

# Why College? Using Community Engaged Research to Explore the Perspectives of Students with Intellectual Disabilities on the Importance of Access to Higher Education

LALENJA HARRINGTON, M.A., QP

University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
l\_harrin@uncg.edu

KIMBERLY D. MILLER, M.S., CPRP

University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
kdmiller@uncg.edu

DENISE SUMIEL

University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
d\_sumiel@uncg.edu

## Abstract

*Students with intellectual disabilities have historically been written “about” in research and scholarly literature with little emphasis on what they have to say about the research process. In this project, PSE One, a postsecondary education program for students with Intellectual Disabilities at the university level challenges this “exclusion” in its use of community engaged research as a part of its program evaluation. This paper highlights the initial stages of this ongoing research process, preliminary discussion of results, and a discussion about how community engaged research reflects the concept of visionary pragmatism.*

## Exploring the Collective (notes from a researcher’s journal)

Research

(re)defined

(re)imagined

(re)visioned

as radical change to institutional culture and structure (Saltmarsh, Hartley & Clayton, 2009, p.2)

a messy space where we grapple with each other (Torre et al., 2008)

in the collective

where we ask

who has the right to speak?

what do our students want?

who gets to “do” research?

How do students define their growing?

How do they know when they are?  
a conscientious act of liberation  
that opposes the  
domination of the masses  
by ELITES  
rooted in controlling material production,  
means of knowledge production  
and the social power to determine  
what is valid or useful knowledge (Rahman,1985, as cited by Torre, et al.p.28)  
where we ask  
what IS useful knowledge?  
why does learning have to look a certain way?  
a transparent process that challenges  
the decline in more “formative aspects of education” (Saltmarsh, Hartley & Clayton, 2009, p.2)  
that joins in solidarity to take collective action for radical social change (Flicker, et al., 2007, p.240)  
unmasking the myth of science  
and validating people’s knowledge (Flicker, et al., 2007)  
bringing the student into decision making positions  
valuing what students already know  
the intersection of research, practice and theory  
post-critical lens valuing co-production of knowledge  
knowledge that develops consciousness  
and furthers “social change struggles” (Stoecker, 2003, p.37)  
where we ask questions to the second order (Saltmarsh, Hartley & Clayton, 2009)  
are we doing social justice?  
are we challenging the status quo?  
are we transforming education?  
non-traditional approach  
within a field that values  
objective “proof”  
significant site of struggle  
“between the interests and ways of knowing of the West  
and the interests and ways of resisting the Other” (Smith, 1999, p.2)  
challenging “either/or”  
in favor of “and”  
valuing the artistic process  
and embodied knowledge  
presuming credibility  
as students claim  
the emancipatory  
and radical  
identity  
of researcher

### Introduction

Globally, students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD) are seeing higher education as an option, in the same manner as their matriculating peers (Grigal, Hart & Weir, 2012; Hart, Grigal, & Weir, 2010; Neubert, Moon, Grigal & Redd, 2001). This call for access

challenges many long held ideas and beliefs about “who is worthy to sit at the academic table.” On a macro level, the call for access requires a critical look at how ideas of normalcy permeate our educational system, challenges educators to expand pedagogical approaches to those that value a wider variety of knowledge or “ways of knowing,” and calls for an examination of the divide between special education and inclusive education and the implications of that framing. On a micro level, the demand for access provides students with opportunities for locating their own agency and determining how best to direct their own lives. In this sense, the post-secondary education movement for students with ID/DD has an opportunity to be an example of what Patricia Hill Collins calls “visionary pragmatism” where visionary thinking that pushes on the systems that oppress is linked with pragmatic action characterized by understanding one’s needs in the “here and now” (Collins, 1998, p.188). This is an important point when one looks at the history of research for students with ID/DD, which is unabashedly populated by studies and strategies that focus on what the individual student is able to do or not do, with little theoretical attention to how structures and systems exclude, discriminate, and oppress.

