the model remains flexible in who is included as the child's interlocutor (p.552-553). From these foundations, the paper discusses three participant frameworks within the Child-Directed Communication model. This piece specifically discusses the difference between typical strategies of adult-child dyads where each is facing each other, where the pair are nested and where they may be seated side by side. The paper goes on to discuss different activities that the pair may be engaged in and how these activities relate to the used participation framework. For example, a nested pair where they child is held on the parents' lap or closely to their chest may be used in settings where multiple families are gathered together. Here both the child and parent are facing outwards together towards their social group. When considering communication access, the side-by-side format is discussed in relationship to how the pair can share a visual field. As they are oriented side-by-side towards a letter board, the opportunity for the child to point to letters and spell out words because legible. Said differently, because the pair is organized in this way, the activity of the child pointing letter by letter to spell out a word or phrase is possible as they can both readily track the point and letter being selected. Particularly for a young person who is pointing to communicate, as is discussed in the paper, the side-by-side format allows for improved outcomes with the letterboard and spelling to communicate.

The importance of this work is grounded in combating the potential issues that arise from negative assumptions related to how students with disabilities are treated. Donnellan (1984) wrote the call for educators to approach through the least dangerous assumption. In this piece she specifies all the ways that educators might consider multiple dimensions of decision making. Three examples of these dimensions include the opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers (p.142-143), the nature of instructional setting and materials (p.144) and the chronological age appropriateness of the curriculum (p.146-147). This work set up a bar from educators to rely on when resisting medicalized deficit assumptions.

The work of Downing (2005) stands out as one of the leaders in discussing the potential of non-symbolic communication. Her focus is on how to meet students where they are and

encourages practitioners to engage and act expectantly with their students (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007).

The field of augmentative and alternative communication has discussed a number of additional conversational differences in interactional dynamics. The field also poses possible ways to improve outcomes. One particular point of interest is the balance between participants. This work is done by considering the dynamics between AAC users and their non-AAC using interactional partners, as well as dyads of two AAC users together. Unbalanced participation (Collins & Marková, 1999) between an AAC user and a non-disabled conversation partner is one of the conversational differences research has taken account for. However, AAC user dyads are noted to be far more balanced (Müller & Soto, 2002).

Another approach considers the transition directly to strength-based understandings of communication (Light & McNaughton, 2015). Light & McNaughton (2015) mention how strength-based understandings can offer additional points of entry for building on the skills that users have. After a lineage of research based more specifically in quantitative measures, leaders in the field acknowledged the limits on what previous work has afforded. They remarked on how continuing and developing work focused on interaction can bring forward new important findings that would reach beyond those limits of previous work (Light & McNaughton, 2015; Smith, 2015). The recognition of this need for methodological and analytical enrichment creates space for this study to engage with the field more directly.

Additionally, Erevelles (2000) makes a call to continue developing lines of research that argue for the multimodal communicative labor of individuals labeled non or minimally verbal. She brings these qualitative studies to the foreground as a key part of the theoretical work required to expand the basis for how this research develops.

The Community-based Organization

The BAAT program was selected for this study after I was introduced to its underlying principles by Dr. Karen Nakamura and met with its director, Ben Wells. The BAAT program serves students ages 18-22 years old from the local school districts. The program focuses on self-determination training, vocational skill development and independent living through a community-based program (Adult Transition Program, 2009). This critical post-high school period is when students continue to receive special education services but transition into programming that allows for a focus on identity-driven activities and practicing increased self-determination through daily cultural community activities. These programs are typically studied in terms of their inclusivity and attention to disability-rights (Grigal & Hart, 2010) but specific elements such as the role of group communication and a focus on discourse-based work has been under investigated (Light & McNaughton, 2015).

The program is ran by autistics and other neurodivergent people. In a blog post entitled *Banging My Head On the Neurotypical Wall* (Anonymized Director, 2016)*,* Director Ben Wells writes about a discouraging experience when he was participating in a board meeting with neurotypical people who did not make space for understanding disability and neurodivergence in a meaningful way. This example itself as part of the key transition moments that demonstrate the value of how the organization formulates itself and aims to interact with its participants. The director's intention to create space and bring meaning to neurodivergent practices in daily life comes from a place of lived experiences and reflection on the importance of alternatives to experiences like that board meeting. He understands that this does not come as a simple transition but requires dedicated re-education. He states, "Without understanding our history, how are we to providing safe and inclusive space for neurodivergent people?" Here, Wells is

pointing out the way that understanding history and disability are key components in doing good work.

The program takes particular care in navigating partnerships. It is important to maintain a transparent neurodiversity rather than neuro-normative partnership. In a blog post, related to a partnership with students in a Clinical Counseling program, the post states that "The problem is language; ID/DD folks have many unique forms of language. The burden is always placed on ID/DD folks to communicate in a manner or a language that is convenient for others [therapists, teachers, families]. The BAAT program insists that it is our job to learn the language of each individual and meet them in the place where they communicate from. This is simple respect" (Anonymized Director, 2014a). This clear statement offers a critique and an alternative to not only other forms of similar programming in their trainings, but also to the larger fields of education, clinical supports and communication disorders. In an interview for *Thinking Person's Guide to Autism*, Wells discusses the program with interviewer Kelter and underlines that "This is not a neuro-normative space, and while the space welcomes everyone, it is meant to be a place where neuro-atypical folks can prosper. I believe that our ideas about disability are socially constructed and that we need to be aware of how and why it is shaped the way it is shaped, but I understand in a very personal way that folks need support. Our mission is to support." (Kelter, 2014)

Program Participants

This adult program is made up of multiple small groups of approximately six participants, that are supported by one to two staff members. The participants are recent high school graduates that are focusing on developing skills such as self-determination through an inclusive community-based program. As part of the program, each group visits a work site regularly, has an opportunity to exercise at the local YMCA and plans travel trips. These travel trips are designed to allow participants to practice setting a destination and plan of how to get there and back. They are generally close locations on shorter program days and may be further away during full days of program. The participants utilize personal knowledge, wi-fi enabled cellular devices to access maps, and travel apps to devise a plan of how to reach and return from their destination using public transportation. The destinations of these travel plans are based on the suggestions and interests of participants. They typically make their way there, spend some time engaging in group activities at the location and return as a group to the base location of program.

Community Engagement

The program's Facebook page (Anonymized, n.d.) highlights both photographs and relevant posts for the programs' larger network and the general community. This public face offers a space where the program's social media staff writes the narratives of their services and programs to focus on the abilities, participation and value of labor that these adults contribute. One post from May 10, 2018 at 8:22am with images of young men at their chosen job site in a kitchen states, "These are images of [three participants names, researcher removed] preparing meals for Food Not Guns. One aspect of "Meaningful Work" is work that connects IDD [Intellecutal developmental disabilities, original uses acronym] folks to a larger community. In this case Food Not Guns feeds local residence who might not otherwise have enough food to eat. [Three participant names, researcher removed] are an essential part of that process. They shift position from the ones *being served to the ones serving others* [authors italics]." Both the images and text generate a shift from the deficit-based narrative of individuals with intellectual disabilities as needing assistance and services to explore and expand how these young men participate in community work and service in the Bay Area of California.

This program focuses on multi-level ways that self-determination can emerge and pushes the public imagination to see how [participant name]'s choices about her hair relate to her sense of self, ability to navigate family dynamics and shows her out and about on the bus sharing her personal style. A second example from May 8, 2018 at 8:03 (Anonymized, n.d.) discusses how one participant advocated for a personal goal and shares images of her achievement. "Sasha has had a goal for some time of wearing her hair in a mohawk. She a[d]vocated to her grandparents in Georgia and achieved her goal! Self-determination isn't only the about BIG goals, it is about the many tiny personal goals; the goals that make us feel unique and more fully human."

Program Goals and Principles

As described by their director in an early personal communication, the program this dissertation focuses on aims to dismantle the common form of adult supportive services in the community. Rather than a staff person that serves as a shield between disabled participants and the community, this program focuses on allowing for the direct interaction of its disabled participants with the community. This allows for the tensions to emerge as disabled adults take on direct interaction in their communities and the community is responsible for directly engaging rather than the staff person creating a gap. The director notes that the previous model serves as a sort of inappropriate mechanism to "protect" disabled people from the community and the community from disabled people. BAAT's work however, allows for the actual contact to happen.

BAAT accomplishes its goals through a three-part framework that makes up the Neurodivergent Education Model (NEM) that Harrison (2019) discusses specifically. The framework includes (i) Legitimizing Neurodiversity practice, (ii) Trauma-informed perspectives on education, and (iii) Self-determination training.

Legitimizing Neurodiversity Practices

Harrison describes the Neurodiversity practice principles focusing on two groups of claims. The first group of claims sheds direct attention on the effects of the medical model on the disabled individuals who participate in this program. It discusses the harm that is created through medicalized perspectives, which frame atypicality as pathology. Thus the societal assumptions of ableism are actively impacting disabled people throughout their lives (Harder, Keller & Chopik, 2019).

The second set of claims discusses how everyday neurodivergent practices are acts of resistance towards a decolonization of disability (Harrison, 2019, p. 124-125). Specifically, Harrison describes these set of claims as: (a) "'Neurodivergent' and/or non-normative competencies" are important and appropriate responses to current ableist structures (p.127) (b) "Normalization" is an unjust and harmful assimilation practice to disabled people and disability culture (p.128) (c) Having Neurodivergent leadership in place and active neurodivergent community engagement is a key part of moving forward with transformative change in a neurotypically dominated world (p.128). This set of claims brings together the call for Neurodivergent voices to be respected and hold positions of power in order to create change. This part of the framework situates the importance of bringing neurodiversity practices into daily living as they both engage the participants from a place of acceptance and resist harmful views of disability.

Trauma-informed Perspectives on Education

This principle focuses on both the reasoning and practices to engage in trauma-informed work in education. Trauma-informed practices are rooted in understanding the ways that: …Violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have impacted the lives

of the individuals involved and to apply that understanding to the design of systems and provision of services so they accommodate trauma survivors' needs and are consonant with healing and recovery (Carello & Butler, 2015, p.264).

Trauma-informed practices center the development of relational skills between the person being supported and the environmental factors. This could include another interactional partner or an environmental trigger (Brunzell, 2019). They focus on approaching behavior in a constructive manner. For example, this means that rather than using methods of physical intervention (restraint) or punishment when an individual may become triggered or upset, the focus is on holding space with the person. By holding space, there is both a non-physical response allowing the person to process their feelings and a mindset amongst the staff of the history and lived experiences trauma causes. The program instructs practitioners that to utilize trauma-informed practices means to engage with individuals they are supporting in the moment and then to focus on how to work towards self-regulation in the future (Harrison, 2019, p.135-164).

Self-Determination Training

This principle discusses how an interdependent transition model can divert away from the history of dependency that is created through deficit-based education models. Through a focus on the individual's ability to say "no" and make choices, they are empowered to personal responsibility (Harrison, 2019, p. 218-234). Harrison (2019) reflects on how the director and program staff "… have studied Wehmeyer's work and mobilize much of the same language, they teach self-determination as a 'practice,' not a product or 'thing' that could ever be standardized, possessed, or owned." (2019, p. 217). The program integrates self-determination into their focus on Neurodiversity building set of practices that train participants and offer skills in personal responsibility.

Program Structure

Each of the groups has a regular meeting place at the start of their day and return to the centralized location of their office at the Helen Keller Campus (a pseudonym) at a local transit hub for the end of day. The groups can be developed based on similar gender, interests, or in relationship to when participants begin attending the program. For example, one entire group was formed of all new participants. A second example is a group of female-identified participants who had a new student join them. The daily meeting usually is from approximately 8:30 am to 2:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Groups range from four to six participants. Generally, there are two staff for each group. Community members and other community organizations and programs will also be a part of this project. Some organizations have a regularly scheduled relationship with the participants of BAAT: YMCA, Food Not Guns! (a pseudonym), Local Community Farm, etc.

Methodology

The project examines" talk" (in many forms) in action to uncover patterns of successful, unsuccessful and potentially fertile interactional grounds for development.

Researcher Positionality

During my initial meetings with the organization director and staff, I had in depth discussions about my own disability experiences and family life. Sharing these stories was at first very painful after years of being socialized into academic work settings that urged the silencing of histories. Coming to higher education had been a cultural shock. Not simply because I moved from one cultural repertoire to another. The skills of snow shoveling and navigating romantic gossip between disabled young adults in my car certainly did not emerge as immediate areas of strength as I learned about layering with vests in Bay Area weather and the procedural

development of language acquisition. We were instructed to leave our *teaching hats* out of research conversations in a University research group. Instead, the basis for all dialog was seeded in the seminal work of language, education and sociology researchers. I had not talked about my experiences. I had not discussed my own wavering sense of disability identity in meaningful ways.

This work yanked on me to show up as a whole person with a history, a set of research interests and someone willing to be creative in their pressures on methodology (Di Lorito, Bosco, Birt, & Hassiotis, 2018). I continue to come to this research project as an individual who grew up in a chaotic environment mostly led to understanding the world through the stories told by my then intoxicated father. He whispered, screamed and choked through explanations of his trauma, the institutional systems of surveillance employing the people he could not trust and the degradation he forced into my body. I began creating little rules that I would follow to get through the stages of my day. I watched and adapted to environments to hide certain information and was met with disbelief when I dared to write specifically about it. "Is this true," a teacher's voice asked after calling me to the front of the room. She had just read a short descriptive nonfiction assignment I wrote about my father. These comments would serve to isolate me further.

I would submit my Internal Review Board materials for approval to work with individuals with intellectual disabilities. The process would take far longer than expected process as I was met with presumptions about the danger of individuals to my recording materials, the lack of participation that is possible and the lack of comprehension of how a project like this could meet their standards. This intertwined background of my own history, the legacy of experiences shaming disability in classrooms and the institutional fear of disability come together to assert my own interest and focus on a disability studies in education approach to transition services and communication access.

Participants

After returning to the program with a formalized plan and consent forms, I began to meet with groups based on Ben's suggestion and distributed forms for them to take home. The packet included (1) a consent form (2) a simple language narrative about myself and my study (3) a *question-and-answer* form that could be returned, and (4) a self-addressed and stamped envelope.

I received my first consent form about one month after I began to visit the program. Over the course of the following two months, nine individuals in total decided to participate in the project. These nine individuals were part of five different groups. Three of the participants were the only participating members of their group. These individuals were Bryan, Konnor and Jack. Two other groups included three participants in each. In one of these groups was Shanti, Riku and Mateo. In the other was Saul, William and Ezequiel.

The nine participants in this study are a heterogeneous group of individuals who vary in gender (cisgender male and female, gender fluid), race (African American, Latinx, South East Asian and White), and age (late teens to late twenties). They are linked by their participation in this community-based transition program. The differences enrich this research projects ' understanding of communication resource deployment and contextual factors that can enhance sociality because of its variances.

The participants were offered video-recording materials during sessions and some elected to use them whereas others preferred the researcher to do so or allowed them to be placed nearby. All of these participants benefit from programming that supports them in developing

self-determination and this research project situates its goals in better articulating how we as a community can do that better.

Throughout my time with the participants of this program, I became acquainted with some of their preferences, their relationships and their interests. By no means was any of this exhaustive or particularly in depth as my interest was in moving alongside individuals throughout their daily program happenings rather than becoming focused on their background specifics, their personal information or any other information that might be contained their personalized plans. This shift away from the sorts of "files" or content that is typically used by program staff allowed for a different sort of understanding to develop. As a research project, the aim is on the dynamics within program as they come to life. I welcomed any and all moments of conversation, activities or details that participants wanted to share with me but did not treat them as 'informants' in the sense of the term and role in traditional ethnographic research. Finally, as many of these individuals do not use verbal communication and the program focus is on meeting where they are in their communication styles and strategies, the information learned emerged from these principles. As part of the process, signatures were needed and obtained from parents or guardians but additional information about the participants' background was not requested.

In meeting the different students, much of my understandings emerged in knowing them through their relationships with each other. Riku, Shanti and Mateo all participate in the same small group. This group met in a large café on a major street in the Bay Area. All three of these participants sat at tables next to one another in the morning. While Mateo would work on recording his journal entries, Shanti and Riku would use her cellphone and earbuds (each of them using one ear bud) to listen to music together in the morning. At times, Shanti would allow Riku to use her cell phone to play games for a while.

Mateo, made his way through the day quietly following the group down the street and through their schedule. He was most interested in engaging with others when he would ask about the preferences and is known to enjoy sticking to his routine at the gym.

Riku is usually found sitting beside Shanti unless she is absent from program. He will stand and make quick paces around the room sometimes releasing small vocalizations as he walks around the café or the classroom. Riku frequently translates single words between English to Japanese. Sometimes he will include translations into other languages like Spanish.

Shanti may sit poised quietly beside Riku but greets familiar faces with a large warm smile and widely recognizing eyes. During the time that I spent with her she was not interested in participating in work at the local farm but filled with energy during sessions at the adult school involving music or when the group watched *HΘMΣCΘMING: A Film by Beyoncé*. In the time I got to know Shanti she was quick to let others know if she was enjoying activities through active engagement. This included playing basketball at the gym or showing off interesting things she noticed in stores. However, if she was displeased with the pace of instruction or the comments of others, she would roll her eyes to signal displeasure.

Saul, William and Ezequiel were another three participants that were in a small group together. William and Saul would frequently sit together from the start of their day and Ezequiel would sit at another table nearby. Both William and Saul were very verbally social with one another throughout the day discussing topics related to their previous weekend or what they had done recently while outside of program.

William would greet others with a familiar nod and smile immediately asking about how they are doing. From the way he listened closely to others and always seemed ready to adjust with the group dynamics, he demonstrated a strong sense of respect for himself and those around

him. At work William was organized and collaborated well with community members in the dining room at a local community center kitchen.

Saul was someone who demonstrated leadership in understanding and respecting the preferences of his peers. I would frequently hear him checking in with Ezequiel and the program staff about if they were going to follow the usual plan of stopping a sub shop before getting on the bus or reviewing the updates if Ezequiel was absent. He was always interested in a assisting new volunteers at the local community center kitchen.

Ezequiel was an aficionado of cars. He was usually interested in particular models and would show me dealerships an information about them using his cell phone or tablet device. Throughout the day, he made use of his cell phone to listen to music and watch visual content. At the local community center kitchen, he worked behind the scenes with other regular staff to prepare the materials such as napkins for the upcoming guests. He was able to do this using his device and sitting at a staff gathering area just outside the active kitchen. He demonstrated his close connection to his family through occasional phone calls he might make while at a local bookstore leaving a voicemail about his day thus far.

Jack, Bryan and Konnor were each in different small groups from each other. Jack and Bryan both met with their small groups at the main campus location in separate areas. They were each able to situate themselves in their desired seating places and interact with other participants or staff if they chose to. Whereas Jack would arrive and set himself up near a large window with music to listen to or a book that he had brought along that day and stay put, Bryan was frequently circulating around the larger downstairs area outside of the café he met in towards a foyer. Jack was friendly to those who sat nearby or came by to say hello but Bryan would move around swiftly between tables and people greeting everyone and sharing something he might have brought in or a magazine.

Jack was another participant who made use of his cellular phone for music access throughout the day when he first got to program and when he was at work. He would assist with cooking meals with his group at a kitchen in a local organization building but always brought his own lunch. At this building, he had a routine and would begin the process of setting-up the folding round tables on wheels with chairs for the group to use once they finished cooking. He would sit beside another participant in close proximity as each of them enjoyed their food from home.

Bryan was always prepared to make his way around place. He was eager to move around the morning meeting spot and he was self-directed at the kitchen he prepared vegetables at. He would utilize magazines or books from the public library to point and lead dialogs about particular things that interested him.

Konnor met his group at a local café. The members of his group were all familiar with each other from the previous school setting they had attended together. His group was newly formed after I began attending program and I met him as he was learning about the program and adjusting to the opportunities. Konnor frequently discussed spirituality, gender and his life. He enjoyed joking with another participant from the program throughout the day. When at a local kitchen preparing vegetables, he was definitely someone who became very focused. During the occasions, I attended work with him, he always demonstrated respect and asked clear questions to community members that he was collaborating with.

Data Collection

I met with the director and two of the lead supervising staff in May 2018. During this meeting, I introduced my background, interests and the hopes that I had for the research project.

In this meeting, I was introduced to the curriculum through a self-determination handout. The director explained to me the vision for bringing the participants into direct interaction with the community members. Each of the supervising staff asked some questions and we set up an opportunity for me to return and shadow a group.

A qualitative method was chosen for this project because it offered the opportunity to collect naturalistic, descriptive data. This allowed for the regular delving into particular areas of interest in interaction as they arise, having this space to move between the naturalistic setting and the opportunity to reflect closely on interactions alleviated a concern with process about working with people who have historically and continue to be viewed as 'unable to participate 'due to their cognitive disabilities. The focus was on continuing an inductive analysis creating unanticipated findings that emerge while working with participants (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 4-8).

This project engages with the methodologies put to use and explored by the DataCenter: Research for Justice (DCRJ), specifically taking up practices that work to center the knowledge production of research participants. The project will engage a community in research work that focuses on self-determination as they tell their own stories and employ the generation of understandings of their own experiences, cultures and histories to take necessary steps in social justice (Jolivétte, 2015). Action research is growing in the field of special education. It is a powerful tool in considering how to best approach projects that engage individuals who have typically been viewed through a deficit model in education and choice-making.

How BAAT was selected

Other school-based or community-based programming could offer a study of interactional opportunities but only within dominant paradigms of communicative processes. This program offers both a unique stance and an opportunity in and of itself as it is believed it to be the only of its kind within the United States.

After describing my project to the director and two of the administrative staff, we all decided that shadowing would be the next step. During the shadowing step, I came to the program twice a week for a month. During this period, I would arrive to the Helen Keller Campus and the director would select a group for me to go and meet with. At times, he would walk me down to meet the members of the group or one of the leadership staff would travel with me on bus or bart to the location of the organization. Once at the meeting location, they would introduce me to the staff and the participants. I would sit with that small group while members continued to arrive and introduce myself. I would then attend whatever places they were going to during that day and participate to the degree that participants were interested in me joining them for. At times this meant joining into the work of loading wheelbarrows with woodchips and moving them to a location in the garden at the local farm. During other sessions, I would stand to the side while participants cut up vegetables or participated in their course at the adult school.

The shadowing process solidified the match of my research objectives and BAAT as an ideal organization to work with. Because of their semi-structured daily plans, there could be some consistency in examining interactions at lunchtime, job sites, and other repeated destinations while maintaining the opportunity for diversity as the participants selected their locations for "travel training."

During this process, I focused on examining the following research questions:

Question 1: Interactional Opportunities.

1a. When considering both verbal and nonverbal communication options, in what ways are both strategies leveraged by participants in the accomplishment of their goals? In what ways do limitations arise?

1b. How is Disability constructed in interactions in different types of interactional groups: participants, participants and staff, participants and community members?

Question 2: Disruption of Deficit Communication Assumptions.
2a. What communication access and development possibilities emerge in an iterative video project with individuals in the Bay Area Adult Transition program?
2b. What opportunities does film allow to expand the existing conversations of assumptions around communication and disability?

Observations

I attended the program for two days per week beginning in June 2019 through March 2020. The visitations were halted suddenly with the beginning of shelter-in-place, due to the Coronavirus pandemic. During the ten-month period of time, I began by taking observational notes and offer information about my project with the program participants.

I attended the program for two or three days per week from the start to completion of their program day. The particular interest in times of transition such as at job sites or in the classroom was that this was a time when interactions were more frequent and collaborative with both participants, program staff and community members.

As I joined program for their usual activities, I took photographs involving positioning and interaction of participants during their activities. As participants attended community programming such as courses as the local Adult School, I began to record the dialog since it was generally much more condensed and more difficult to capture with observational notes only. Some of this recording was done with a voice recorder and some was done with a hand-held video camera that was often placed on a desk edge behind the group where it could be seen but not interfere. A voice recorder was used for when we walked down local streets and the participants were speaking verbally.

A personal hand-held camera with a memory card was used and an audio recorder was used to collect data. As participants became more familiar with the project, they began to take interest in the go-pro cameras that I brought with me to program often and would take out to trial run some initial recordings but had not offered for them to wear yet. In order to learn more about the participant experiences and perspectives, I began to offer the four go-pro camera I had available for them to use. During the third week, we began to use Go-Pro cameras on body harnesses to collect video during times of transition (deciding about activities and transportation) and at their job worksites, as these were points of frequent interpersonal and whole-group discussions.

Throughout the project, I recorded qualitative notes with Observer Comments and created Memos weekly regarding the general findings for preliminary analysis that assisted with the upcoming week's data collection.

Data Analysis

During this period of generative visual and audio material, I had begun to organize all of the data into folders specific to each days visit in NVivo 12. All of this information was stored on two external hard drives and a specially purchased lap top device to hold and code materials.

Bruce and Pine offer insights into the procedures for data analysis and drawing preliminary conclusions. The emphasis is on the process as "… a recursive, dynamic, and cyclical process of inquiry." Importantly, the authors emphasize the importance of discussing the data and dissemination to encourage dialog and development of interdisciplinary findings. (2010) This guidance taken in conjunction with the work of the DataCenter's approach to empowering

the research participants through critical engagement with knowledge production and power dynamics offers a proliferating point of possibility for research in Neurodiversity and communication.

This project used an inductive process of analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As they suggest, materials were reviewed and used to plan for each upcoming data-collection session making "observer comments" within the transcription of what occurred during the visit to program. As well, memos were then written describing the growing themes. I used these themes and organized the data into slideshows for each participant by the dates of my visit to their session. I then brought in those slideshows to show to participants. For example, with Riku I asked for him to look through the materials and make changes to the slides if he wanted. He would insert images and move the content around on the pages.

Data Corpus

I visited this program over the course of approximately nine months. Within this period, I attended program for 74 days. Across these sessions 51 hours of audio recording, 54 hours of video recording with the handheld device and 25 hours of video was recorded with the GoPro cameras were recorded. These recordings were downloaded onto two hard drives after each session. They were then immediately removed from the memory card. The hard drives were stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Data Coding

The first level of coding was to establish the setting or 'contexts' of the activities such as: *restaurant, job site* or *traveling.* Within these codes, specific locations were also coded to ensure an initial reflection on specific locations because specific sites offer differences in points of access, options, and participation structures. With these codes, I was able to follow the instruction of Bogdan and Biklen (2007) to place my project in a larger social context.

This series of codes allows for further coding that takes into account the perspectives of participants towards aspects of their settings. As some of the activities occurred, I had been able to ask follow-up questions about the materials that went into the observational notes and transcriptions. These codes include additional codes that gather information about the participants thinking about activities and objects. For example, one of the participants engaged in journaling each morning at program. This was first coded directly from photographs of the journal entries and then in one session, the participant had an image of journaling on his cellphone that he was using as a reference. I was able to then add depth to the coding in regard to the devices in use. Codes included *"initiating activity"-> "journaling"->"cellular phone use."* I was able to ask the participant about his use of the image and his cellular phone in regard to hand written materials. I then included his response into the observational notes and the transcription of the day's activities.

The second set of codes were 'processing' codes. These codes allowed for a differentiation of process through the study. Each of these processes is defined as the particular task at hand. Codes in this category temporally demonstrated changes in both time via dates and the elements of change in programming and environment. For example, one of the participants works at a semi-public garden. One of the earlier sessions collected video footage of him working with the garden's director to collect cardboard and place it down in the appropriate locations in the open space. During a later session, noted by date, job responsibilities and environmental changes, he was now collecting woodchips and using the wheelbarrow to move them atop the cardboard to set the stage for a fertile environment for growth atop the dry and hard dirt beneath. Over time, changes have changed in temporality, activity and the physical

space with which the participant is working. For example these codes include: *"Job Site"->"Garden"-> "cardboard" then "Job Site"-> "Garden"-> "woodchips phase 2."*

A third set of codes involved 'strategy.' These codes allowed for thinking about positioning and the methodologies of communication. Here, I began to code specifically about spatial organization across locations and temporality. Secondly, the ways in which participants where "doing being" (Sacks, 1992; Tracy & Haspel, 2004) participants was taken into account through codes such as *verbal expression, physical movement, writing, drawing, use of phone or pointing.* Within this set of coding, information became to emerge more clearly as well as more generatively in questions regarding the research questions.

Some narrative or topic codes were used to describe the specific content of dialog of participants but were not the main focus of this project. These codes emerged related to *"past experiences," "other services"* such as therapy, and *"future goals.*

These coding structures allowed for the organization of materials into three findings chapter that follow.

The Upcoming Chapters

These lines of thinking will bring the study through an analysis of socio-spatial accessibility (Chapter 2), an accounting of the referential potential (Chapter 3) and the foundation for further self-determination development (Chapter 4).

In chapter 2, the accessibility of social spaces will be discussed using examples from participants in the classroom, job sites and on public transportation. An interactional analysis of the ways that participants navigate space will demonstrate how particular moves they make assist in them accomplishing their goals or preferences. Through a discussion of how participants move in the environment, (such as a hand on their shirt or bowing to greet someone) the chapter will argue that these gestural features are central to the social accessibility of space.

In chapter 3, the study of referential potential will look closely at how participants offer up materials (both existing and self-generated), stylistic presence and physical placement for potential interaction. The chapter discusses the typical patterns of response from staff and how participants organize complex understandings amongst each other. The example of how participants respond to one another is used to demonstrate the potential of interaction opportunities that is available. The conclusion will discuss how the many potential points of interaction with individuals who use minimal verbalizations may create new social opportunities.

In chapter 4, the analysis will focus on how self-determination emerges during program. The chapter begins by demonstrating the way that the program staff set up participants to make choices and lead themselves. The chapter then moves on to examine the number of ways that participants make choices about their placement and organization for activities. Finally, the chapter includes remarks from an interview with one participant about the program from his perspective. This chapter concludes by discussing the ways that the Neurodivergent Education Model (Harrison, 2019) creates the space for the participants to develop self-determination skills they regularly practice.

Together these chapters bring forward findings that are based in the interactional level of analysis, the qualitative accounting of participant offerings, and how the principles of Neurodiversity grounded with self-determination develop a structure for the program. Each of these elements has specific implications and come together to develop a more holistic approach to thinking about formative assessment in education and transition programs. These aspects are discussed in the final chapter of the dissertation.

This study contributes directly to the education field's understandings of disability in interaction and how the potential of individuals with a matrix of communication practices can be better understood, leveraged and inform our larger classroom and community spaces. Specifically, findings add to our existing knowledge on multi-modal communication and how technology such as go-pro video clips can contribute further to educational research, community inclusivity and our understandings of communication at the interactional level.

Chapter 2: Questions in Socio-spatial Accessibility

Key terms commonly brought into conversations related to the degree to which disabled individuals can participate in typical societal practices are access and inclusion. First, access (Hofmann et al., 2020) considers whether any given space or activity allows for the open and free participation of a person's body. Secondly, inclusion serves as the legal and political term that outlines the specificity of what this body of people is legally entitled to in space (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005). These terms have come to formulate how the field of education considers the schooling of disabled people (Rosenbaum, 2008). These educational rights have been developing in tandem with the rights of disabled people in society broadly speaking.

Certain rights have been granted and developed particular connotations in society; these terms have limited meanings. For example, many combat veterans returned from Vietnam and required the use of wheelchairs. They called for increased physical accessibility of public spaces. Municipalities adjusted their policies and construction resulted in increased access for everyone through curb-cuts (Shapiro, 2011). These inclined spaces on the corners of sidewalks then allowed for general societal benefit as other users recognized the increased access for those pushing strollers or carts. Even the term curb-cut, though, highlights the ways the public is imagining access. Because societal design has focused on access for particular bodies (white, cisgender, middle-class, males of particular physical, emotional, and cognitive stereotype as the default), society generally develops others' inclusion as a retrofit seen as an afterthought (Garland-Thomson, 2002). Principles such as universal design underlay the movement towards increased accessibility of spaces but are not standard or universally accepted. Today, we continue developing educational access and inclusion from this basis.

This study examines intentional and creative access for disabled young adults in a community-based transition program. This study uses data excerpts to discuss how each of our engrained sociality or natural drive for connection (Lieberman, 2013) comes into a relationship with the spatial environment related to access (Hamraie, 2013). The discussion will bring together elements of Disability Justice (Sins Invalid, 2019). Then, the discussion will include points related to interaction (Goodwin, 2007) in order to make sense of how the environment is implicated in sociality or socio-spatial access. This study takes lessons from the foundations built by Disability Justice (Sins Invalid, 2019). Disability Justice began developing through disabled women of color who recognized the need for theorization and applying ten key fundamentals of collective access. Activists Patricia Berne, Mia Mingus, and, recently passed away, Stacey Milburn, worked together on a first wave; they were then joined by Eli Clare, Leroy Moore, and Sebastian Margaret, continuing onto the *second wave* of Disability Justice. The ten principles all offer collective guidelines that trouble oppression. They include intersectionality, the leadership of the most impacted, anti-capitalistic and cross-movement politics, recognizing wholeness, sustainability, cross-disability solidarity, interdependence, collective action, and collective liberation (Sins Invalid, 2019). This study works to take up both Disability Justice and an interactional approach in its design and deployment. These elements are used with a focus on how they can offer nuance to understandings of communication and access. In addition, it is useful to consider how Goffman's participation framework (1981; Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004) lends itself to finding the interactional elements of this study's data corpus.

Goffman describes the term *participation framework* as including all the participants within the perceptual range and their conduct which can be interactionally analyzed (1981, p.3). The participation framework consists of the participants' orientation, alignment, and talk

(Goffman, 1963). In Levinson's (1987) review of this term, he returns to referring to it as 'reception roles,' as he states Goffman sometimes had (p.169).

The specification of the terms *participation framework* and *reception roles* uncovers the way this role is understood differently from that of *the producer* or *production* role. This differentiation can assist in piecing apart the way that interlocutors have constructed the interactions. Each role has subcategorizations that assist in analysis. For example, producers might be sharing their original expressions or recreating the expressions that originated from someone else. Someone receiving the expression might have been intentional, unintentional, an eavesdropper, or an overhearer (Levinson, 1987, p.169).

Within the participation framework, this analysis focused on the structures of expectations or frames (Goffman, 1974; 1981; Tannen, 1979). The frame is a form of schemata that participants can use to understand and interpret what is happening (Goffman, 1974). The notion of *frames* allows us to think through the expectations of both the *speaker* and the *hearer*. This line of analysis can also push the discussion to consider what we can learn about the constant reconstruction of socio-spatial access. Many of the terms Goffman uses, or that have been built off of his work, can be expanded when disability is used as a central dialogic partner. Such as the term *accessible* which has historically meant in this field that the interaction is able to be *heard.* Bringing in disability begins to question even the notion of the speaker into the *expresser* perhaps and the hearer as *the receiver* thereby avoiding ableist terms and allowing for the underlying assumption that all participants (particularly those with communication-related disabilities) are both expressively and receptively social.

In terms of disability access, the focus has historically been on the physical spaces. The consciousness of the limitations of physical barriers for disabled children (Kang, Hsieh, Liao, & Hwang, 2017) and adults (Sherman & Sherman, 2013) continues to be a focus of research. However, this line of research has been complicated by our developing understanding of cognitive, environmental (chemical) and sensorial participation. These elements of accessibility have begun to gain consciousness in the public mind (Condessa, Giordani, Neves, Hugo, & Hilgert, 2020). In academia, researchers continue to focus on critical understandings of both the built environment (Hamraie, 2017) and how disability access is such a creative and radical process (Titchkosky, 2011). When discussing disability and access, Titchkosky highlights how a *politics of wonder* can develop an open-ended approach to these questions rather than a focus on concrete or certain ends (p.133). Access and inclusion are not mutually linked but work in tandem. This then impacts the way inclusion is understood. Because of these deeper understandings, advocates in the field of design such as Holmes argue, "…as a result, the work of inclusion is never done… With inclusion, each time we create a new solution it requires careful attention in its initial design and maintenance over time." (Holmes, 2018, p.10). Her comment on inclusion is translatable to inclusive programming, pointing out its need for upkeep.

This study grounds itself in the examination of access, centering communication in socio-spatial theory. Socio-spatial theory, from Lefebvre's original framework, of perceived space (or spatial practice), conceived space (or representations of space), and lived space (or spaces of representation) (1974) has been applied to educational analysis. For example, Gulson and Syme's *Spatial Theories of Education* (2007) compile chapters that apply spatial theory to educational spaces. Ferrare and Apple take up the conversation of that text with wariness and call for a critical education perspective (2010). They argue that the combination of spatial theory and critical education can enhance our understandings of social relations in educational environments. Similarly, Lipsitz (2007) points towards the relationship between racialization and

space within the U.S. context. His argument constructs the lineage of how space is a conduit for racial inequality as it serves white supremacist use. He remarks that:

> From the theft of Native American and Mexican lands in the nineteenth century; to the confiscation of black and Latino property for urban renewal projects in the twentieth century; from the Trail of Tears to the Japanese internment; from the creation of ghettos, barrios, reservations and Chinatowns; to the disproportionate placement of toxic hazards in minority neighborhoods, the racial projects of American society have always been spatial projects as well. (p.16-17)

This study and chapter acknowledge the succinct observations of critical scholars like Lipsitz. His work reminds readers of the lineage and racist spatial arrangements in the United States. When we consider ableism, racism, and other forms of inequality, space does offer entry into historically ignored aspects of potential analysis (Ferrare & Apple, 2010). This study applies a critical grounding that focuses on the power and agency that emerge when disabled adults' social actions confront ableist spaces in interaction. This chapter's excerpts will demonstrate how we can use socio-spatial analysis to critically examine access.

The chapter will close by offering implications for research in and beyond the classroom. The discussion of socio-spatial access will be brought into conversation with the work related to communication differences in aims to bring depth to our understanding of the sociality of individuals with communication differences and the active ingredients available in interactions.

The Study Setting and Participants

This study embeds itself into the daily practices of a community-inclusion transition program for adults with disabilities. In other words, I, the researcher, regularly met with small groups of disabled adults (usually four to six) and their facilitating program staff (some of whom also identify as disabled) twice a week to be present and record communication interactions as they went about their typical activities. Their typical activities consisted of working, educational classes at the local adult school, shopping, cooking and recreational visits to parks for the different groups. Data was collected through photography, audio-recording, the collection of found objects or participant-generated materials (such as lists and drawings), and video recording with GoPro cameras. Nine of the program's participants consented to join the study. They chose whether or not to wear and use the go-pro cameras when available. As well, the participants selected which written and drawn materials were made available to me.

Throughout the nine months that I participated in these activities, I reviewed and organized the corpus of growing data to gain insights into trends that emerged related to access and participation. This chapter looks closely at interactional happenings in several spaces and how socio-spatial participation is collaboratively defined, facilitated through activities, and creatively used by participants to enhance their social engagements.

All of these participants receive services from the transition program led by an Autistic director and value the hiring of disabled staff. This unique program grows from the two core principles of neurodiversity and trauma-informed support.

Transition programming provides a critical period of development for adults with disabilities who are exiting from high school to begin their subsequent movements into community life. Because this transition is full of opportunities to try new activities with greater independence levels and in unique social atmospheres, it is a vital pathway to learn about the possibilities of access and inclusion.

Data Corpus

This analysis is from the observation of six three-hour sessions of a media arts course at an adult school in the Bay Area and additional four-hour observations at volunteer sites and public transportation. This particular subset of a larger data corpus allowed for an analysis of how participants utilize a range of communicative modalities to enact their inclusion within community spaces. Data collection spanned approximately nine months. The media arts course and community activities are part of multiple larger local organizations serving disabled adults.

Five of the nine focal students who regularly attend are the participants represented in the data excerpts used for this study: Mateo, Shanti, Riku, Konnor and Bryan.

Analysis and Findings

The data were sequentially organized by sessions in Nvivo data analysis software. Codes were developed around each focal student's interactions, classroom activity types, modes of expression, and receptive communication practices (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Trends in thematic areas of interests emerged from the data analysis across the participants' communication interactions, including: the built environment, the participation framework, and disability participation as radical creation. Through a closer examination into these trends, information about how the participation framework impacts participant experience were defined. Said differently, this study's findings relate to how the participation framework opens up a new avenue of conversation. Socio-spatial access emerges as a feature of analysis that can contribute to the literature related to disability. Within the participation framework, three particular components were found: the people, the referent(s), and socio-spatial accessibility.

Data Excerpts for Discussion

The excerpts in this paper will help illustrate the concept of socio-spatial access for each of the five focal students across three locations (the inclusive media arts course, a volunteer site, and on public transportation). First, we will review a relatively rapid successful exchange between Shanti and the instructor as she selects her background song for a practice session of their video project. Secondly, we will examine how Mateo manages to maintain self-regulation through physical movements, touch and attention demonstrating how he develops and maintains socio-spatial access. Third, an example from Riku, during his practice session will allow us to more precisely examine how some regulatory movements can both serve as a creative way to maintain access and allow for the ongoing development of inclusion in the classroom activity. Fourth, we will look at how Konnor uses his bow greeting to recreate an introduction to his access needs in space. Then he demonstrates competency through space in an organizing task, so a community member begins to "make space" for him on the table. Finally, the last excerpt follows Bryan through the process of seeking and finding visual assistance in space. These five excerpts illustrate ways that socio-spatial access can be understood through the relationship of physical setting, interaction and physical objects within the setting. This lens offers up potential to highlight the strengths of participation and contrasts with a deficit-based lens. The depiction across the five different excerpts will compile an argument for how socio-spatial access is related to the setting, easily moveable objects (such as the printed papers or the loaves of bread), less movable objects (the desk and the Bay Area Regional Transit turnstiles) and the body with respect to self-regulation and social interaction.