The field of Special Education has historically been dominated by behaviorist approaches that focus on fixing or ameliorating deficits so that students can better reach an acceptable “norm.” Roger Slee (2001) describes research in the field as that which focuses on the “normalization of difference by stabilizing the newcomer in an environment that provides a buffer to enable schools to remain the same” (as cited by Ware, 2009, p. 115). According to this paradigm, as Ellen Brantlinger (2009) asserts, the goal is to,

bring identified students closer to the statistical academic achievement average of chronological age peers- a benchmark thought necessary by those who support inclusion, but only for ‘children who are *ready* because they are the *same*’ . (p.130)

Even those who advocate for full “inclusion” and for acknowledging intrinsic value in the bodies, minds, and life experiences of those with disabilities, often still use a normative framework that compares to an idealized state of being, that of “normal.” This is a difficult line to walk.

### Lived Experience

We provide a concrete example here, as author 3 describes an experience in one of her classes where she asked her professor to make changes to the format of a test. Not to change the content of the questions, but to make the format more accessible for her. It was important that 1) her professor made space for her to ask this question, and 2) that she acknowledged that the question itself was not a threat to the educational learning outcomes- that in fact, changing the format more effectively allowed Author 3 to show whether she was meeting those outcomes. It is important to note that yes, Author 3 *was* being compared to an ideal- but rather than being compared to the “norm” of her other classmates, she was evaluated on her understanding of the course’s learning outcomes. Author 3 felt that in this case, her expression of learning was found to be just as valid as her peers.

Author 3’s experience is important and informative, and is a good illustration of why it is essential to bring light to the ways in which student voice has been historically excluded from educational research. The loudest scholarly voices in the field of education concerning students with ID/DD have typically represented the empiricist viewpoint, where success cannot be accurately measured unless you have objective proof that has been determined by a neutral, scientific process (Brantlinger, 1997). Researchers who fall in this “traditionalist” camp assert that “legitimate” scholarship requires “clear definitions, logical arguments, or empirical verification” and must meet standards “associated with true experimental designs” (Kavale & Forness, 2000, p.279). This viewpoint leaves little room for stakeholder involvement in research design and/or evaluation, as traditionalists believe that the experts must lead research efforts (Kavale & Fornes, 2000).

Participatory research in all of its forms, which includes stakeholders in the research process to varying degrees, challenges this idea of the scholarly expert. It is important to note here, that although we are asserting that traditional, empirical approaches to research do not typically center stakeholder voice/involvement in the research process, we do acknowledge that there are times when it can be beneficial for varied research methods to work in tandem.

This paper explores the ways in which one postsecondary education program, PSE One, has decided to use a participatory method known as community engaged research in its program development. In it, we will describe the initial stages of an on-going, research process within this 4-year certificate program for students with ID/DD on a university campus. The authors consist of members of the research team who have been most involved in data collection and initial analysis. Ultimately, the purpose of this community engaged approach is to involve students in a more powerful way in the continued transformation of the certificate/program in which they are enrolled (agency), and to examine the ways in which their perspectives and experiences can impact pedagogy throughout the higher education community (structure).

### **Approach to Research**

The authors offer the following position statements regarding what informs our approaches to research:

#### **Lead author**

I have always found great value in the articulation of that which has previously been unheard, undervalued and/or pushed to the margins. As a product of a black southern family, I understand what it is like to be suffocated within a family system that expects blind obedience and quiet suffering. As a woman born to a black mother and white father, I know what it is like to feel as if your voice doesn't count because it isn't authentic or credible enough to the very community to which you most wish to belong. As a mother of an African-American son, I know what it is like to watch educators try to silence your child with labels because he questions everything and "moves" through learning. As a poet, I acknowledge how important it is to honor a multiplicity of voices, perspectives and styles of communicating; as a spoken word poet I value the time-honored tradition of "challenging the status-quo", the power of the political, and the significance of finding space for one's own voice, in whatever form that may be. I included a poem at the beginning of this paper for this reason-to set the stage for this type of poetic approach.