Excerpt 1. Socio-spatial Access with Shanti

First, we have a short interaction between one of the focal students, Shanti, and the course instructor. Shanti stands in the front of the classroom, prepared to practice a video that the students will record in a future class.

She has selected a print-out of a face to use to cover her own and a song to play in the background.

In this excerpt, the instructor and Shanti work together to ensure things go as the focal student chose during a previous planning session.

Figure 1

Shanti in class

Instructor: Is that the right song?
Shanti: Yeah.
Instructor: Oh, Yeah? (increase in pitch)
(pause and computer arrow moves to select a specific song's image)
Instructor: Tell me if this is the right song.
Shanti continues to watch closely on the board as the arrow of the projected laptop screen moves all around the interface as the instructor is seeking its next click.
(pause and the mouse of the computer screen moves to select play)
Shanti: Power.
Instructor: Is it?

Shanti nods and makes an inaudible comment as she turns her body towards the instructor first and then the class. (sequential images of turn below)
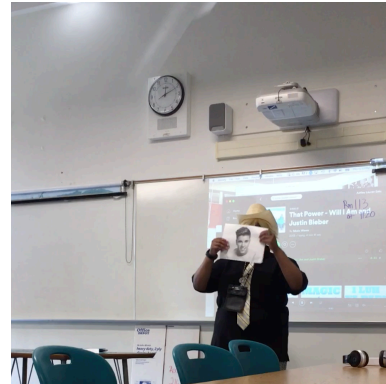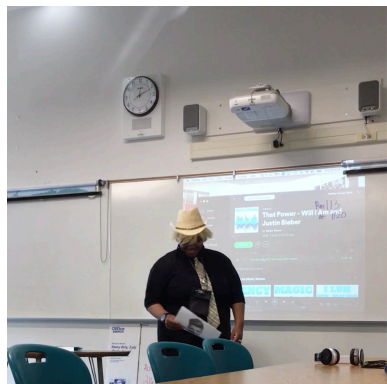
This final section where Shanti affirms and prepares for the activity demonstrates access to the decision of her song, the positioning of her body and inclusion in the activity to that extent. These terms should be well defined as we understand roles, though. Here, Shanti does not have access to clicking formally. She does not point or control the computer but is collaborating with the instructor. She is constructing access with the instructor in the creation of her practice session with the appropriate song.

Part of what has occurred throughout the data collection is the reality that for socio-spatial access to develop with fewer interruptions, restarts or changes in referents, the interlocutors' familiarity plays a part. The instructor is aware of the visual strengths and short quick verbal responses that Shanti frequently uses during class. The projected screen works well

Figure 2

Mateo in class
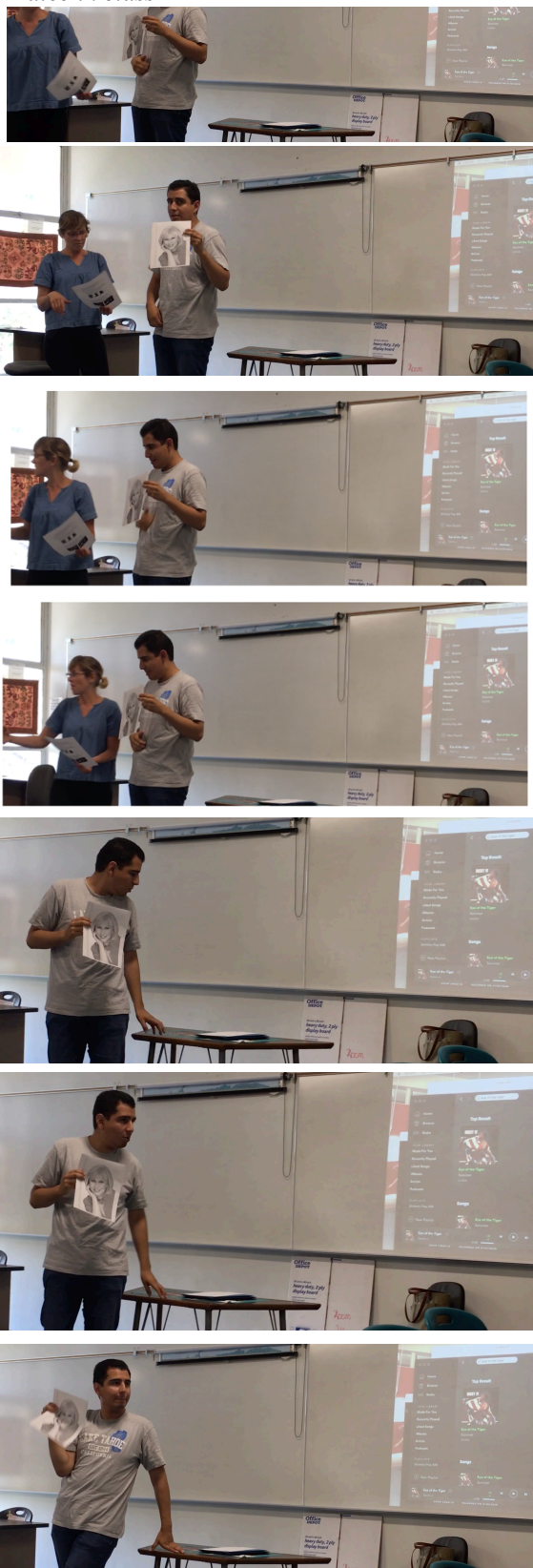
as a referent for the two with some verbal exchange to develop a successful exchange and accessible space.

Excerpt 2. Socio-spatial Access with Mateo

In Mateo's practice of his video, he demonstrates self-regulation strategies, and the instructor uses modeling to ensure he reaches his goals.

In the first section of this excerpt, we see Mateo using the sense of touch to regulate his experience of standing in front of the classroom by pressing his hand on his chest. Next, as the sequence allows for, he ensures visual access to his peers by turning to show all of them around the room his print-out. Note how he uses his gaze with the angle of the paper. This dimension that opens up the possibility of receptively noticing anyone who might want to engage with him during the process.

Mateo moves his hand up and down his shirt as the instructor talks to the class. Mateo's head moves up and his eye gaze begins to match the direction of the image he is holding up.

Then, as the instructor is loading the song, Mateo takes notice of the small table behind him and uses it to first tap on and then lean as he asserts his attention towards the projected laptop screen on the board.
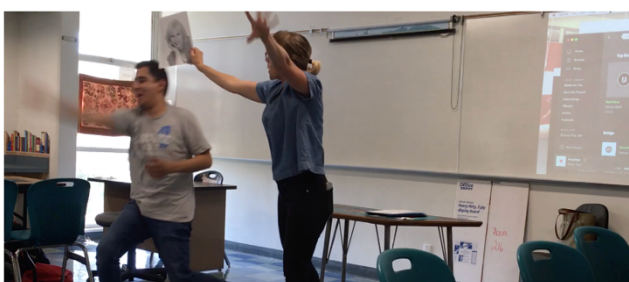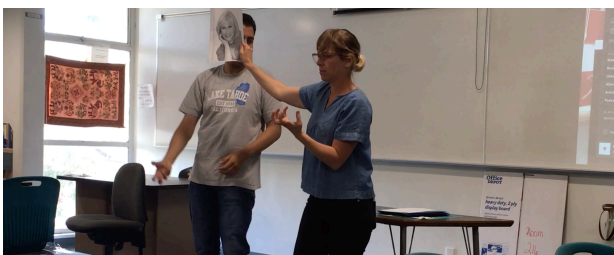
In the final section of the sequence, Mateo is now enacting the motions that he planned in a previous session, throwing a baseball. Because he was hesitant to begin, the instructor holding the paper for him begins to model and Mateo joins in his motion of throwing a baseball.

Mateo's examples in this sequence of activities demonstrate how he has readily developed strategies for self-regulation. Touching his torso while in a presentation role and then touching and leaning on the desk could outwardly be read as "behaviors" to prevent from a deficit or ableist lens. However, I argue that these serve as communicative management strategies so that Mateo can continue accessing and participating in the space and activity. Both he and the instructor work simultaneously to develop a schema for ensuring that this practice session is developed as he had previously desired.

Excerpt 3. Socio-spatial Access with Riku

The excerpt used from Riku's practice session demonstrates how individuals may enact movements that don't necessarily "fit" in the planned strategy for the activity but can and do become a meaningful opportunity for socio-spatial elements to enact access.

Here, Riku has been practicing a section of a short tv show segment with another student to discuss and teach the translation of a few words from English into other languages. Riku has read his lines and is in position. Here, Riku shows a smile, relaxed physical body and gaze towards the teacher and camera during this sequence. He then lifts his right arm and does a quick jump off the ground. He lands and reorganizes his hands together as he is repositioning his head to listen and continue with the practice session.

Riku's jump and his hand's compression into a fist might be read through a deficit lens as problematic behavior. A faulty model of inclusion or "neurodiversity lite" (what Shain Neumeier

Figure 3

Riku in class

troubles in their 2018 article as superficial) might be understood as an action that occurs but is ignored in closer detail as the overall classroom goal is successfully reached. However, I argue that this small jump assists in re-grounding and the fist compression and release is a relief of potential stress or anxiety (Riku does not specify his exact feelings at any point) to remain a participant with access to the social classroom. This argument is founded on the knowledge that has been built in the field of the Arts of Psychotherapy (de Tord & Bräuninger, 2015). In a paper where Patricia de Tord and Iris Bräuninger (2015) analyze the effectiveness of various physical grounding exercises through dance; they highlight the existing work that Peggy Hackney (2003) does to incorporate the physical body into expression, and Bräuninger's (2014) random control trial survey showed that nearly of half of the Dance Movement Practitioners use grounding. (In analyzing this series of images that collectively create a story of Riku's physical appearance, it is clear that he shows a smile and active but steadily controlled arms in the first frame. The second frame shows the positioning for the jump and the beginning of the first motion to bend his knees. In this second image and in the live footage I would highlight the inner and outer experiences of Riku's socio-spatial accessibility in radical action. This movement to ready for a jump and a change in physical stature is a disabled person's creativity and power through action. This is one example of when the consciousness of the space and flexibility in space assists Riku, his co-participants, and us to consider access closer. He manifests his regulation strategy within a highly scripted activity. The practice session is to preview and demonstrate how Riku will enact his section of their show through scripted body and speech. This analysis shows the complexity he brings in regard to his self-regulation and the social space.

Secondly, as the sequence unfolds, the final frame shown in Excerpt 3 presents Riku with his hands held together and his head slightly tilted down towards the teacher. Riku does not hesitate to participate in the activity as he tilts in her direction for instruction while managing his own sensorial experience and demonstrating a modern version of the Japanese bow in reverence (Fitzgerald, 2020).

Excerpt 4. Socio-spatial access with Konnor

The excerpt with Konnor begins as he readily holds his preferred position with his hands beside his chest. However, the community member that he is working with puts out his right hand to greet Konnor. In a smooth transition, the community member realizes this and moves his

Figure 4

Konnor with community member

hand to his upper chest as he shares his name and Konnor bows politely.

Konnor communicated to his interlocutor across the table that he would not touch his hand through his distinct physical stature. Instead, he followed through with a bow

demonstrating respect and another traditional salutation. The coordination by his interlocutor demonstrated a spatial repositioning to continue to exchange in a more appropriate way to Konnor's use of space. Notably, the interaction across the table allowed for direct visual

Figure 5

Community member shifts bread

cooperation with one another.

  It continues as the community member, Konnor's interlocutor, demonstrates how to organize the loaves of bread on the tables. Konnor immediately completes the task revealing his competency. The community member then moves bread further away, "making space" for him on the table. There are four repetitions of moving loaves of bread to the community member's left. He then stops and pauses once more to see how Konnor works seamlessly on the task.

  This interesting series of actions can be interpreted as another example of socio-spatial access where space is navigated by Konnor through his demonstration of understanding and then altered by the interlocutor to give more space, both physically and metaphorically.

Figure 6

Konnor at work

  Maintaining this management of space and task, the community member returns later to repeat this on the other side of Konnor's station, moving bread away once more to create space for Kevin through this social encounter. He again takes a final glance at all Konnor is achieving before walking away. There is a simplicity to the series of events. It provides a straightforward

interactional approach to how space is being navigated through the spatial dance of Konnor, the community member and the loaves of bread.

Excerpt 5. Socio-spatial Access with Bryan

Finally, the last excerpt follows Bryan through the process of seeking and finding visual assistance in space. He approaches the BART ticket collection machine to exit before his program peer. In the first image, we can see Bryan glancing forward without showing much movement to complete the necessary action to retrieve and place his ticket in the machine. However, in the following images, notice Bryan's peer behind him slowly approaching. In the third image, his peer remains off to his right as Bryan looks to his left. his head turn is characteristic of Bryan's behavior as he manages his movements in space related to other people.

Figure 7

Bryan with peer

The series plays out further as his peer approaches the exit machine beside him, moves forward, inserts his ticket and pulls it up as he walks through the opening exit. Here, notice Bryan's head turn again just before he follows the action and exits with his peer. This final example is of particular interest because it is in a community setting for public transportation.

This series of events tells how a disabled young adult decides and manages his movements in space in relation to his peers. There was no instructional element taking place or assistance seeking. Rather, Bryan demonstrates a lean into interdependence as he waits as his peer approaches and then moves in almost simultaneous activity with him.

Figure 8

Bryan with peer exiting

Discussion

Across all five of these examples, our participants' underlying sociality (Lieberman, 2013) is a crucial factor in comprehending the work related to self-regulation and access. The

constructive process of socio-spatial accessibility is an interactional component that this chapter takes on the initial steps of developing. It offers a further understanding of how people work together, their environments, and their strengths in regulation to be as present as possible. While all of this is an ever-shifting flow of personal beings and how the environment is developed and maintained, the notion of socio-spatial access can allow for a point of analysis that gives credible understanding to what may be seen through deficit models as distracting or meaningless. In other lenses, it might be seen as meaningful but personal, as in stimming. The term aims to bring such activities into the context of the environment and build a better understanding of how people use their bodies, vocalizations, gestures, and other referent means continue in the developing social context.

Nuanced understandings of how large referents like the projected screen from Excerpts 1 and 2, accessible communication exchanges, participants and the ways that socio-spatial access is developed complicate our understandings and offer new grounds for exploring how all of these pieces fit together. As well as looking closely at how small intentional movements (in excerpts 4 and 5) can set the stage for an unfolding of events. The holding of hands near the body with the bow, the successful organization of loaves of bread, and the exit strategy at BART show a sequence of preferred processing for the disabled young adults and how their intents affect surrounding social contexts. These self-driven responses to their socio-spatial space provided opportunities for them to operate in ways that met their access needs and the social space transformed with them.

Socio-Spatial Access

Socio-spatial access is a notion developed further from this study's findings that considers aspects of communication access that otherwise might not have a specific enough term yet. This is built from the knowledge that we are all social creatures that thrive on our connections and conflicts to learn (Lieberman, 2013). It is an ongoing process of people, referents, and the ability to navigate participation in any given moment. Body language, the space that bodies can and do occupy, directionality and organization of bodies in space show how self-regulation in sociality is all tied to access.

Spatial work by scholars such as Leander, Philips and Hendrick Taylor (2010) focus on constructs of place, trajectory, and network. They continue with Lefebvre's challenges to dominant notions of space. His argument focuses on the removal of the physical barriers as containers. Instead, by focusing on all of the moving pieces that flow into, through and out of the space, you find what he terms "… complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits. " (1991, p.93). Leander, Philips and Hendrick Taylor (2010, p.332) discuss the complexity within classrooms of: resources, energies, and information flows that continuously are in motion and shaping the space with each other. This work in space opens up points of analysis and generates new understandings of learning spaces that reach far beyond the classroom. (2010, p.382). Building off of this work, I argue that we can illuminate a number of understudied complexities that are socio-spatial access. This study aims to highlight the presumption of sociality (Lieberman, 2013) and its relationship to the complexity of access (Alper, 2017; Alper & Haller, 2017; Simplican, Leader, Kosciulek & Leahy, 2015; Titchkosky, 2011), particularly including self-regulation (Blair & Diamond, 2008) as both an environmentally embedded process (Myers and Pianta, 2008).

As de Certeau's *Walking in the City* (1984) shares, our social spaces can be understood as "… invents itself from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future." (p.91) The "walker" navigates, impacts the creation of and is

impacted by the creation of space. Both Leander and colleagues and de Certeau's work offer ways of considering and envisioning space from a core of construction. This provides a more comprehensive and creative way to consider, specifically, the opportunities for social interaction.

Work on disability and communication has taken up a few different avenues of investigation including, clinical frames for the assessment and use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices (Light & McNaughton, 2015; Soto & Zangari, 2009), first-person accounts of what it means to have a communication-related disability (ex., McLeod, 2009; Sellin, 1995), how the construction of the social interaction can impact opportunity for expression (Goodwin, 2000; Ochs, Solomon & Sterponi, 2005), the ways disabled speech can get things done (Sterponi & de Kirby, 2016; Sterponi, de Kirby & Shankey, 2015; Sterponi & Shankey, 2014), and social critiques on the use of and power dynamics related to complex communication (Alper, 2017).

Through these and other lines of research, there remains a critical gap in articulating the necessary theoretical frame. This work considers (1) the underlying social aspects of disabled people with communication differences and (2) understanding all of the active ingredients that make up any social interaction. Each, as well, considers the successes and complications of communication beyond typically formulated speech in some ways.

This study unpacks the opportunities of challenging the normative hierarchical communication power dynamics. Said differently, the verbal voice is seen as the most important (Alper, 2017), whereas other forms take secondary positions. Opening up and centering the experiences, vast fields of expression, and reception that are continually being created in our social sphere can allow for much more rich understandings of our interactions with one another, improved relationship building, and adjust the power dynamics to give attention and gratitude for all of the work that disabled individuals do to show up and share in social spaces.

For many individuals of diverse backgrounds showing up and being is a radical stance (Clare, 2017). Linda Olds work on systems theory builds off of Maturana and Varela's (1987) exploration of how "… social relatedness, language and concepts of the self as part of the way an organism creates its world to maintain adaptive correlations between sensory and motor input, an evolution continuous with all biological process of adaptation and self-reproduction." (Olds, 1992, p.74)" She also considers Laszlo's two forms of self-regulating or self-reorganization (Olds, 1992) highlighting that "… with freedom comes the capacity for error, the 'correlate of freedom' according to Laszlo (p.275)." (Olds, 1992, p.83). A sense of self-determination, a common term in the transition field for young people with disabilities, represented as "freedom" here, offers up an interesting way that someone can "fail" or have an error and find balance with the environment in its constant reproduction.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I argue that we can continue developing our understanding of all people's sociality (Lieberman, 2013). Centering the experiences of disabled adults with complex communication strategies, I argue that all people create their versions of socio-spatial participation that can serve to support access if the social space and their sociality are understood as valuable elements. The goal is for education, and the broader community, to begin reading this. Rather than labeling some bodies and behaviors as problems, what can the reframing and the closer understandings offer us? Indeed, they can help develop critical thinking about participation, the poetics of bodies, and the creative ways many people participate in social spaces that were not developed with them in mind. This is a call for both the recognition and the alteration in how the world handles and holds environmental spaces with each other.

What I have found most striking are how you can see/feel/hear the connectivity when access is exchanged for inclusion. Inclusion is not disabled people in a space. It is the way that someone smiles when they are heard. It is the audible noise that arises from joy. It is the power in Shanti's eyes as she affirms and turns to take her place on the stage (or the classroom in this case).

This study pushes the analysis further to consider how space affects ability to engage and express. Disability is a messy and illustrious monster that has inherent complexity from its roots in The Ugly Laws (Schweik, 2009) and Freak Shows (Chemer, 2016) to modern discussions that highlight the lives of Autistic Artists (Biklen & Rosetti, 2005) and disability film festivals that are organized by disabled people like *Superfest* in the Bay Area (Paul K Longmore Institute on Disability). Part of this work is calling out the structural barriers and power dynamics that formulate normative practices and move theoretical thinking forward.

A new edited book (Vallejo Peña , 2019) featuring individuals who type and spell to communicate includes common threads of presuming competence, the vulnerability to admit misconceptions, being sure there are communication tools and training supportive communication partners. One specific recommendation that Vallejo Peña makes in her concluding remarks is that "Letter boards, keyboard, white boards and dry erase makers, tablets with communication apps, and other tools are used among individuals who type and spell to communicate" (p.176). These are useful tools for all classrooms. If we start by considering the resources for social participation, lots of options open up that are critical for many people. Henry Frost, an Autistic man, writes that "when I typed for the first time, and the words I typed were read aloud, the sensation cannot be fully described in words. My focus became present and I was functioning in real time." (p.133). The availability of the appropriate resources and the reception by others offers up important acknowledgments that build classrooms.

Additionally, Brostoff critiques Disability Studies in the academic field, offering up alternative options. Again, these point towards common themes that can be used across spaces: classrooms, transition programs, and community groups. She says, "small classes, flexible deadlines, an understanding that there is sometimes a fine line between therapist and educator, emphasis on projects rather than standardized tests or grades, communal spaces where it is okay to talk or okay to read a book, an uncanny mix of body and minds- what students in special ed classes (ideally) get is what students and teachers in Ph.D. programs (ideally) get and what everyone deserves." (Brostoff, 2016, p.147). The landscape of access has many specific elements that require attention (Titchkosky, 2011).

Limitations

This study focuses on only five students in singular settings for each of them. A broader analysis that looks at participants across educational and public settings with an increased number of participants could help decipher more specific aspects of socio-spatial access. In an expansion of this work, excerpts using more complex barriers that may require more creative methods of socio-spatial management can be included. This can offer a deeper look into how students are disciplined (Foucault, 1977), removed from classes, shamed or unacknowledged, and how that impacts the students' next choices and regulation. Comparing and contrasting these examples will directly develop the concept and confront ableist assumptions (Storey, 2007).

Future Work

This work is built on the foundations of elements from psychology, sociology, and critical literacy development. The next steps forward are to consider refining the meaning of socio-spatial access in regard to these elements. There can be great benefit examining how this

could be integrated into the way that we think about its relation to third space (Gutiérrez, 2008) and educational psychology. This work will be expanded in its next stages to include examples from multisite observations.

Chapter 3: Referential Doing

This chapter makes explicit three forms of communicative moves (Swales, 1981, 1990; Upton & Cohen, 2009) by disabled adults in an inclusive community-based program. Within this specific environment (that all encompass the overarching program), what communicative strategies are used by participants to initiate, enact or demonstrate participatory referential interaction? These moves used objects of reference in the world to craft opportunities for interpersonal communication. They are: (a) the use of objects (existing or created); (b) appearance(s) and (c) proximity. They emerged as themes from the more extensive data set examining interactions in a program implemented using Neurodiverse principles (discussed in the Introduction chapter).

This chapter analyzes the educational and communicative value of these three forms of attempted referential communication (Soto & Olmstead, 1993; von Bertalanffy, 1965) through a Critical Pedagogy and Disability Studies in Education lens.

The precise meaning of the objects of reference chosen by the participants in these communicative moves may not be linked to just one specific referent. I want to discuss the use of objects, appearances, and proximity.

Using a Disability Studies in Education and a Critical Pedagogy framework, the data indicate to how the referential communicative moves—using objects, appearance(s), and proximity—show examples of what I will call *Neurodiverse habitus*. Habitus is "… a system of *dispositions,* that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of *long-lasting* (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action" (Bourdieu, 2017, p.43). Habitus is a useful construct for understanding what patterns of participation and referential materials the participants use readily. In this way we can define communicative moves that are deemed valuable in this Neurodiverse program and offer the larger educational and disability service community ways to think about them as communicative opportunities.

Ochs, Solomon and Sterponi (2005) discuss the limits of Euro-American Child-directed communication habitus in a study demonstrating how alternative forms of social organization better served the needs of a neurodiverse youth. Rather than the typical Euro-American participation framework that would organize a caregiver to be seated face-to-face with the child, a side-by-side positioning was used. In the side-by-side positioning, both the adult and child could co-orient towards a letter board. As the analysis goes on to discuss, this form of side-by-side positioning allows the adult, specifically the child's mother in this example, to assist in prompting and closely following the child's pointing. The publication discusses this as a transformation of habitus from the dominant Euro-American framework and outlines how the alternative disposition and practice work.

Examining the cultural practices as they emerged in the spaces of this program created an opportunity for formulating a discussion of Neurodiverse habitus. The argument will not attempt to foreclose on what Neurodiverse habitus can look like but instead will open up a discussion that may allow other researchers to engage in.

The conclusion of this discussion will overview how this form of habitus fits with into existing literatures in communication, critical education and disability studies. The final remarks highlight how these excerpts offer a fertile platform for considering interactional power dynamics, voices in diverse forms and opportunities for critical education to further its knowledge of engaging diverse students.

Literature Review

The foundation of this investigation is inspired by the work of critical pedagogue Ana Cruz. In an article that explores the breadth and depth of ways that Paulo Freire's work has been engaged and expanded by educational researchers of diverse backgrounds, Cruz (2015) retells her journey of coalescing critical pedagogy and Deaf studies. Cruz describes the roles of love (Freire, 1970), hope (Kincheloe, 2008), and transformative social action (Darder et al., 2003) that Freire upheld as crucial elements in his pedagogical approach. Cruz's work is particularly important because it is one of the specific bridges between the perspectives of Freirian thought and Disability Studies research. In "From Practice to Theory & from Theory to Praxis: A Journey with Paulo Freire" (2015) she describes how her ongoing work in critical pedagogy came into direct conversation with disability as she worked with a young person that wanted to study music and is Deaf. Cruz's journey offers a pathway for viewing how disability and disability studies frameworks can come into conversation with well known theoretical frameworks to result in new ways of thinking and approaching educational practice.

These tenets are the foundation of this chapters' analytic perspective. Freire tells us that "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world." (2018, p.88) The excerpts that I discuss will offer a close look into the ways that disabled adults are using elements within the world as referential points to guide and advocate for their interests. A discussion of non-verbal communication and objects of referent will be included to link existing literature to the findings of this chapter. In this section, I review studies that highlight the accomplishment of non-verbal communication and the ways objects of referent can be used to assist in conveying information and expressing stances. The second theoretical foundation to this analysis is Disability Studies in Education. This framework pushes for a democratization of inquiry (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; Kleiwer & Biklen, 2000) situating disabled individuals as the knowers, presumes competency and highlights the ways that interdependence builds social experiences (Annamma, 2016; Kliewer & Biklen, 2007; Linton, 1998; Shapiro, 1994). Together, these lenses offer a unique way to consider the communicative strategies of Neurodiverse people.

Freirian Developments since Pedagogy of the Oppressed

The analytic perspective of this chapter maintains an affirmation of diverse communicative modalities. It relies on what Freire and Macedo (1987) discuss when they remind educators to engage with students' linguistic codes. They comment on how ways of communicating can be different and have different histories and lineages. All of which they argue are not inferior. Although they may not have always been directly calling out to disabled individuals, this analysis will describe how their framework can work to uplift these student voices specifically.

Giroux (2010) uses the term "legitimizing" to talk about holding student experiences and voice at the center. This is useful to think through in the context of how young adults are currently making use of the resources that they can leverage to offer communicative intersections. Although Giroux's work is a broad critical education audience, I believe the principles of the argument can work for this context. He states:

> Legitimizing students' resources sets the groundwork for their ability to relate their own narratives to histories to the context of learning, locate themselves in the realities of current lives, and critically interrogate and use resources to broaden their knowledge and understanding. Moreover, legitimizing students' resources requires shifting the emphasis from teachers to students and making

visible the relationship among knowledge, authority and power (Giroux, 2010, para. 8).

This acknowledgement and attention to where the student is starting from, as he states, is a worthy base. Simultaneously, engaging with students where they begin makes visible shifting power dynamics. The attention is given to ensuring the student communication is affirmed as meaningful. The framework understands that this alone is not enough. Existing forms of communication, linguistic codes or referential attempts can be acknowledged and then used to develop Freire's focus on humanization and change through dialog.

In her review of humanization and Freirian scholarship, del Carmen Salazar reminds readers that according to Freire, "humanization is the process of becoming more fully human as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons who participate in and with the world (Friere, 1972, 1984)" (del Carmen Salazar, 2013, p.126). This definition aligns with an affirmation of the person and growth as each person gains meaningful participation in the world. Critical pedagogy is a way of living that connects to social change (Giroux, 2010) and confronts exclusion (Giroux, 2004).

Disability Studies in Education scholars Kliewer and Biklen describe the success and opportunities of a child called Nicholas through the lens of Freire's work. Their qualitative study of an inclusive preschool describes the impact of being constructed as "literate" and the how being a full citizen of a literacy community aligns with the principles of including disabled students meaningfully. They cite Freire's "literacy pedagogy, *conscientização,* born of and furthering a collective dialogue, is a deep awareness and enactment of the right to democratic participation on the part of individuals who of the right to democratic participation on the part of individuals who have historically been silenced." (2007, p.2589; Kliewer, et al., 2006) The relationship between humanization and full membership in a classroom literacy community offers specific analytic implications for how this analysis positions Freire's humanization in relationship to understanding how diverse communication attempts can be leveraged when constructing Neurodiverse disabled adults as agentive interlocutors.

Non-verbal Communication and Objects of Reference

Work from the field of discourse analysis and conversation analysis offers both strategies and knowledge regarding the nature of social interaction, the tactics used non-verbally and analytic principles to decipher what people do in interaction (Baxter, 2010; Goodwin & Heritage, 1990)

From birth individuals enter a process of coming to understand what Hobson (1993) refers to as their "indicating potential," or their ability to take part in the process of gesturing, pointing and commenting (p.151). Hobson discusses this as part of the structures that support communication and language development for infants. Interesting to this discussion is also his inclusion of how the child is held accountable for their utterance while in conversation with an adult (p.152). He notes that holding the child accountable has a great significance because there is recognition between both the symboliser or referent is understood by both the speaker and the listener. In his discussion of autistic communication specifically, he points towards a "lack of awareness of how communication functions to 'connect' people psychologically" (p.172). In understanding this within the context of interaction, it certainly points towards the issues of communication that exist in dyads of autistic individuals who use limited verbalization and their communication partners. This analysis will shift away from a sole focus on the autistic or disabled speaker to focus on the potential responsiveness of the listener.

From Goodwin's analysis of how Chil, a man in his seventies who lost his ability to speak after a stroke, points to accomplish communication, he notes that "Chil inhabits a world that is already richly sedimented with meaning." (2000, p.71) He can use the structures around him to reference and build interactions.

From Goodwin's work (2000), we learn how the communicative strategies of Chil are received by his interlocutors who engage in questions for verification, follow-up questions for specifics and ongoing dialog to discover his meaning.

The experience of Chil is powerful because it highlights when the resources and contexts work in favor of the individual who communicates nonverbally. Jan Blommaert explains that "orders of indexicality" (2005, p.73) maintain the hierarchy of reproducing particular speech expectations. This means that there are social expectations continuously reforming that elevate the power and prestige of particular forms of communication while downgrading others. Some forms become "superior" while others are "inferior" (p.73). This all has implications for the typical reception and communication attempts of individuals who communicate through gesture, pointing and other nonverbal modalities. Blommaert theorizes the inequity in voice as it relates to (a) differential access to forms and (b) differential access to contextual spaces (p.76). The area of forms is defined as the resources that emerge from literacy, codes and other group-specific repertoires. The second core problem focuses on contextual spaces or how the conventions are received or interpreted (p.76). This analysis focuses on the forms of communicative referents that emerge in a particular context.

For some of the participants in this study, expression through verbal communication is either not possible or may be unreliable. Communication always emerges in many ways but for these individuals, I will argue it is critical to acknowledge, note and build interaction from the objects, appearances and use of proximity they use. The potential of these communicative resources is surfaced because the program or context they are moving within values Neurodiverse beings. The program is organized in such a way that these communicative potentials emerge. It is important to specify the trends in how they appear as a step towards additional communication research and possibility.

We know that narrative is a core human communication activity that links people together (Ochs & Capps, 2009). Through speech or aided communication (Soto & Zangari, 2009), development in individuals' ability to narrate their own stories about the present, the past or future offers the opportunity to drive identity development (Soto & Starowicz, 2016).

The communicative moves and communication that emerges is an important element in the ongoing narratives related to disability and autism specifically. In "The Autism Matrix," (Eyal, 2010), the authors point out how the narratives from autistic individuals may be difficult for parents or other advocates to hear as they contrast with existing assumptions. The authors focus on moving away from a discussion of what is the most "accurate" depiction but rather on the reality that:

> This sort of language begins to constitute the experience of what it is to be autistic by telling stories that connect words from ordinary language… used to describe emotions and mental states, with the behavior or autistic children, thus making this behavior intelligible to parents, experts, and conceivably also to autistics themselves. (p.231)

Said differently, the communication directly from the individual makes use of common referential linguistic meaning that can assist in both no autistic -and autistic people to learn from autistic experience. This aligns with how referential moves from individuals who may be non or minimally verbal can be used to gain deeper insights and connections about their experiences.

Disability Studies in Education

Disability Studies in Education calls for the voices and knowledge of disabled people to be centered. Tracy Thresher, an Autistic man who types to communicate, says, "I want people to know that not being able to talk doesn't mean there's a lack of understanding, or that the person doesn't want to share what they are thinking (Peña, 2019, p.36)." His remarks demystify assumptions about individuals who are labeled nonspeaking and call for a presumption of competency as a communicative partner (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Donnellan, 1984). Responsibility is distributed among interactional partners. This aligns with the call from Thomas Skrtic (1995) and others (e.g., Danforth, 2006, 2008; Erevelles, 2002, 2013; Mullins, 2019) for a democratic approach to disability that maintains avenues for "a way to continuously deconstruction and reconstruction its knowledge, practices, and discourses" (p.43). This remains a critical feature of how we need to approach communication with individuals who have communication differences.

Kayla Takeuchi (2015) reminds readers that she was "born in silence" and unable to communicate for 15 years (p.62). Once she found a method of communication that worked (i.e. typing), she says "I trained my mom right away so I could set new life goals" (p.63). This recognizes the multiple layers that are always at play for communication, personal development and goal setting. For Takeuchi, it was clear that she needed a method of communication that leveraged her strengths. Secondly, she immediately recognized the role of her surrounding network. Said differently, she specified how her immediate communication partner impacted her ability to define her path. I quote her statement because the term "trained" is important in considering the specific re-education that needs to go into supporting non-verbal individuals well. These supports need to adapt to understanding and assisting the individual in their own goal defining and attainment.

Takeuchi closes out her piece by reminding anyone who works with individuals who do not speak to presume competence to assist people in reaching their highest goals (2015, p.63). Maintaining flexibility during communication and uplifting disabled speakers pushes back on normative expectations and narratives of inspiration or pity (Shapiro, 1994).

This thread of empowering diverse forms of disabled voices also is discussed in Kleiwer and Biklen's (2007) study of the preschool student Nicholas. They call attention to how his teacher modeled appropriate responses to his greeting during their first encounter. They describe it as "*Read in his behavior meaning and purpose,* was the message conveyed in her seemingly organic translation of actions that might commonly be dismissed as nonsensical, aimless, and impaired." (p.2580) This literacy practice of "reading in" or acknowledging, affirming and working towards meaning making with his communicative actions is what provided for their discussion of how Nicholas is constructed to be a full citizen in the classroom literacy community. The teacher goes on to suggest that he leads them on a tour thereby setting the disabled student up as knowledgeable, competent and a leader.

This discussion of excerpts from the community-inclusion program wants its readers to engage with the offerings of participants through a similar lens. The discussion will set-up the guideposts through critical pedagogy, discourse analytic strategies and disability studies in education to formulate the path.

<div align="center">

Research Question

</div>

This chapter discusses the trends in communicative referents offered by participants in a community-based inclusive program. Through an analytic lens that surfaces complex examples of Neurodiverse habitus, this chapter responds to the question:

1. Within these specific environments (that all encompass the overarching program), what communicative strategies are used by participants to initiate, enact or demonstrate participatory referential interaction?

Methodology

As discussed in the introduction, the larger study collected observation, video, and audio data over the course of approximately nine months. Artifacts were also gathered or photographed for reference to specific material items that impacted daily activities of the participants.

The larger data corpus was organized by session dates which occurred two-three times per week. From here, further questions arose that required organization by participants across time.

Data Corpus

The data used for this analysis was extracted after coding for expressive means was conducted across all the participants of the larger study. Therefore, the material included in this analysis will be photographs of the participants and/or materials that they have created (written journal entries or drawings) from six participants.

Analysis

To better understand the ways that the participants used objects of reference to build commutative interactions, the data was organized specifically by participant across time. This generated a timeline of social vignettes from the beginning of data collection to the completion. From these sequences, examples of communicative stances were coded. At first, this generated a broad range of personalized descriptions of how each participant navigated their agency in communication. This led to a synthesis of three key strategies in expressive means or what is discussed as particulars forms of Neurodiverse habitus. These three trends are demonstrated by photographs of the participants and any referential materials they use.

Findings

Three thematic uses of objects of reference were found by the participants of this study. The three examples are: objects, appearance(s) and proximity. Said differently, objects served as rich environmental materials that participants could utilize to reference and depict agency in discussions. The analysis considers where the objects come from and how the participant uses them generally. Second, the physical appearance of the individual includes both their posturing and how they dressed. This analysis will consider the dynamic nature of changes in posture and appearance changes as accessories were changed or used in different contexts. Finally, proximity displayed personal preference related to sociality, closeness, or perceived desire for a particular distance. All three of these strategies for expression and agentive communication allow participants to demonstrate or assert authority over topics of interest and provide contexts for them to guide interactions.

Referential Communicative Attempts through Objects

For the participants in this study, objects can offer essential opportunities for communicating specific details about their interests and themselves. Riku, Bryan, Jack, Mateo and Shanti are five participants who frequently utilize material objects to assist in daily tasks and interactions. Riku, Bryan and Jack use existing books as part of their ongoing communicative repertoire at the program. Mateo and Shanti create material objects through writing and drawing to express information about themselves and their perspectives.

Using Literacy Materials

Figure 9

Riku using a language dictionary

In the first photograph example, Riku uses translation dictionaries and books at a large chain store to locate the specific terms in print as he reviews them vocally aloud. He moves from books in the youth section accompanied by images to dictionaries in the adult language section to shift from English to Spanish to Japanese around common terms. Riku frequently translates words from language to language while moving through activities at the program. Riku demonstrated this translation with a staff in the aisle of the bookstore. He held out the large Chinese translation dictionary pointing to specific words and reading them aloud. Then Riku's staff would respond with affirmation and ask him about other words he commonly translated at program like "pizza." After exiting the bookstore, Riku's staff shared with me that this is a common practice during program and how impressed they were with his linguistic translation skills. In considering how all this related to his communicative strategies, the use of the books served as a referential medium that the staff remarked on. This is a point of initiation from Riku about an area or topic of his interest that a communication partner can respond to.

What is important to capture with this example is how Riku moves to incorporate the visual aid in his translation process at the bookstore. From ongoing observations and discussions with Riku, he translated terms at his leisure during activities. However, when in the bookstore, he moves to show the translations to interactional partners cueing their engagement and leading them from language and physical spaces to another language and another physical space with a different book.

Figure 10

Bryan points at a magazine

Whereas we can think of Goodwin's example with Chil and his rich semiotic environment as the field for building a discussion (2000), Riku is pulling his interlocutor into rich language and literacy environments with him. He finds materials that can link his interests in language and translation to visually aid his interlocutor and increase the likelihood of a dialog developing.

In the second example, Bryan also finds and locates specific

materials within a magazine ad to discuss topics. He brings the magazine and other similar materials to the program. Bryan recognizes that the magazine can support his interactions and provides them as a point of reference as he shows the exact content that interests him in the image included. He lays out the materials in the directionality beneficial for his onlooker and points from another side to guide reception. The other participants in Bryan's group come to program ready with their cell phones or materials to look at. Because an interactional partner is not usually available in his immediate surroundings, he takes the magazine and walks throughout the downstairs area of the Helen Keller Campus holding the magazine. He greets other program participants and staff showing them the magazine. The program staff and other participants respond affirmatively, with brief comments about the topic or object he is pointing to. Bryan nods his head and smile increasing his frequency of pointing. As many individuals are usually occupied with their own materials, Bryan continues to walk around sharing his magazine.

A third participant, Jack, also brings books from home to guide his interactions with other participants and staff at the program. Jack is usually seen with a large coffee-table style book of horror movies that he carries in his arms while on public transportation. Similarly, the image shown is Jack removing a yearbook from his backpack to take out during a lunch break. With this book, Jack can guide interactional partners to see the signatures he received in the book and specific images of him and others from the past. I watched as he pointed to himself and other friends while opening the book on the table. Another program participant sat nearby to his right at the table listening to him and watching as he looked through the book.