All of these experiences impact my world view and my approach to theory, research and praxis. But most importantly, my experience in working with and standing in solidarity with students with ID/DD for the past 9 years on a college campus, grounds my belief in the importance of the co-production of knowledge and student agency. The students with whom I work have amazing things to say and rich experiences to share, and there must be a platform for their voices and room for them to engage in "change-making" activities like research on this campus and in the larger community. This is something that I feel in my bones.

#### **Author 2**

My career has revolved around standing with individuals with ID/DD in a quest for not just equal access, but welcoming and accommodating environments for all. As an individual with mental illness, my disability most often lies in the shadows, not visible to those with whom I cross paths daily. Other times, however, there is no way for me to hide the disability. During these times, I am all too aware of the impact of living on the margins, and the social injustices that come from being judged for misconceptions rather than realities. There is big difference between my experiences, though, and those of most individuals with ID/DD. I only live a small part of my life facing these injustices head on. While my disability has provided me with perspective, it has not put me in a position to speak for individuals with ID/DD. I have a desire to hear their voices and better

understand their perspectives so that we can work together to create communities that are more accommodating, welcoming, and inclusive.

This is sometimes easier said than done. In the midst of an ever dynamic program, operating within the complexities of the real world, traditional research methods are often not realistic, nor valid. This can be further complicated when a program is designed to address real world, yet “soft” outcomes (e.g., friendship, social networks, quality of life). Then add to this a philosophical belief that research should be done “with,” not “on” or “to” them if practical, reliable, and valid findings are to be obtained. Put these together and one ends up squarely within the need for a community engaged research approach. The beauty of a community engaged research approach is the involvement of multiple stakeholders, shining light on differing perspectives, and allowing for the emergence of the voice of those who are often the most marginalized populations impacted by the program. It is only through these voices that the real impact of a program can be truly judged. Furthermore, it is only through such an approach that I will be able to gain a deeper perspective that will allow me to walk with individuals with ID/DD.

### **Author 3**

I think that students with ID/DD should be involved in research because they may never have been taught how to do it, and they have important things to say. I also think that research like this is important, because there could be something that you would never know about me, if you don't ask me questions. I think that students with ID/DD should be asked more about how to make changes in things like housing, policies, and education. It is important to ask me what I want for my future and with my career. I don't want other researchers making decisions about me without asking, it is good for me to make decisions on my own. We are all like everybody else, we just need a little different help from others; we can do the same things that other people do like getting a job, going to school, giving back, and doing research. I like being involved in research because I am going to be working with people with disabilities, and it is a good step for me.

### **Research Paradigms that Challenge the Positivist Approach**

We as community engaged researchers felt that traditional, empirical approaches to social science research were not deemed ideal or desired, and that there were a number of non-traditional approaches to research that were much more in line with the intent of project such as action research, participatory research, participatory action research, emancipatory research and finally community engaged research (Stoecker, 2003). Although presented here as separate models, these research paradigms often overlap, and may be used interchangeably by scholars (Flicker, et al., 2007; Lykes & Coquillon, 2006; Smith et al., 2010). Looking at them separately however, helps to illustrate some of the different ways in which participatory research can be approached.

**Action research (AR)**, according to Stoecker (2003), is most associated with the improvement of the professions, worker productivity and satisfaction, and with the process of mixing theory and practice in educational settings (p.37). delman (1993) has defined it as a “means of systematic inquiry for all participants in the quest for greater effectiveness through democratic participation” (as cited by Lykes & Coquillon, p. 297). Through the work of Kurt Lewin in the 1940's and communities of “inquiry” in the 60's, AR has contributed to the fields of “organizational behavior and development,” communication strategies, and systems changes (Lykes & Coquillon, 2006). It values “useful knowledge, developmental change, the centrality of individuals, and consensus social theories,” yet it does not challenge “knowledge production or material production” (p.37). AR does not focus on challenging the antagonism that can exist between groups as a result of societal pressures and oppression, and unlike participatory research, it emphasizes collaboration within the status quo.