Figure 11

Jack takes out his yearbook

The carrying of visual content is another way that participants demonstrated agency in guiding conversations at the program. They set up the field of interaction to focus on either topic of interest or information about themselves by bringing in reference objects and then inserting them into the interactional field.

While the examples from Riku, Bryan and Jack show how existing literacy materials can serve as referential material for engaging conversations, Mateo and Shanti created content that they could use to drive discussions and interactions.

Developing Materials that can Guide Communication

Mateo records daily entries that discuss what he did the previous day or from a weekend earlier. Each morning at program, he writes the specific details related to what he did, ate and who he saw in a composition notebook. At times, as seen in the image, Mateo uses his cell phone to copy down passages that he may have written down over the weekend elsewhere or to look up the spelling of a particular word.

Figure 12

Mateo uses his cell phone for reference
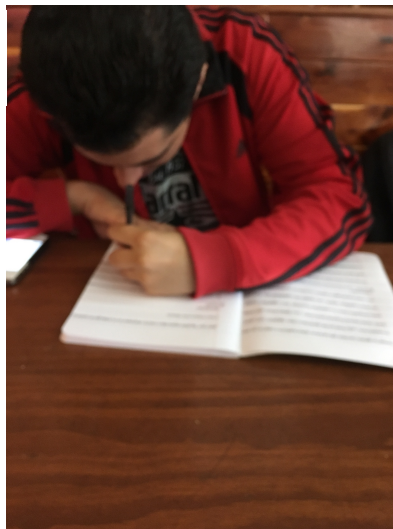
After Mateo completes the writing process, he requests to share it with one of the staff members. Another student in the program also records information about his days and then reads it aloud to the entire group. For Mateo, he moves to sit beside the person to share with and points to the texts as he reads. This process of organizing his thoughts, writing about the previous day and then sharing it with at least one other person at the program sets up Mateo to discuss what he has written further. Typically, Mateo decides to follow-up and asks his interactional partner if they have watched a film he has watched if they like the food he has written about or other topics. The staff respond by letting him know whether or not they have and then he asks

Figure 13

Mateo points and reads his entry

another question. This sequence of questions typically continues for several rounds and the staff follow-up by asking Mateo about his opinion on an activity that he mentions. Mateo responds with a short statement and transitions to asking someone else if they have watched a particular movie or enjoy a specific food. This format and sequence of questions are common throughout the day as Mateo sits nearby someone or meets someone while they are out in the community.

For another student, Shanti, drawing is a critical way to participate in the process of expression. She has a collection of drawings that she has created of members of the program and popular culture characters.

As she had her drawing materials out, one of the program staff explained how she uses her artistic skills to create portraits of people and other sweet program friends (like the director's dog Lora).

Figure 14

Shanti smiles sharing her artwork
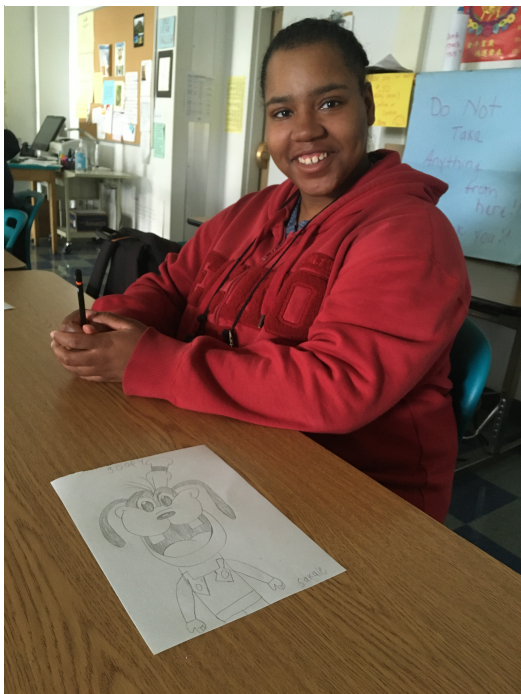
During one of the sessions, she began to draw and shield her paper with her hand. This was a motion that called my attention to what she was doing. In her demonstration of control over who was allowed to view her work in progress, she asserted her ability to draw attention and control it. After a few more minutes, she completed her work and shared the drawing with me. Shanti was familiar with this process of drawing and sharing so she knew that this would result in a sharing a comment from the group. Shanti's choices about her topics and her drawing style allow her to develop materials that she can share and build communicative relationships with others around her. Once she decides to share her drawing with the group staff and participants ask to see it closely and let her know how impressed they are. Her program staff invites her to show other drawings she has done in the past and asks her who else she is going to draw. Interestingly, this depiction of me highlighted my eyes and the feature of my face most closely in alignment with my eyes. My glasses, my ears and my eyes are featured with the greatest detail. Here, this Autistic young woman demonstrates her appreciation of my eyes and face on her terms.

Figure 15

Shanti's drawing of Renee

Communication Through Appearance(s)

A second communicative strategy that appeared across participants and demonstrates efforts for connection is how individuals manage their physical appearances. For a number of these individuals, this is most obvious through their selection of clothing and accessories. For another student, Konnor, how he manages his body language in space exemplified the importance of gestures in tone.

The Styles at Program

The students who utilize ways of dressing and appearing exhibit their standard of outward presentation. Shanti, Jack and Bryan all demonstrate how their way of dressing for program can create further referential expression and communication topics.

For Shanti, she selects clothing and wigs to represent a great deal about her identity and shifting identity across days and even hours. For example, she may arrive to program with a distinct color wig and matching outfit. During the one day, while I had been joining them for a course at the Adult School, I realized that she had removed the wig. Without any outward commentary or notable presentation, she subtly shifted the features of her appearance. Shanti

Figure 16

Shanti incorporates wigs into her style

Figure 17

Jack wears a tuxedo shirt

Figure 18

Jack wears skeleton suit

sports a denim overall cropped dress with leggings, a long sleeve striped shirt and a blonde wig in the example photograph.

The design and ability to change and modify her look throughout the day set Shanti up to engage with peers and community members about style. Through her wigs, Shanti demonstrates constant adaptability and agency in how she decides to show up throughout the day. Shanti's program staff sometimes comment on how much they like the color of her wig or the style of her outfit. Shanti smiles and quietly responds with thanks.

Jack also uses his appearance to assist in the facilitation of identity and communicative opportunities. In the photograph shown, he is wearing a tuxedo t-shirt. At the program, this commonly receives compliments and remarks from participants and staff alike as they appreciate his sense of style that fits within what popular culture would find typically of a man with quirky style and outwardly inviting points of dialogue.

Finally, Bryan uses costumes and elaborate dressing garments such as capes to design his daily look for the program. Each day, he takes on the full ensemble routine in his skeleton suit with top hap, black clothing with a large black cape or other visually captivating materials.

These three participants used how they dressed and prepared to look for the program to spark interaction and communication throughout the day. Their appearance also allowed them to enact particular moods or tones depending on the features of their look. For example, when using the cape, Bryan might engage in a pull of it over his face and release to create a sense of secrecy and openness.

Using body language

Konnor managed details of his expression through his body language and organization in space. In the accompanied photograph, Konnor sits with his eyes

Figure 19

Konnor closes his eyes and lifts his hands

Figure 20

Jack sits in the morning
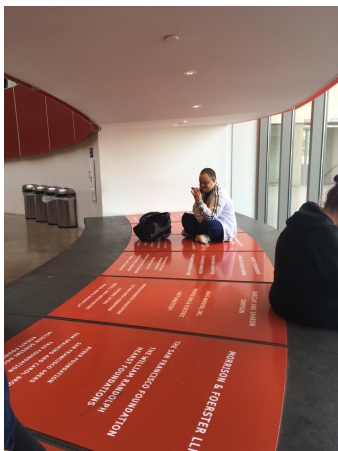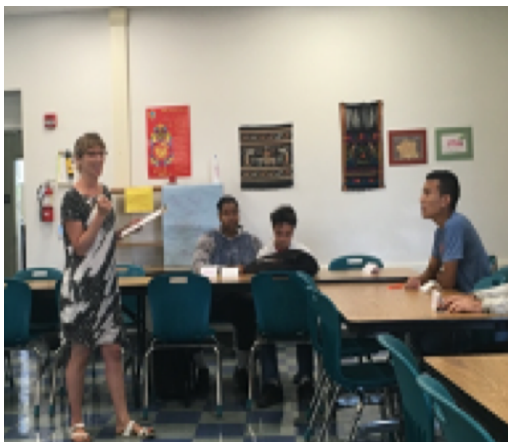
closed and hands in the air as he speaks. Whereas the other students do not utilize a great deal of verbal communication as part of their repertoire, mobilizing objects and appearance as communicative triggers with interactional partners, Konnor does. In addition, he implicates the organization of his body as part of his communication repertoire. As I sat across from him during this interaction, I paused and waited as Konnor closed his eyes and lifted his hands into the air. After a few moments he opened his eyes and began to speak about his view of human development. I waited until his arms relaxed to ask follow-up questions and paused to process and allow for his physical movements to become a part of the conversation. This is one example of how the body may alert itself as a communicative signal from the Neurodivergent person.

Communicating through Proximity

The final important aspect emerged from the analysis is proximity. For the participants in this study, proximity is managed as part of demonstrating group membership and choice. Because the program allows for flexibility in the ways that participants decide to join, there can be diversity in approaches.

For one of the students, he regularly joins and attends a group selecting a seat close to the general area where his smaller group meets in the morning but allows for access to the large windows and open space of the atrium. He arrives each day, finding a place for his backpack and setting himself up to look over his books or listen to music from a device. As students continue to move and shift around, he participates by responding to greetings but remains in the same general space throughout the program's early hour.

Shanti organizes herself and spatial decisions as they relate to demonstrating her relationship to another participant, Riku. They are known to be in a relationship and commonly sit together. Evidenced by the following two images: the first is on public transportation and the second is in the classroom, their bodies' organization together expresses connection and

Figure 21

Shanti and Riku shoulder to shoulder

Figure 22

Riku and Shanti arm in arm

Figure 23

Konnor welcomes peers

Figure 24

Ezequiel seated in bookstore

interdependence to the social community. By sitting closely to one another and engaging in intertwined arms, they are alerting their social surroundings to their connection through common examples of how a "couple," displays themselves (Liddiard, 2014).

Another student, Konnor, invites and sits with a peer from his community group at a cafe. During this moment, the organization of his body and placement in the cafe space is working in tandem with his desire to maintain and develop relationships with his fellow program participants. Konnor took the seat beside the wall across from an open seat when he arrived. He gestured for his peer to join him after hearing that the peer was upset and began a conversation. His peer responded to his questions and they engaged in an ongoing dialog for a while. Konnor comforted his peer discussing grief.

However, Ezequiel sits by himself and manages his participation in the program and the community with a great deal of personal space. In the example photograph, he sits in a chair in a store of used books holding his cell phone with headphones plugged in. Knowing his entire profile, he also is an individual who uses some verbal communication for expression but mostly relies on scripts and commonly discussed topics. This seems to work for him as he manages a balancing of interest and engagement with his program but maintaining the more desired independence from constant interaction others want. Ezequiel's program staff passes by once in a while as they navigate the store. He maintains his place and focuses solely on his phone. On one occasion, he called his family and left voicemails to let them know about his day.

When Riku, Mateo and Shanti attend an outdoor dining area they decide to sit closely together and share some food items. Riku sits between Mateo and Shanti. Throughout lunch, Riku uses a gesture towards each person to signal a request. I watched as the exchanges unfolded multiple times as the request was made and then either granted as food was shared or denied by Mateo with a shaking of one hand. These three young adults maintain a social arrangement that allows them to engage in rapid non-verbal communication while eating together.

This example of patterned signals and agreements about how they share or reply "no" to one another offers an important opportunity to think about Neurodiverse habitus and its potential. In this example, three of the program participants have agreed upon a sequence of events and prompts between each other. Riku lifts his hand towards his peer and Mateo passes a small amount of food or rejects the request with a "no" and head shaking. Both the proximity of the participants to one another and the agreed upon rules of engagement are important aspects.

Figure 25

Mateo, Riku and Shanti dine together

Group Movements

From a broader perspective, proximity was also reflected in the way that groups moved through public spaces. One specific example that highlights this was the way that a group met in a downtown café each morning and organized near the back door, discussed where they would be heading first and then made their way down the streets. During each occasion that I joined this group, I would arrive to find the members disbursed throughout the tables of the café.

Generally, one or two of the six-seven participants would be seated in close proximity to the program staff but others would be on the far side of the room with their headphones on or walking around the café leisurely. When the decided time had been reached and the group was meeting to discuss their day, they each strolled out with backpacks or bags in hand to the back exit of the café that was in a small atrium of the shared building space. It was during this brief conversation that the group would decide on any errands or preferences that they would commit to before going to their jobsite for that day. Typically, someone would want to purchase something from a convenience store so they would plan on which location to head towards in the nearby shopping district.

The cohesion of the groups in the streets emerges as a point of interest because it demonstrated a fluidness rather than a tight boundary that can be seen in school or travel groups. The group members typically selected positions either at the lead or a bit behind the program staff who navigated amongst the fluctuating group. Members would approach one another, walking and pointing things out or move away from one another after disputes or irritation. This ever-adjusting organization demonstrated moments of interpersonal intimacy both made possible by the bustle of the downtown streets and disrupted as other pedestrians passed. The pace of the group was neither too casual nor too rushed as they adjusted for other member's speed and were sure they had enough time to complete their tasks.

Discussion

Each of the community-based inclusive transition program participants arrives with their communication resources and repertoires that they utilize in varying ways across diverse settings. This program focuses on foregrounding Neurodiversity and the value of each individual's contributions from its onset, allowing creative and expressive means of communication to become a part of what I am referring to as Neurodiverse habitus at the program. This study's findings describe three strategies that participants regularly use to aid in expression and serve as referential points of meaning-making with communication partners.

The three strategies are discussed from Riku, Mateo, Jack, Shanti, Konnor and Michael. These strategies included using objects (both existing and created), through appearances (both in dress and posture), and choices in proximity. These strategies are ways that participants can insert shared referential material into interactional space. This tactic is similar to what Daniele Cowley encouraged through collage-making in her dissertation study with adolescent girls labeled with learning and intellectual disabilities (2013). She developed this strategy to encourage meaningful dialogs based on Wendy Luttrell's (2003) self-portrait collages with pregnant teens and Mehta's (2010) dissertation with physically disabled youth that used multiple methods of participant-centered engagement.

June Downing dedicated her life's work to researching and teaching communication skills to students with severe disabilities. She reminds readers that "even if the individual does not develop a comprehensive communication system that meets all needs and addresses all demands, having some means to communicate is far preferable to having fewer or no communicative needs." (Downing, 2001, p.16). This remark calls attention to a strengths-based approach that acknowledges the value of the skills that are present. She goes on to encourage awareness of what students can do, stating, "when students with severe disabilities do not or cannot use speech, teachers (and parents) may feel pressured to supply these students with a replacement symbolic system. Yet, these students may have a fairly efficient system of non-symbolic communication modes that merits attention." (Downing, p.118). Note that Downing doesn't entirely shy away from the option to develop further communication access but acknowledges that their existing strategies are worthy of attention. This chapter is an initial look into the ways that students bring referential materials into the interactional field. I argue that this is worthy of attention before pushing in other directions or towards other end goals.

In the Augmentative and Alternative Communication literature, Janice Light and David McNaughton highlight how interactional research approaches can help develop strength-based understandings of communication. They discuss how conversation analysis can be used to develop meaningful communication skills. They reflect on Martine Smith's (2015) findings that "when re-framed and viewed from the lens of conversation analysis, the children's contributions are viewed as "... conversational moves that occur as part of a shared communication problem-space, where collaboration is essential if meaning is to be progressed" (Smith, 2015)." (Light & McNaughton, 2015, p.90) These are part of a reflection on how research in AAC can move towards effectiveness in impacting the day-to-day communicative opportunities of individuals with complex communication needs. In another piece, they specifically discuss that their goals are grounded in maximizing communication, participation and bringing effective practices directly to AAC users (Light & McNaughton, 2012, p.201).

When individuals are using AAC with an interactional partner who does not use AAC, the conversations are incredibly unbalanced in participation (Collins & Marková, 1999). However, AAC user dyads are noted to be far more balanced (Müller & Soto, 2002). Taking these factors into account as programs and educational settings strategize around training staff and the community may lead to new success areas.

Freirian's sense of praxis always grounds us in mediation with the world. This means that communication is not something that can be removed or singularly assumed without its context.

Limitations

This study focuses on the trends demonstrated in a specific kind of program. Therefore, in other transition programs, the guidelines, mission and overall structure may not work to

support similar means of expression by its participants. Additional research that could work with AAC users in Neurodiversity focused transition programs may yield additional information about how these expressive strategies can support and compliment AAC use.

Future Research

This chapter's aim was limited to the scope of describing the trends in strategies that emerged for participants in the program. The original coding strategy focused predominantly on categorizing and understanding how expressions were typically offered or made by participants. Additional studies or further stages in this research agenda can look at the dynamics that emerge during interaction for each of these strategies.

Further implications could be understood related to the difference between how the strategies are used and their influences and accomplishments in interaction. For example, what other interactional opportunities are available when Bryan points to an object of discussion in a magazine eliciting a topic and when Konnor utilizes his body language to demonstrate affective, emotional tones that accompany verbal dialog. Additional work could utilize the examples of participants with each other to gain more guidance on how interactions are being navigated. This could be accomplished through looking closer at interactional spaces that are focused on participant dyads or groups like the example of Riku, Mateo and Shanti eating lunch or the example of the group that moved together in a flexible flow down the street. In order to further understandings of how Neurodivergent habitus is already functioning, these examples demonstrate the potential of participants with one another in a supportive context accomplishing their goals. Further, the analysis could take these elements of Neurodivergent habitus and expand them into the patterns of how community-members engage. To what degree and in which contexts specifically do things continue to flow or become conflictual? Learning more about this could assist in improving training for program staff and community-members.

Additionally, each of these features allows for the communication of stances and has implications for identity. Analysis could then move into the specific opportunities of semiotic representation and its relationship to what we know about Augmentative and Alternative Communication (Soto & Olmstead, 1993).

The next steps in this research trajectory can work can utilize additional conversation analytic constructs such as *interpretive frames* (Gumperz, 1982; Tannen, 1993) and the impact of failure to respond as expected or *shifting assumed frames*. Communication partners may not have the flexibility that is needed in their comprehension of the framing of an interaction. For both partners to understand, each must comprehend the frame (Bateson, 1972). Future research could investigate that from both sides of the interaction, enabling further discussions of how framing works for each interactional partner.

Chapter 4: Self-Determination in the Community

... When will I be accepted into relationships

where I am called when you need someone

to talk,

laugh,

or cry to?

What trial must I triumph

so that the scales fall from your eyes.

Because if I am invisible for too long

I might totally disappear for good. (McLeod, 2009, p. 16)

       In his first book of poetry, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) user Lateef McLeod demonstrates the complexity of enacting interpersonal relationships and self-determination (SD) for disabled individuals in the quotation above. Four components define self-determination: (1) self-knowledge, (2) decision-making, (3) communication, and (4) goal setting and attainment (McNaughton et al., 2010). Despite the desire for connection and authentic bonds, disabled people continue to face limitations in social experiences. This is due to racialization (Annamma et al., 2013; Brown et al., 2017), ableism, and limitations in the general public's understanding of complex communication. In this chapter, I will look at how the BAAT program staff facilitates opportunities for participants' self-determination.

       In the quotation above, rather than focusing on self-determination as an individualized set of skills or "abilities," McLeod reminds us to appreciate the reality that self-determination or competency arises in interaction (Fasulo & Fiore, 2007). This will be the perspective from which this chapter continues to discuss the opportunities for self-determination that participants at BAAT experience. The goals of this chapter are to uncover and highlight when and how Neurodiversity emerges as an asset and a value, shaping interaction, social spaces, and socially situated identity.

In her dissertation work with this program, Harrison (2019) reflects on how the director and program staff "… have studied Wehmeyer's work and mobilize much of the same language, they teach self-determination as a 'practice,' not a product or 'thing' that could ever be standardized, possessed, or owned." (2019, p. 217). The program integrates self-determination into their focus on Neurodiversity building set of practices that train participants and offer skills in personal responsibility. The organization created the Neurodivergent Education Model (NEM) to include three specific parts. The first step legitimizes the practice of Neurodiversity. This is accomplished through a set of claims the organization developed that critique the medical model of disability and outline how Neurodiversity practices accomplish disability justice (Harrison, 2019, p.125-129). The second step outlines a trauma-informed perspective on education. These perspectives focus on being supportive in the moment, contextualizing experiences and working towards self-regulation in the future (p.135-136). The final and third step is the Training in Self-Determination Skills and Personal Responsibility (p. 116).

       Harrison's dissertation (2019) demonstrates how the program moves beyond the field of special education's definition of self-determination to reformulate and build a Neurodivergent Education Model to guide the theoretical and practical elements of their program's participant experience.

First, I will review the literature related to self-determination and AAC. The field of AAC describes self-determination as it applies to supporting individuals with minimal verbalization or who are labeled non-verbal and from the lens of special education and communication supports for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Secondly, the literature review will address how using film for research can have an impact on cultural conversation that support person-centered planning. Third, the principles of interdependence in programming models rather than independence as a goal is clarified in order to understand the analysis of the proceeding excerpts.

Literature Review

Building off of the work of the previous two chapters, this literature review will focus on integrating research related to self-determination, the possible role of film in person centered planning and interdependence in programming models. These three areas of discussion will set the foundation for thinking about the analysis of the excerpts from the program that highlight how community inclusion and choice are enacted.

Self-Determination

The literature related to self-determination and AAC will be engaged to build an understanding of how the principles of self-determination have been and continue to develop for individuals who could make use of alternative forms of choice-selection and communication. First, I will discuss the development of Michael Wehmeyer's work and then influences from Disability Studies in Education and their relationship to interactional understandings of self-determination. Finally, I will conclude by integrating this conversation with the way that Laura Harrison (2019) describes self-determination training as a third part of the curriculum at the BAAT program.

Michael Wehmeyer's definition of self-determination has evolved from earlier iterations, clarifying misunderstandings in the field (1998; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). The Special Education scholar's conception of self-determination emphasizes the quality of life for individuals with disabilities (2005). He cautions against the confusion and use of the term that arises when the term self-determination is utilized in broader inequity discussions. For Wehmeyer, the focus is on the intrapersonal level. By bringing scholarship back to its roots in personality psychology, Wehmeyer focuses on students' support in taking the initiative in decision-making, problem-solving, and student-directed learning (2005).

The development of disability studies allows further centering of disability experiences within the self-determination literature (Baglieri et al., 2011; Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012; Linton, 1998). Cultural factors such as community values, beliefs, customs, and rituals are introduced to understand self-determination through involvement with communities that value interdependence and communal cohesion (Frankland et al., 2004).

Danielle Cowley and Jessica Bacon (2013) suggest that individuals with complex communication needs should be at the center of self-determination discussions. Although their argument focuses specifically on the implications for individuals with intellectual disabilities, it remains relevant in the shift from a "medicalized discourse focused on normalcy and independence" toward a "discourse of diversity, interdependence, and social justice" (p. 468). This shift represents a move away from "fixing" individuals toward interventions in the social processes and policies that limit those individuals' opportunities and lives and aligns more readily with McLeod's anxieties. It also echoes Nirmala Erevelles' profound redefinition of agency insofar as educational scholarship engages with the voices of people who use AAC (2000).

Cowley and Bacon (2013) consider the interdependence of interpersonal communication and social arrangements. They discuss how models of self-determination instruction (Wehmeyer, 1998) focus on particular principles of practice that are "…likely to happen in isolation from real world contexts and peers without disabilities" (p.476). In their view, self-determination is not necessarily limited to either/or conceptualizations of skill that needs to be instructed on as an augmentative curriculum, as in Wehmeyer's writings If considered with the interdependent interaction model, the Wehmeyer four components (mentioned earlier, i.e., self-knowledge, decision-making, communication, and goal setting and attainment) can become a generative pathway for both SD and the interactional research fields if these skills are being incorporated into a functional curriculum. Said differently, Cowley and Bacon (2013) argue that all students disabled and non-disabled, can benefit from the development of self-determination skills as an integrated part of their general curriculum. Such a theoretical expansion could relate to (a) the kinds of interactional patterns that arise between people who use AAC and verbal communication partners (Müller & Soto, 2002); (b) students and their peers (Clarke & Kirton, 2003; Clarke & Wilkinson, 2007; Clarke & Wilkinson, 2008); and (c) the findings of discourse analytic work in its potential to expand our conceptions of how disabled youth participate in dialogue (Fasulo & Fiore, 2007; McDermott, 2001; Mehan, 2001; Rapley & Antaki, 1996). This shift from individual-level understandings of control to integration in social engagement contexts can help us learn more about how self-determination works on multiple levels. For example, these three lines of research that are mentioned above all include methodological approaches and analytic strategies that focus on the relationship between disabled individuals and their communication partners. This shift in methodology and analytic focuses brings out details about what occurs within the interaction. When considering AAC users, findings suggest that AAC users in conversation dyads balance more symmetrical participation than an AAC user in a conversation dyad with a non-AAC user (Müller & Soto, 2002). The study of conversation dyads allows for an analysis of an individual's skills and participation and how these features might appear in different social arrangements.

Film in Person-centered Planning

Film offers important opportunities for understanding self-determination of people and communities. It is a way to collect information about an individual and their experience. This can assist in offering up specific details regarding how someone made decisions, communicated their wants or needs and the resulting conclusions. In the following project, film is used to record participants' daily activities offering information back to participants about their experiences and about the program dynamics.

This video information about the program allows for a documentation of how the program has functioned and what the community-inclusion elements look like in real time. It can demonstrate how the spaces are organized, how the individuals collaborate through multimodal communication (Cekaite, 2010, 2015) and the results of activity. As well, because the program is different from other existing models, it offers examples to disrupt assumptions. The use of film provides specific audio and visual examples of how this program manifests its own Neurodivergent Education Model.

Film can serve as a strong resource to share information, practices and values about communities. Projects such as the *Through Navajo Eyes* Project (Navajo Film Themselves) and *Bethel Community and Schizophrenia in Northern Japan* (Nakamura, 2010) are exemplary illustrations. Each of these projects documents specific community practices and shares it with a wider audience.

The *Through Navajo Eyes* (Worth & Adair, 1972) project is considered a foundation for visual anthropology. This project partnered with the Navajo community participants daily for two months in basic instructions in film. The researchers communicated to the participants that they should create a film that is about something important to them. The participants were paid minimum wage and the seven films were shared with the Pine Springs Community (Through Navajo Eyes Project).

The film project *Bethel Community and Schizophrenia in Northern Japan* documents a small community of people with schizophrenia and other psychosocial disabilities. The Bethel House is the central organization of the community that supports its members. The film follows members of the community as the navigate daily life and community practices (Nakamura, 2010). This film project offers a specific link to disability and documentary to center disabled experiences and voices.

This chapter is grounded in the use of a visual anthropology approach to understand communication opportunities and access for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities who may be labeled minimally or non-verbal. Video information can be used to understand the current interactional field. This information can allow further understandings of communication repertoires and engagement. This information is a critical piece that can be linked with the ongoing conversations about the development, limitations, and trends in communication access.

This chapter brings video data from the BAAT program into conversation with research focused on improving supports for individuals with complex communication needs that uses an interactional conversation analysis-based approach (Light and McNaughton, 2015, p. 90). The use of film to investigate and describe how this program creates opportunities for self-determination brings into a direct look what forms of communication are happening. The findings can contribute methodologically to research on communication access. This chapter makes use of video recording in daily programming as a way of learning more about self-determination. Communication is the fiber through which these opportunities arise.

The existing literature does not offer much in the way of video data in an ethnographic study of community-based services for disabled individuals. An additional note is that other work using film has moved public knowledge closer to the lived experiences of disabled people as they share key features of understanding disability, community organizing, and work (Biklen & Rossetti, 2005; Brea, 2017; Rooy & Savarese, 2017; Nakamura, 2010). Whereas many studies about disabled people have taken place within the constraints of clinician-led conversation and activities (e.g., Fasulo & Fiore, 2007; Kovarsky et al., 2013; Muskett et al., 2010; Rapley & Antaki, 1996), this project observed the lived activities of the participants through an ethnographic approach.

With this project, it was necessary to continue looking for ways the best ways to use video to both capture examples of how communication emerged. I remained flexible in deciding whether the handheld camera or GoPro camera would be more effective. Remaining explicit in conversations with the participants and with the organization about the ways that the video data could be leveraged was important. The program director let me know that the program valued the participants' ability to see themselves developing across time. Similarly, to the iterative model of *Preschool in Three Cultures* (Tobin et al., 1991), and the multi-step research methods being used for Subjective Evidence Based Ethnography (SEBE) (Lahlou et al., 2015) this video project will work in recurring

rounds of filming and discussion to build more precise understandings of how the participants and staff make sense of communication.

Methods

Data Corpus

I visited this program over the course of approximately nine months. Within this period, I attended the program for 74 days. Across these sessions, 51 hours of audio recording, 54 hours of video recording with the handheld device and 25 hours of video recorded with the GoPro cameras were recorded. The data set for this chapter was extracted through coding across all the observed sessions from the larger study. Coding focused on observations related to self-determination, participant choice and program staff roles. These three areas came together to develop the conversation related to how this program demonstrates a focus on self-determination through staff roles, how participants organize themselves, and participant reflections. Relevant findings are described using photographs from the class at the Adult school, screenshots from GoPro recorded video data from a worksite, photographs of how participants chose to organize themselves socially and at work, and transcript excerpts from an interview with one of the participants.

Participants

This chapter discusses data from five participants. Their excerpts were selected because they best represent the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The first two of the students that this chapter reviews data from are Konnor and Jack, who are each in different smaller groups and have been discussed in previous chapters, as they navigate their daily routines. Additionally, this chapter incorporates data from three other participants, William, Saul, and Ezequiel. These three young men are from the same group, attend a course together at the adult school, and work together at a local food kitchen for the poor.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I organized all of the video, photographic information and observational notes into NVivo. As I reviewed the video data, I coded information related to the location of the events, such as a *job site* or *adult school class*.

Staff Roles

I too coded information about the staff actions and appearances. These were labeled *staff role*. A subset of that code focused on how the staff were present at the job sites. The resulting codes were *staff indirect support* and *staff direct support*. A specific trend arose in the way that staff were initiating and intentionally standing aside during activities, these examples were categorized under *staff indirect support*. *Direct staff support* examples included those where the staff provided direct instruction, responded to questions or participated in activities alongside the participants.

Participant Organization

With regards to the participants themselves, I coded the way they set themselves up for activities, and organized their bodies for social, work and travel activities, resulting in the following codes: *self-organization* with the subcodes *in the start of day*, *on the bus*, *at work location, on bart, walking, in classroom, lunchtime* and *at the end of day*.

Participant Viewpoint

Finally, the responses and opinions of the participants with regards to programming and staff supports were also analyzed and coded as *participant interview and participant program viewpoint* with the subcodes: *about experiences*, *about friendships*, *about community* and *about*

learning/teaching. This series of codes allowed for the description of how self-determination training happened during the program.

The ethnographic documentation of the ways that inclusive programs are working in the community offers research nuanced information about the development of communication supports and community-based programs. Using film in this way may allow for deepening awareness of what is happening. This can include tensions, opportunities, questions, what is being acknowledged, and what goes unnoticed both by disability service providers and the community. Another way to say this is that we can learn unexpected benefits from this close ethnographic study of a program happening in the community. Particularly today, sparse research in this manner has looked into the day-to-day life of individuals living in community apartments, group homes, or participating in transition and adult services.

The opportunity to work closely with an organization in regard to their programming and initiatives related to communication offers important potential for understanding underlying constructs and a bridge to further future research projects. There is an ongoing need for research to be action oriented and based in lived, real time activities.

Findings

The findings of this chapter are organized into three segments: (i) how the staff works to enhance opportunities for self-determination, (ii) how the participants organize themselves (socially and for work), and (iii) remarks from an interview related to program and disability-identity.

How the Staff Work to Enhance Opportunities for Self-determination

The staff from this program provided opportunities for self-determination in two keyways that will be discussed in detail: through academic programming and through naturally occurring workplace competency.

In this program curriculum directly engages with aspects of self-determination and self-assessment. Through the coursework at the Adult School and the day-to-day activities, these participants actively engage with a two-fold structure for skill development. They have the meta-level discussions about self-determination, their desires and their assessment of where they are in the trajec

tory of learning how to have what they want in their lives. The second part is the activity of moving in the community each day and participating at worksites where they can bring this into action. Students are provided with a facilitating staff who oversee and can provide additional instruction when needed but allow for the participants to fully engage with the community member leaders.

Academic Programming
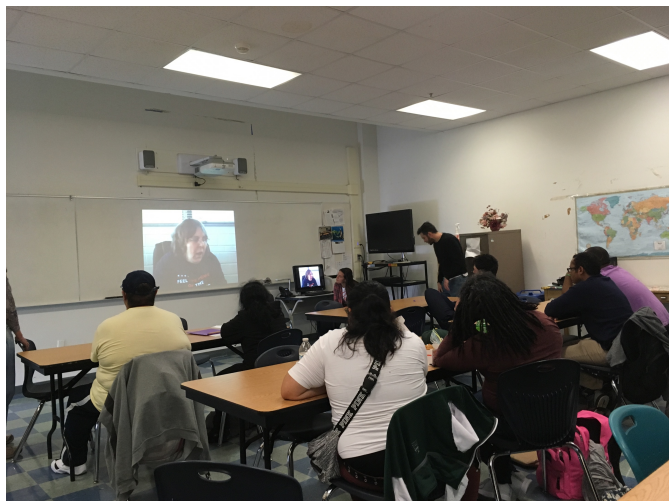
Figure 26

Self-Advocate film in class

Figure 27

Class discussion with Neurodivergent staff

Shortly after I began my work with this program, I was able to see how the program partnered Autistic staff in roles of leadership and curriculum development. During a session at the Adult School, one of the program staff partnered with the Adult School staff to hold a discussion section that included a first-person narrative from a disabled individual discussing their experiences with self-determination.

In the image from that course, the video is projected to the front of the course on a whiteboard as the students watch from rows of desks. I watched as the program staff introduced the topic, played the video, and then opened the conversation for questions. The speaker in this video discussed their experiences in segregated educational spaces and their move to taking control of their life through self-advocacy.

The staff moved from the video clip to a larger discussion with the program participants about their own experiences in school and hopes for the future. They went on to discuss how decisions are made in their lives and how they feel about those decision-making processes. Two of the staff worked together to support an active and critical discussion of the participants' experiences with self-determination in their lives. In this second image, another staff member is off to the far wall assisting to affirm, respond, and facilitate further discussion as the students talk about their personal experiences.

The program also used self-assessments in the course to check in regularly with students about their own goals and opinions about the class. The included images show the course instructor leaning down to have a few words with Ezequiel, or Zek, as he completes self-assessment hand-outs. Two of the images show examples of the assessments that ask specific questions about the course and specific questions about oneself.

It is worth noting here, that Zek sits independently in the class, that the instructor comes to have a one-on-one conversation about his progress with the assessments, and he goes on to complete them in pencil. Over the course of the time that I worked with Zek, I noticed that he enjoys setting up a routine of sitting in approximately the same space but is flexible if tables are

Figure 28

Instructor speaks with Zek during class
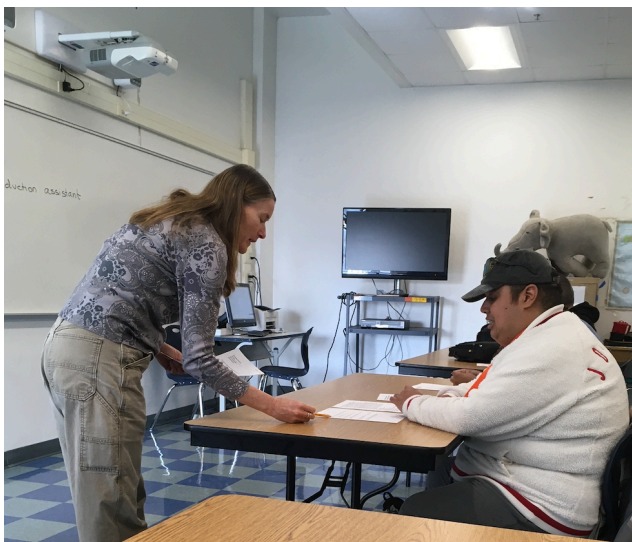
Figure 29

Zek completes worksheets independently
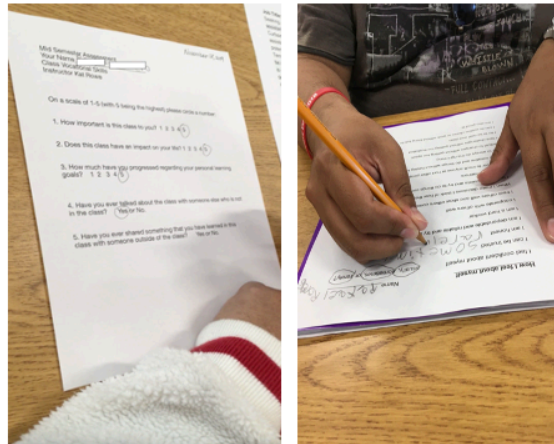
arranged differently. He always demonstrates focus in completing tasks while sitting away from others. Here, these factors all come into harmony as he can work without close staff intrusion. I appreciate that Zek works with pencil and fills in any assessment forms per his own sense

Figure 30

Series of staff using her hand to show participants where they will go to work with community members
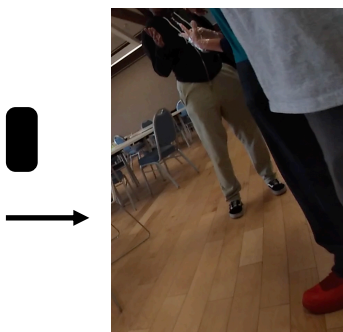
making. In the first assessment shown here, he circles his preference in response. In the second document, he circled each of the selects, "mostly," "sometimes" and "rarely" at the top of the page. He returns to each of the circled terms as he writes out his corresponding responses.

Independent work and the opportunity for classroom support allow Zek to use his personal strengths and thrive here. This is the first of a few proceeding examples I will discuss that uncovers the role of support staff in self-determination opportunities to navigate workplace settings with community-member peers.

Workplace competency

Through specific episodes from two of the groups, we see examples of how staff approach and

allow for the program participants to take the lead in their worksites. This relationship focuses on the participant's ability to take risks. It is a key feature of the program's foundation. It allows participants to get maximum contact and opportunity to interact with community members.

Food Distribution with Konnor's Group

Konnor's group goes to a local senior citizen center where they have a new task on this day. The group is going to assist with organizing food on tables so that when individuals come through the line, they can select from the options available. This scene is what occurred prior to Konnor's interaction with the community member in Chapter 2. In this excerpt, the staff for Konnor's group sets up the task for the day and the way she navigates introducing the opportunities to work with the community members is discussed.

Throughout the series of screenshots from a videoclip, the staff member uses her hands to motion and emphasize the pieces of her instruction. Her instructions share general information with the participants about how this community room works as visitors come in and take food off of the tables. During her hand motions she is instructing participants that different folks will be at certain stations organizing the food on the tables. In the first of the series, the group is lined up at the right side of the room from our perspective. She begins with her hand flat and open towards all of the participants. This seems to signal not only the alignment of all of the members as one team but call attention for everyone to listen. From here in subsequent screenshots, she uses her hand to face towards the group and then out towards where they will work during the day's session. She returns to a neutral down facing hand in the fourth screenshot. This begins a series of rapid motions where she turns her hand in pointing and then rotates her wrist out. She finally uses a wide swing of her arm to move from a point
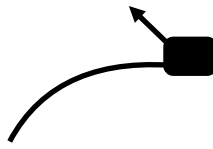
at one end of the lined-up tables to the other final side in the second to last screenshot. In the final screenshot, she tilts her head back for a visual check-in with everyone as she is directing them out into their workspace.

This sequence of hand motions as the group awaits the start of their hands-on session may seem simple, but it is here that she sets up the entire context for what their time here will look like. She navigates a position of facilitation to specifically direct attention and describe different parts of the table sequence.

In partnership with this, she then walks around the backside of the table with the group and assists in setting them up with the specific community members they will work more closely with for that day. This set of images shows the movement behind the tables and where Konnor stops to begin his interactions with the man on the opposite side of the table. The sequence that was just reviewed is then followed by the excerpt discussed in Chapter 2. The arrow in the final

Figure 31

Staff walks behind participants and away as they begin work with a community member

image shows the staff member who has now made her way around the far side of the room with some of the other participants and is continuing to move around the spaces and away to open up direct dialog and collaboration with community members.

Dining room duty with William and Saul

Another group works at a local kitchen and dining room to prepare hot meals and serve food to individuals who visit daily. This program staff keeps a facilitative role of checking in with the participants as they go through their routine of preparing for their work session. In the

Figure 32

William and Saul put on protective work gear and walk down the hallway past their staff standing aside

following two images, William on the right in a red shirt motioning to Saul to follow him in the direction of the hallway. Saul has just finished putting the plastic apron over his head and turns to follow William down the hallway. Notice the staff member off to the right-hand side of the images against the wall. She holds a tray of napkins that Zek will fold in another room. As they pass, she has a quick remark to be sure they are all set.

Figure 33

William points towards doorway by Raul

The two young men then proceed down the hallway and William moves towards two doorways on the left, and Saul moves around a corner at the right. William signals with his hand towards Saul's direction, letting him know he will come over in that direction afterwards. This sequence demonstrates the ways that William and Saul are involved in one another's preparation for their work session, and how they navigate in tandem. Their staff member is there for support but does not track them through their work nor impede on their routines of preparation.

This particular sequence continues to be of interest as Saul goes out into the larger dining room area and gives directions to two new volunteers he notices. These volunteers are new to the organization and unfamiliar with their responsibilities once the dining room opens. Saul approaches the two young women and introduces himself. He goes on to use his right arm to lift and point towards the opposite side of the room. First the girl in the center begins, and then the girl on the left follows in also pointing towards the area they are discussing. This pointing demonstrates a joint reference as Saul educates them about their task during the dining session that day. Saul is directing their attention to a station at the far corner where they will bring discarded trays. Their task is to throw away any napkins or garbage into the can and place the dirty trays on the silver station for the person behind it to rinse and move.

Figure 34

Saul gives instructions to two volunteers in the dining room pointing towards the station they bring plates to

Figure 35

An arrow points towards the workstation in the corner that Saul points towards

How the participants organize themselves

Another feature that depicts moments of agency and allowances in choice is the ways that participants decide to organize themselves. A few photographs will be used to demonstrate preferences in organization socially and while at their worksite.

Socially

When participants reach their morning meeting places, they have cultural habits that have developed with their groups about how each person will organize themselves as they await the arrival of the other members. In Zek's group, the contrast and harmonizing way that he sets up his spot while William and Saul walk around the space and gather with some of the participants from other groups.

In the image provided, Zek sitting down at a table with his headphones on and cell phone out. During the morning routine, many people will walk around the downstairs area of the building and share greetings. Zek always actively greets and responds to folks as he continues to enjoy his space and time online.

Other members of the same group, William and Saul, might be found sitting around a table with other individuals or standing together discussing music, events they have gone to or current events.

Figure 36

Group of participants gather around a table

Figure 37

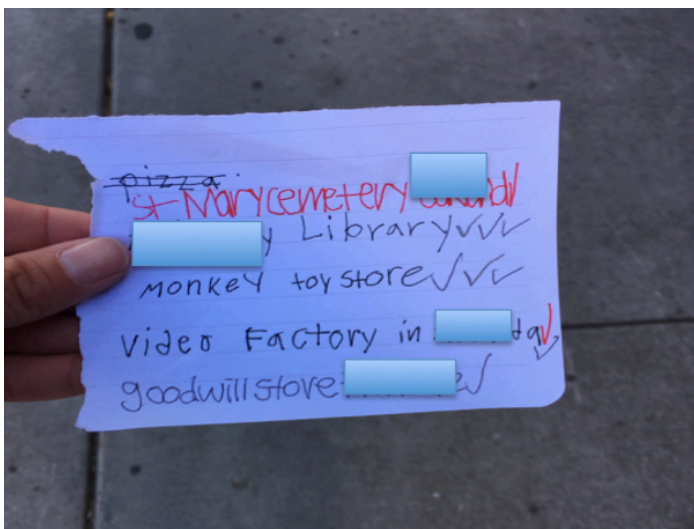*Zek smiles holding his phone at a round table*

Another group from the program uses a small piece of paper to organize their social decisions and to provide a record. Decision making was an important process that followed a specific procedure of collecting all the ideas onto a small piece of paper and then allowing for everyone to vote on their preference of where they would like to take their travel training trip during that day. The ideas from each person are recorded on a slip of paper and a vote is conducted. The tally was written down and shared with participants so that they could review the information. The image shows a list of places written in different styles followed by several checkmarks that correspond to their number of votes. Methods like this allowed space for everyone interested in contributing an idea to do so, to participate in the process of creating the document, and then to have a concrete record that could be passed from person to person. This is important because first, it allows for everyone's voices to make it into the list of options. Second, there is a physical representation of the vote that is accessible to the group members to review themselves. Third, allowing the record to be passed around and held onto by someone served to calm any frustration that did result after one of the member's option was not selected. For this person, holding the information and being able to share it as they reflected on the tally allowed him to have this as a reference point for processing. It was clear he was disappointed and being able to go back to the record of vote could remind him of why they were going to that day's selection. As well, it assisted as staff had a few exchanges with him about accepting the selection and reminding him that they will do this process again and that the selection could be in his favor in future sessions. Although it might not have dissipated his disappointment immediately, it brought a calmness into the conversation and allowed everyone to move forward knowing their plan for the day and the structure of voting they will continue to use across sessions. This dependability on the process can serve as a calming feature.

Figure 38

List of places and check-mark votes on a paper

At Work

Building from the previous discussions of how participants can move and take leadership in their workplaces, they also demonstrated preferences on how they organized their workstations.

In the included images, Jack working at a downtown charity organization making peanut butter sandwiches that will be distributed at lunch. Here, the materials are organized around the outside of his seat, and he has his beverage in the dark container with a silver cap off to his left side. Not included here but also generally part of his work routine was using his cellular device to play some music in the background that was enjoyed by himself and his co-workers at the table. Jack created an organizational space that worked best for his process here. The staff would

Figure 39

Jack puts peanut butter on bread at his job site

circulate around and check-in to see how things were going. Members from the charity organization showed Jack and his group where they could find the materials and provided any specific information for that day. As Jack would work, people would come and go from the kitchen behind him, and a room set off to the side of the room he sits in. Frequently the members from the community organization would thank the participants from BAAT. Some of the members from that community organization would come by to say more direct greetings. Usually, at some point, the members of the organization would begin to have coffee and ask if anyone else from the group wanted any.

Zek also selected a similar way to work at the dining room his group attended. As William and Saul worked in the Community dining room in their roles, Zek set up in a smaller open room in the back where people would also drop in to help with preparation or stop for a break. Here, Zek also used his cell phone to play music that he listened to as he worked on folding and organizing napkins in a more efficient way to hand them out with the meals as the kitchen opened and went through boxes of them.

Both Jack and Zek found ways to use their personal preferences in their corresponding workplaces to develop a workspace and process that fit well for them. They remained a part of the active workspace environments while maintaining the space and materials to assist in their own self-regulation. Each of these young men continued to develop relationships with members from the community and accomplish their work with facilitation from staff but without an overly intermediating influence.

Figure 40

Konnor sits on a bench peering off to the left

Remarks from an Interview Related to the Program and Disability-identity

Finally, the interview conducted with Konnor offers key input about how Konnor understands his own role at the program, his ideas about what he values, and how mindsets about disability influence interpersonal actions. This informal interview was developed with the intention to learn a bit more about his background, his perspective on the program, and his interests.

Konnor and I decided on a space in a public park area near a bench to set up the camera and go through the questions. We did not try to move far away from others or avoid the natural scene but rather implanted ourselves into the events. Throughout his interview, we laughed and paused as the local public transportation passed close by bringing loud sounds, he took moments to pass remarks back and forth with a close friend at program and we met a community member's dog.

For the interview, Konnor sat on the bench and approached the camera occasionally to state direct messages to the future viewers about and after loud sounds. His perspective on the intention of the video for unfamiliar viewers to see is interesting as he greeted them and bowed during our closing. He played with the camera as an interlocutor representing the future members of his audience

Konnor Mentions "real talks"

Renee: Is there anything that you would want to change or add to the program?

Konnor: Ooooo, Yes.

Konnor laughs and slaps his knee a few times in response.

Konnor: Um.

Renee: I'm not saying we can do this. I'm just trying to have us imagine

Konnor: Dang it!

Konnor brings his head down towards his knees as he laughs.

Renee: I know. (laughing) Oh, I just want to make that clear. (laughing) I just want to get a sense of what stuff you like doing and what stuff would you want to be doing.

Another participant from the program walks through and greets us then passing by the camera and waving his hand towards it.

Konnor: (laughs) Korey, we're doing an interview!

Korey: I know that you're doing an interview but I'm crashing it because I am the party breaker.

Konnor approaches Korey and he then moves away from us. Konnor sits back down on the bench.

Renee: Okay, keep going, keep going.

Konnor: Well, what I would want to add to is probably, hmm,

Konnor: This is kind of hard. Like being able to invite outside people into the maybe inviting outside people into program or

Renee:	okay so like opening it up
Konnor:	Maybe having oh well this is my own personal option but
Renee:	Yeah
Konnor:	If my partners ever actually came into this program which they probably wouldn't because well probably because the fact that they don't have anything that would have them put into this program but yeah if they were it would be pretty different. Well for one, there would be more reasons for me to come I would have somebody to have a real talk with all the time like my boyfriend we would have real talks
Renee	Yeah
Konnor	And friend talks
Renee	This is like getting into the stuff I was going to ask next, this is good
Konnor	And also my girlfriend I would talk to her about real life stuff you know like family, apartment, bills!
Renee	Bills, that's good.

On first reflection, I began to consider the relationship between Konnor's response of opening up the program to other people. Kevin's remark points towards the distinction of who would have a disability label that would include them in this program and those who do not. To some degree, the program is meant to be naturally opened up to community engagement. However, these structures are a bit limited to the community interactions that align with existing opportunities to go to specific locations for activities like physically working out at the local YMCA, job sites, the local Adult School, or agreed upon mid-day destinations for travel training. These travel training locations are places that the group decides to plan their journey on public transportation to and from. Depending on the length of the time they are at program and the group's interest, they might go into San Francisco or another suburb of the East Bay.

Moving further into Konnor's comments he touches on "real talks." This idea of real talks is a point of interest and further development when considering opportunities for self-determination and how program does and can effectively fit into the trajectory of choice-making for these individuals. In this passage, Konnor talks about "real talks" as those he can have with his partner. He situates them in dialog with individuals that he has been developing more intimate emotional connections with.

The idea of "real talks" corresponds to his socio-emotional needs for deeper delving into important conversations with individuals in his life. I understand this to mean that Konnor sees an opportunity for program to engage with "real talks" rather than a judgement against what is currently happening at program. It is important to understand that he is demonstrating a level of trust and security in program to say that he would want "real talks" here.

In the following lines, Konnor builds on this comment to mention that these conversations would relate to "real life stuff you know like family, apartment, bills!" This again is an important connection between what the program is currently doing and what Konnor sees as opportunities. This program facilitates opportunities for practicing self-determination through job sites, adult school courses and travel trips. The participants are able to share their specific suggestions and do outreach to find job sites they enjoy. The participants are also able to share their views on participating in courses that are offered at the adult school and select their destination for travel trips (as described in more detail in the introduction chapter.)

First, from my other observations with Konnor, I know that he is actively involved with a local kitchen that takes grocery store donations and prepares them into vegetarian meals for

people in need. I see it worth noting that this is something happening and that it is not mentioned here. Secondly, Konnor is a participant in a self-determination course that has been in session at the local Adult School. Parts of that course do bring up preferences about future living arrangements. His contextual desire to have these conversations with his girlfriend are another proceeding step from this work. He is aware of his preferences and the responsibilities that come with moving into an apartment. He now wants the programmatic support to engage in those dialogs with his intimate partner.

Konnor's responses to the question of what changes he would make at program offer a critical next step in where programming could go.

Discussing Communication and Teaching

I asked Konnor about his preference when communicating with others. This question was a part of my interview both because of my own interest in the opportunities of Neurodiverse communication, and because I had come to know Konnor as someone who used a great deal of body language and made a point of supporting when they experienced difficult emotions. Konnor responded, "talk, movement, and sight."

He did not want to say anything additionally about talking but went on to elaborate that "watching people's movements correlates to emotions. So, the more you move sight towards the body, the more you can understand and feel the emotions." Konnor explains the importance of movement and sight as again contextualized between interlocutors. He describes the movement of the person he is watching and how his own sight focuses on their body to build understanding of emotion. This process is represented not as an assumed understanding. Instead, he describes it as a scientific process of learning correlations between body language and emotions. This results in an embodied experience of understanding and feeling emotions in his description.

Building closely off the skillset that Konnor uses to communicate, he describes himself as doing more teaching than learning at program. The following section of our interview transcript walks through his discussion about teaching and learning, his own desires to teach, and his hope to go to college.

First, I start by asking him about what he teaches, he says: "How real life can get. Help people learn life lesson. I give them wisdom." Konnor immediately demonstrates a strength in knowing the values of his experiences. He recognizes himself as a knower of wisdom. Still curious about his thoughts on learning, I follow-up by putting a bit more pressure on his own learning by asking, "What do you want to learn?"

Konnor says that in program, "I had to learn about life or something like that. Not much that I haven't already learned or experienced. Pretty much the same things"
He goes on to describe more specifics about his desire to teach. With this he organizes a sort of teaching perspective.

> It's more like I'm teaching now. It is one of my dreams to teach people. I do want to teach people about life, the skills that it takes to live with others, the skills that it takes to be anything, or the skills that it takes to be yourself, in some cases, or how to show all of your different sides or don't have one view on life.

In this description of teaching, Konnor takes up a number of features of self-determination education as he discusses teaching cooperative skills, what could be domain-specific skills and personal identity skills. He leaves this description encapsulated with a wish to instill a multicultural and open perspective on life as he states "how to show all of your different sides or don't have one view on life."

In the proceeding remark, he immediately goes on to describe his relationship to the program.

> But also, it's like the reason I am in this program is the fact that my grandma wanted me to be in this program. Before my mom died, she wanted me to go to college. That's one thing I wanted to do because she wanted me to do it, and so I wanted to do it.

Konnor has set up the discussion in the previous section to talk about the opportunities he has at the program to teach and then goes on to complicate his participation with another goal he wants to pursue. At this point in the conversation, I decide to ask some additional details about college. As a friendly conversation partner who is interested in Konnor's personal aims, I figured this would be the next route to take. Konnor continues along this dialog path and then does re-contextualize his current position.

Renee: Do you still want to go to college?
Konnor: I do.
Renee: What college would you like to go to?
Konnor: BCC, for now
Renee: What's that? Berkeley- Community
Konnor: Berkeley City College.
Renee: Great and what would you like wanna study? Do you know or just start somewhere and see where it goes?
Konnor: Possibly computer systems, to work with AI
Renee: Nice
Konnor: Yeah
Konnor: Also like I kind of got thrown into this program without a choice. So that's actually one of the reasons why I didn't have, I bad view on it, because I didn't really have a choice in the matter. Also that was like life after my mom died.

Konnor knows the next step he is working towards and the courses he is interested in. He then takes some time to reflect on why he was initially resistant to the program. When I had met him during his first days joining his group, he immediately connected with peers from his previous high school and showed some hesitancy to understanding what they would do at program and how things would work. He returns to these moments as he talks about joining and then brings that into relationship with the plans he had become set on with his mother.

Konnor: My mom gave me choices. While my grandma doesn't because well whether while one of the things that I actually figured out is that she has a closed mindset when it comes to people with disability. She treats them as if they can't actually live in the world. Because she actually worked in Special Ed and she didn't know how to separate work from home. So she treats a lot of people like that, like they can't actually do something themselves.
Renee: And how does your mom look at it?
Konnor: She saw me as a person who could do almost anything when I was growing up because of how much I was already going through.

Konnor goes on to describe with specific details about some of the difficulties he has faced in life. I affirm his comments. He talks about mutual losses that his mother and he shared, and then mentions how he dealt with all of this.

Konnor: And also I had to learn pretty quickly because I had to be an adult in my family because I didn't have a father figure or an actual dad. My dad had to leave

because of family reasons

Konnor: Yeah and on that I had to be the dad. [train] Yeah but I had to grow up really quickly just so I could take care of my family.

Konnor marks specific details of his own life and reflects on the challenges he has faced as evidence of his ability to move forward in life towards other challenges, like college. In this interview, Konnor also offers a reflection on mindset. From the literature on social and medical models of disability, there is a popular familiarity with the tensions of highly prescribed mindsets about human differences as limiting the opportunities for individuals. Konnor brings in his own opinion about how his grandmother's role working in Special Education became a professionalized view that she could not separate from the contextualized experiences at home with him.

Discussion

This chapter described three key areas of how self-determination and training occur in this program. These three areas are: (i) how the staff works to enhance opportunities for self-determination, (ii) how the participants organize themselves (socially and for work), and (iii) remarks from an interview related to program and disability-identity.

The findings from these excerpts allow us to look deeper into the impact of how this community-based transition program utilized a number of key components. The curriculum and staff facilitation, the encouragement of participants to develop and use competencies at work, and the choices in how participants organized themselves socially and in work-related tasks set up opportunities for self-determination. Additionally, the reflections of participants to discussing the strengths and places for development for the program demonstrate how this organization invites dialog.

The concept of self-determination continues to develop as programs like BAAT demonstrate how they utilize this process within community spaces. The preferences of disabled people emerge through their voices. This program utilizes a Neurodiversity perspective, maintaining a foundation of belief and encouragement for participants to make decisions about their lives. The core value is the individual, who may or may not have had many opportunities for choice-making in the community, to thrive with staff facilitation.

The specific examples from the data used for the analysis in this chapter offer two important findings. The first is a demonstration of how the program works which encourages self-determination through personalized and flexible means of participation by each participant. The second is a pathway to move forward from this origin point. I do not advocate or argue that programs would necessarily shift in their overall make-up of participants or responsibilities but what is offered here is another level of interpersonal engagement.

Video as Part of Sharing the Story

Video recording was used in this project to collect examples of how the program functions. This chapter specifically considered video examples related to self-determination training. The video examples provided specific examples of where the staff chose to stand and orient. Having these screenshots from the GoPro footage allows for evidence that goes beyond the descriptive but brings readers into the scene. The emphasis is on the participants and their opportunities to make choices at their work sites, in the Adult class and during social times at the start of program.

Having video data of the interview and the examples out in the community can be used to depict the visual layout in greater detail. This chapter takes up the use of screenshots from videos in ways that assists in organizing a written analysis. Additionally, the video data will be a

useful tool to share with the program in the presentation of the findings. Having this visual content can serve to assist with next step discussions with the program and with the participants. All of the chapters of this dissertation heavily rely on the use of visual image to facilitate the analytic discussion. To me this is important as I continue to translate my work. It was useful in the process of bringing images and video back to the participants during the study. It will continue to be useful in our future discussions and as I continue to make this work more accessible for the public. The goal of this work is to bring it into discussion with BAAT, other transition programs, service agencies and direct support staff.

Existing Frameworks for Consideration

Participants select how they want to sit, organize, and complete the process of their tasks. I discussed this through both the social organization and the organization in workspaces. If there is not a direct pointing out of the typical power dynamics that are involved between disabled individuals and their staff in these programs, this point might be missed or belittled as unimportant. However, understanding the structures of ableism that seep into all aspects of social life, the shifting of control to the participants is critical. Maintaining flexible spaces where individuals can select from more or less directly social positions is important. This flexibility is an instrument of disrupting assumptions of how anyone *should* show up. The individuals at this program have control within their social and workspaces to make choices about their tasks, their routines, and how they can integrate means of self-regulation (such as listening to music on a cellphone).

Finally, the valuing of participant perspectives as a role in the program. During our interview, it was telling how open Konnor was about the things he would like to see at the program. His sharing demonstrated an ability to feel comfortable speaking about contributions. It demonstrates first his alignment with understanding that he has an active place in the program and that his opinions matter.

Interdependence in Programming Models

Contrary to popular assumptions in the United States, there is a growing understanding of the interdependence of people and communities in disability studies work (e.g., Erevelles, 2011; Longmore, 2003; Price, 2011; Wong, 2018). This is seen in earlier examples of conversational interaction and how the dynamics are continually in flux as participants move through social experiences (Chapters 2 & 3).

The research related to adult transition services has continued to develop over the course of the past two decades. Both with the growth of person-centered transition planning (How Person-Centered Planning Works for You, 2011; My Plan, 2016) and self-advocate organizations forming (e.g., Green Mountain Self-Advocates) have increased the availability of information and training for disabled people in self-determination skills. Work moves forward both in relation to community inclusion and academic access as inclusive higher education program guidelines have been developed (Grigal & Hart, 2010). As well, it has continued to expand as rights outlined in the Convention on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Flowers, et al., 2007) are explicitly fought for. An example of this is the right to live on a college campus (Rossen, 2006).

This work has been greatly impacted by the direct action of Disabled activists fighting for their rights to public transportation with organizations such as American Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation (ADAPT), housing on college campuses with The Rolling Quads at UC Berkeley, the first Center for Independent Living (Independent Living), and protests such as the 504 sit-in at the HEW-offices in San Francisco (Patient No More). The work of Disability

activists and writers has had an impact on the research field's evolving understanding of self-determination (Cowley & Bacon, 2013; McNaughton & Bryen, 2007; McNaughton et al., 2010). Danielle Cowley and Jessica Bacon invite a re-imagining of self-determination in more complex and nuanced ways that acknowledge context and the underlying assumptions in the existing literature. Their call offers opportunities to recognize the strengths, existing accomplishments, and agency of disabled students (2013).

Aspects of the participants' identities are in ongoing co-construction offering important formulations of positions of participants and myself throughout the process (Villenas, 2002). The movement is towards an unsettling of positions and understanding in aims of self-determination for both the researcher and the participants in this work (Visweswaran, 2003; 1994).

Future Possibilities

These examples offer ideas for future iterations of programming. Based on the excerpts discussed in this chapter, contextualized self-determination could be better understood by closely examining conversations and interactions. Taking the examples that are seen in the curriculum and self-assessments, the application could move towards how each participant integrates these dynamics into their important relationships outside of program.

For future research in this area, it would be useful to ask questions about how participants might also feel comfortable or find possibilities in their lives outside program to translate these dynamics across settings. It might be interesting to follow the form of interviewing that Mary Wickenden (2011a; 2011b) took as she went into the homes of her ethnographic interviewees and gained a sense of their communication repertoires across settings. During these interviews, she navigated the complexity of working with young people in their own space and discussing the complexities of their AAC system and identities.

Conclusion

This chapter offered a look into how aspects of self-determination work within a community-based transition program. Further work should also examine the underlying assumptions in transition programming and education that limit opportunities to explore contextual factors. Finally, scholarship should be conducted to explore the availability of students 'opportunities to embody and define self-determination, related choices, and their implications. To leverage the skills and elevate the voices of disabled people, researchers and practitioners must continue to develop understanding in complex and nuanced ways.

As AAC user Henry Frost emphasizes in his chapter about inclusion and civil rights:

... Supports are necessary not optional.

I can learn. I do learn.

Fighting for access is hard.

Learning is not hard.

The learning I can do... (2015, p. 59)

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study examined the interactional possibilities at a community-based transition program founded on Neurodiversity and trauma-informed principles in the Bay Area. The program was particularly of interest because it is both run by an Autistic director, supported by many disabled staff and has its own Neurodivergent Educational Model (Harrison, 2019). This study examined the multi-modal communication opportunities and leveraged video recording to center disabled peoples' experiences and shift social assumptions. Nine participants from the organization agreed to participate in this study. I attended and observed them at their job sites, classes and for travel training. I took photographs and recorded video with a handheld camera and GoPro cameras. Participants would sometimes also wear the GoPro cameras to capture their experience on public transportation or in the classroom.

This research project used a disability studies in education lens (e.g., Ashby et al., 2015; Woodfield & Ashby, 2016), with an emphasis on what Neurodiversity (Craft, n.d.; Singer, 2016) has contributed to our understandings of communication and social inclusion. As well, a special emphasis was placed on the participants' point of view both in the literature (Freire, 2018; How Person-Centered Planning Works for You, 2011; My Plan, 2016) and the methodological choices used (Lahlou, 2011; Lahlou, Le Bellu, & Boesen-Mariani, 2015).

This research project also built off of the work from the field of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and broaden its knowledge to describe multi-modal communication from individuals labeled non or minimally verbal. Interactional analysis was used to learn more about the dynamics of various forms of communication dyads (Collins & Marková, 1999; Müller & Soto, 2002) and the ways that this approach can build off of previous work (Light & McNaughton, 2015; Smith, 2015).

Both Light and McNaughton (2015) and Smith (2015) have discussed research needs to extend the field of AAC. Light and McNaughton (2015) suggest a focus on improvement of outcomes across contextual spaces such as: home, school, work, the community and the health care system. First, they suggest maximizing communication opportunities by using a strength-based approach to communication intervention and leveraging an AAC user's strengths to build communication skills. Second, they propose to work with individuals in their real-life contexts. Third, they discuss how research should integrate a focus on skills for psychosocial development. Finally, they discuss how both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to communication difficulties need to be accounted for in our understanding of an individual's AAC use. Additionally, their paper suggests the use of the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) (World Health Organization, 2013) as a useful tool for understanding these practices and their implications on AAC research (for example, see Zerbeto et al., 2020).

Smith (2015) discusses specific language development and unique AAC learning strategies that have implications for assessment, intervention and research. She suggests the need to use dynamic assessment and include multimodality while assessing expressive communication. With regards to intervention, Smith suggests using written language more frequently as an explicit model for learning focused on morphology and syntax. Finally, she indicates the need for case studies that describe language use over time in both written and spoken forms. This research incorporates both Smith's (2015) and Light and McNaughton's (2015) consideration by adopting a strength-based perspective, describing the participants' multimodal communication strategies as deployed in real contexts, considering both internal and external supports for their communication, and using a frame-by-frame account of their interactions with various partners in a range of social contexts.

This project aligns with the ongoing need for work that examines individuals' communication in real-world contexts, considers the ways communication appears with varying partners (community members, program staff or other participants) and integrates multimodal materials that can become an important resource in communication. Although the participants did not make use of 'formal' AAC such as communication books/binders or speech generating devices, participants used a wide range of aided and unaided modalities to communicate effectively. This project has broadened the boundaries of effective communication and how it arises in interaction and offers additional insights into how multimodal communication is successfully used in interaction between individuals with complex communication needs and their communication partners. This project adds to the existing studies on AAC as well as to the studies on this specific program described below.

Prior to this project, two other dissertation studies on this program were completed. The first dissertation was *Enabling Geographies: Neurodivergence, Self-Authorship and the Politics of Social Space* by Sara Acevedo (2018). Acevedo's dissertation (2018) closely partnered with the program directors and leadership staff to construct a theoretical argument about the program and how its grounding in neurodiverse practice fits into potential for changes towards Neurodivergent space. Her project points towards the process of neurodivergent people's reclaiming of the public social space as an act of reclamation and hope for change. The second dissertation was *Neurodivergent Leadership: Building Multiple Possible Futures Through Intersectional Interdependence* by Laura Harrison (2019). In Harrison's dissertation (2019), she collaborated with the program directors and staff to discuss the program and explain the Neurodivergent Education Model (NEM).

Findings

This dissertation took a close look into the interactional happenings "on the ground" during the day-to-day activities of a community-based program that is founded on trauma-informed and Neurodiversity principles. The first research question aimed to investigate the ways that participants leveraged both verbal and nonverbal communication to reach their goals. The findings from chapter three point out how this program supports creative and active participation wherein participants make use of existing materials (such as books), create materials (such as journaling or drawings), use stylistic choices or organize themselves, their bodies in space, to open up points of mutual engagement. My analysis also showed how the program staff engaged in affirmation and patterns of recognition of these communicative moves. Then, the discussion of findings from chapter three focuses on the materials made available by participants to engage in interactional experiences. The description of 'referential potential' looked closely at how participants offered up materials (both existing and self-generated), stylistic presence and physical placement for potential interaction. The chapter couched this in the acknowledgement that the program supports participants in this endeavor to feel comfortable and open to these forms of self-expression. The chapter mentions the ways that staff respond in affirmation and validation to these expressions.

These opportunities reflect existing methods of shared referents for communication such as Cowley's dissertation study (2013). She encouraged collage-making with adolescent girls labeled with learning and intellectual disabilities. In her study, she worked with teenage girls to understand their views on self-determination and post-school life. She developed this strategy to encourage meaningful dialogs based on previous work by scholars who integrated multi-faceted ways of encouraging participants to tell their stories. She first considered Luttrell's (2003) self-portrait collages with pregnant teens. Luttrell found that she gained bits of stories and brought in

the opportunities for journaling, improvisation, self-portraiture and collage making to supplement this process. She found that her participants were drawn to magazines, markers and construction paper to create self-portraits about their identities as pregnant teens. A second scholar (Mehta, 2010) also used a visual medium of *life mapping* with Indian students with disabilities as she studied inclusion. Mehta's participants used photographs, magazines, artifacts and drawing materials to create this 'life map' as she facilitated the discussion. Cowley (2013) discussed how useful the collage making and use of visual information was for interviewing one student who had difficulty with verbal expression. These studies deepened our understanding of the ways in which participants can use visual information as a rich communicative resource.

 A third way of inviting interactional engagement comes with the participants' stylistic choices. Each dress in interesting and engaging outerwear and each uses their distinct sense of style to invite engagement with their choice of clothing (Linthicum, 2006). The culture of the program included frequent compliments and question about dress. Both the program staff and the participants used distinct dress.

The way that participants used their bodies in gesture or how they organized themselves in groups offered additional opportunities for understanding and following the neurodivergent participants' lead. In the group lunch setting, the participants showed patterns of communicative engagement around sharing or denying the request to share food. They first situated themselves closely in a table and then moved through a series of internally understood gestures as they ate. These participants did not rely on vocalizations or language to communicate in these instances but on their mutually understood gestures. These examples of how participants responded to one another demonstrate the potential of interaction opportunities that the program enabled and the participants created for themselves.

The second research question asked what communication access and development possibilities emerged across the video project with the Bay Area Adult Transition (BAAT) program. Chapter two discussed how the findings point towards the possibilities of socio-spatial access by looking closely at how neurodivergent participants navigate the classroom, job sites and public transportation.

This dissertation study engaged with video, audio, observation and material data collected over the period of approximately nine months with the Bay Area Adult Transition program. Interaction-level analysis resulted in three key areas of expansion for understanding the program dynamics. The first area is in the interactional accomplishments taking place in the classroom, job site and on public transportation. Grounded in socio-spatial theory in relationship to accessibility, I used an interaction level analysis to decipher the moment-by-moment occurrences of the neurodivergent participants during the community-based transition program. Across all the examples, the participants' underlying sociality (Lieberman, 2013) is a crucial factor in comprehending the work related to self-regulation and access. The description of the accessibility of social space demonstrated how participants' self-regulatory strategies in the classroom allowed for successful participation.

The description of these interactional moves by participants allows educational scholar and practitioners to recognize the impact that these small movements have on how individuals chose to navigate spaces. This evidence highlights the fruitfulness of this kind of analysis. For the fields of education and supportive services, particularly those supporting neurodivergent and intellectually/developmentally disabled people, nuances in understanding self-regulation practices (like Mateo's hand on his shirt or Riku's jumps and clenched fists) recenter the way frameworks can imagine 'access'. To consider these practices as critical features of how an

individual may thrive in an environment opens up the definition of socio-spatial access to investigate and complicate accessibility.

Finally, in chapter four, I examined how self-determination is supported and emerges in the program. I provided examples that demonstrated how the staff work to construct spaces where participants can take the lead; and examples of how participants make use of choice. Chapter four showed how the program educational model (discussed in depth by Harrison, 2019) supported self-determination practices through multiple ways in which the program staff positioned themselves and the participants made choices. In particular, the chapter detailed the way that the program staff positioned themselves as facilitators or off to the side in order to allow for participants to take the lead in community settings. Community-based employment training remains one of the more commonly used options based on the benefits of hands-on learning (Cannella-Malone & Schaefer, 2015; Gilson, et al., 2017; Test et al., 2014). This dissertation highlights multiple avenues of research that can be continued, building off of the foundational work that originated from the program's conception, existence over approximately fifteen years and the two dissertation projects that have already looked closely into the theoretical implications and leadership model.

Limitations

This study focused on what happens during the program rather than the dynamics between the leadership, staff, and participants. Because the leadership staff work directly out of the home office, they were part of the morning greetings for groups with a meeting spot nearby but I did not spend any other observational sessions with them. Without a greater focus on the leadership and staff, the discussion and analysis offer specifications related loosely to how a few of the staff interacted with the participants but does obtain a greater depth of their perspectives or training histories.

In addition to differences in the leadership and staff, this study focused on only one program with a distinct teaching model. Because this project did not work with any other programs, it does not contain direct comparisons between program dynamics or models. The research findings are best fit to demonstrate information and outcomes from the interactions that occurred rather than broader comparisons with other transition program models.

Additionally, this study used purely qualitative data collection. The limitations of observational, video, audio and photography create boundaries to which this study can speak. As I was always part of the data collection process, there needs to be an acknowledgement that my presence may have impacted the way participants acted and responded. Additionally, this study did not collect histories or case materials on any of the participants. An approach using current programming documentation, historical documents or other materials from the participant's life could have shifted the study to have a more enhanced understanding of each participant through that lens.

This study's qualitative analysis focused on the use of coding the data but did not use any form of participant assessment. Different forms of data collection such as quantitative information or dynamic assessments during the program could offer information more aligned with the call for detailed case studies by Smith (2015).

Finally, this study's trajectory was interrupted and abruptly brought to a stop due to the stay-at-home orders put into place with the COVID-19 global pandemic. The research plan intended to continue the process of sharing materials with participants and recording the discussions. This process occurred with just one participant, Riku, with a new staff on the final day of observation. This final day was unexpected as the community began to hear about the

virus and began to focus on increased handwashing while individuals called out of work who felt ill to be protective. The findings are limited by the sessions that were possible.

Future Research

From the Limitations

Future research could build from the limitations of this study to incorporate more program stakeholders in the research project. This could offer additional information about the organization implications (Penuel et al., 2020) and multilevel factors (Kessler, 2014; Wynne, 2016; Zakrajsek et al., 2014). This would offer other dimensions to the research discussion. These dimensions include further information about the day-to-day happenings within the director's office, the conversations with and between staff and how those instances relate directly and indirectly to the experiences of the participants. Additionally, a close look at how the community members experience, their partnerships and relationships with the program could offer a wider picture of the programs social network (Hennig et al., 2012).

Further research could also leave off where this study abruptly ended. The study was meant to continue meeting directly with participants and holding further conversations and collaboration to build personalized slideshows. Work that has focused on strategic forms of communication and collaboration with individuals with intellectual/development disabilities could add to this phase of work (Cowley, 2013; Luttrell, 2003; Mehta, 2010). Daniele Cowley incorporated collage-making in her dissertation study with adolescent girls labeled with learning and intellectual disabilities (2013). She developed this strategy to encourage meaningful dialogs based on Wendy Luttrell's (2003) self-portrait collages with pregnant teens and Heeral Mehta's (2010) dissertation with physically disabled youth that used multiple methods of participant-centered engagement. These forms of multi-modal expression could offer additional forms of engagement beyond the slideshow using collected video and photography that was initially designed. Bringing some additional materials to those meetings to work with in hand could be a great process once participants are able to meet again in person (possibly in the Fall 2021, personal communication with a participant on April 17, 2021).

In Relation to Intersectionality and Identity

The data that has been collected and additional studies could also incorporate an intentional focus on the identity development of individuals. Specifically, future research could describe the way that identity as a self-advocate occurs or arises during interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; 2005). The dynamic process of emerging identities (Eisenman et al., 2020; Forber-Pratt et al, 2017; Gill, 2015; Simplican, 2015) in interactions with peers, program staff, community members and in social media (Caton & Chapman, 2016) would offer a great deal of information to the field of supportive services. For example, a recent study examined the experiences of individuals with intellectual disabilities who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans (LGBT). This study found self-acceptance from the individuals and descriptions of discrimination from others (Dinwoodie et al., 2020). Another study (Anderson & Bigby, 2007) looked at the identity development opportunities for individuals participating in self-advocacy groups. These positive identities can play a part in the individuals' sense of control and agency.

It is specifically critical to expand the research into intersectional identity analysis. Elements such as racial identity (eg., Alston et al., 1996; O'Bryne & Muldoon, 2017), socio-economic status (eg., Shogren et al., 2018), religious affiliation, gender identities (eg., Wilton & Fudge Schormans, 2020; O'Shea & Frawley, 2020), sexuality (eg., Medina-Rico, et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2018) and other self-defined identities can bring complexity to the identities of intellectual/developmentally disabled individuals as they are commonly stigmatized (Spassiani &

Friedman, 2014). Utilizing disability-centered environmental structures such as the neurodiversity and trauma-informed education models (Harrison, 2019) or Universal Design for Learning blended with transition programming (Universal Design for Transition, see Scott & Bruno, 2018) can create the opportunity for additional positive identities to emerge and develop.

Further Conversations on Complex Models of Accessibility

Future research could also bring the Neurodivergent Education Model (NEM) (Harrison, 2019) into conversation with other efforts to increase accessibility and disability rights. The Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities offers a broad range of topical documents to support work in areas from Education to Measuring Inclusion. On their website, this organization has a plethora of valuable resources for campuses, organizations or other groups to learn about critical issues like discrimination, citizenship and criminal justice as it relates to individuals with mental illness. Because community-based programs interact frequently, it could be useful to conduct surveys with the community partners to learn about what resources they would be interested in. Additionally, work could be done collaboratively with the participants and staff to learn about additional points of education for community members. Thinking through how to describe the foundational principles of the organizations or other topics that might emerge in the surveying of community organizations and the perspectives of staff and participants to the public audience could enhance the field's resources and long-term impact.

Secondly, the Transformative Access Project (2020) from The Ohio State University focuses on developing an intersectional view of "access." This work can begin to integrate and gain connections with that work in thinking through how it can bring further capacity to how access is being defined within different contexts.

Developing Neurodivergent Spaces

This dissertation has focused on the ways that the BAAT program opened up specific spaces for the participants to practice self-determination. Further research can also partner with neurodivergent and disabled individuals to learn about how they are actively creating spaces with neurodiversity values building off of similar existing projects (Kapp, 2020). In order to better understand the cross contextual and varying strategies that are taken up by Neurodiverse groups to create safe spaces.

Existing research has begun to take up specific parts of what could contribute to dialogues that are considering what constitutes neurodivergent friendly space. For example, Alper (2017) offers details about technology sensory input and how technology can aid in communication. Other research teams consider the role of virtual realities (Boyd et al., 2018). The impact of technology and virtual spaces is important for considering what has been working or challenging for neurodivergent people (Lugo-Marín et al., 2021; White et al., 2021).

Building off of the perspectives from the program, the director, Ben Wells acknowledges that paths neurodivergent individuals take will not necessarily fit into normative expectations:

> "It's okay not to know what you want to do… We live in a world that is not designed for disabled people and it's not designed for Neurodivergent people. And we are sort of forced to gauge our success by how Neurotypical people do it and it's not what we are good at. It's perfectly fine not to know what you want to do and it's perfectly fine to take your transition time and it might take years, it might be five years, it might be ten years, it might be twenty years and all of that is perfectly fine." (Caplan, 2020, 11:58-12:33)

Being specific about the alternative paths that are possible for neurodivergent people allows for discussions about what neurodivergent people define as their personal goals and what they are

interested in getting involved in within a world that was not designed considering neurodivergent needs (Jurgen et al., 2020) and can challenge assumptions about autism (Broderick & Ne'eman, 2008).

Final Remarks

As we continue to navigate the changing social sphere, there are a number of opportunities for disabled voices. In Phil Smith's edited book *Both Sides of the Table* (2013) disabled people, allies involved in disabled people's lives (such as the child of a disabled parent) and discussions about the possible future of education are formed through short pieces by twelve individuals. This dissertation moves my work towards finding ways to share in expressive experiences with individuals so that they are able to continue practicing self-determination skills in the ways that the program intends. The second critical piece of continuing this work is to engage and uplift perspectives of individuals with multiply marginalized identities. Disability is just one facet of identity that is in constant relationships with other identities.

Christopher Bell critiqued disability studies (2010) because of how deeply whiteness pervades the field. His work directly engaged with blackness and disability by first acknowledging how these marginalized identities relate to each other and then how disability has already been a part of black history through Harriet Tubman, Emmett Till and James Byrd (2011, p. 2-3). Bell specifies that his aims are to continue the dialogue between blackness and disability towards transformation of systems and acknowledgment of how culture impacts the pressure to limit understandings of intersecting identities.

Scholarship continues these conversations through the deconstruction of racialization and labeling in educational settings (Broderick & Leonardo, 2016; Leonardo & Broderick,2011), the intersection of disability studies and critical race theory (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013) and the relationship with families (Ben-Moshe & Magaña, 2014). The path for this research forward needs to partner directly with neurodivergent individuals from diverse racial identities participating in and supporting service programs to continue these research projects.

Through my own experiences in direct service, I met young people who were actively engaging in multimodal communication that was commonly misunderstood or limited in its reach because of our current support practices. This research project is important because it brings in information about the possibilities within a program based on the Neurodivergent Education Model (Harrison, 2019). This elicits a call to action in rethinking typically used models of support. Secondly, it re-centers the experiences and modes of communication that come directly from neurodivergent individuals. When considering the current practices in the field and the findings from this project, it becomes possible to imagine future fruitful conversations across education, supportive services and community-inclusion.

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