**Participatory research (PR)** has its roots in “third world development of the 1960’s,” where community members, activists and academics worked together to combat global corporate efforts to “take over world agriculture” (Stoecker, 2003, p.36). This method resulted in “sustainable, community-controlled agricultural and development projects” and has been the leading model for “community involved” research around much of the world (p.36). There is an emphasis on “the centrality of social conflict and collective action, and the necessity of changing structures” (Comstock & Fox, 1993 as cited by Stoecker, 2003, p. 37). There is also an aim to ensure that people are involved as “more than just subjects” and are in fact involved in the research process itself (Watson, 2012, p. 97).

**Participatory action research (PAR)**, which brings together the praxis elements of action research and the participatory philosophy, has been widely used with people with disabilities. Fundamental to PAR are the following elements:

First, that conventional research relationships, whereby the researcher is the ‘expert’ and the researched merely the object of investigation, are inequitable; secondly, that people have the right to be consulted about and involved in research which is concerned with issues affecting their lives; and thirdly, that the quality and relevance of research is improved when disabled people [sic] are closely involved in the process. (Stalker, 1998 as cited by Watson, 2012, p.97)

Central to the core of PAR is the idea of co-research that results in the development of “critical consciousness” amongst members of a team that moves back and forth between “education, reflection, investigation, interpretation and action over a period of months or years” (Smith et al., 2010, p.1117).

**Emancipatory research** came about as a direct response to empiricism and studies like *A Life Apart: A Pilot Study of Residential Institutions for the Physically Handicapped and the Young Chronic Sick* by Miller and Gwynne in 1972 (Watson, 2012, p.94). This particular study was commissioned to bring forth the voices of the residents within residential institutions for people with disabilities in the UK, but the positivistic, social science approach of the researchers resulted in conclusions that supported their “professional interests” rather than supporting the empowerment of those with whom they were working (p.94). Instead of challenging their findings that living in an institution was essentially a “living death”, they asserted that the residents should receive support from institutional staff to accept their fate (p.94).

In their document *The Fundamental Principles of Disablement* (1976), the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) argued against such methods, and stated that disability is a *social condition* which requires an analysis of the ways in which society contributes to the “disabling” of people with physical impairments (Watson, 2012, p.94). They went on to state,

To persist in concentrating on the effects... is to divert attention from the real problems; and in fact it entrenches disability even further by seeking its remedy in the opposite direction from the social cause by concentrating on the assessment of the individual. (as cited by Watson, p.94)

Emancipatory research was envisioned as a way to combat the divide between “disabled and non-disabled people, the researched and the researcher” (Watson, p.95). It has deep roots within the feminist tradition of “critical social research” where there is a focus on the facilitation of “a politics of the possible by confronting social oppression at whatever level it occurs” (Oliver, 1992 as cited by Watson, p.95).

Each of these models of research share common goals of challenging ideas of neutrality and objectivity in research, the generation of knowledge that is of genuine interest to all co-researchers, and collective processes of “inquiry that expose ideological, political, and social processes underlying and permeating systems of inequality” (Lykes & Coquillon, 2006, p.298). Although these are “worthy aims” as Nick Watson (2012) acknowledges, there are also difficulties that arise with

these forms of research, most notably that their “sheer scope makes the translation of such ideals into a research agenda problematic” and that within the field of disability studies, people with disabilities have not *truly* been consulted in the development of research priorities. (Watson, 2012, p.98).

A primary goal of postsecondary education (PSE) programs serving individuals with ID/DD, such as PSE One, is to empower students in the academic process, as well as to provide a breeding ground for self-advocacy and self-determination. As these students are learning these skills through their academic program, empowering them to be fully contributing members of the research team that seeks to understand their experience in the program only makes philosophical and practical sense. This is what makes postsecondary programs like PSE One such valuable sites for participatory research efforts.

When emancipatory, participatory research is valued and implemented, there is agreement that the voice of the student must remain at the center and the forefront of research efforts. Given the location of PSE programs, however, within the higher education environment, collaboration amongst a number of stakeholders, including faculty, students, and community members becomes necessary. For this reason community engaged research is an ideal method for PSE research.

**Community engaged research** (CER), also known as community-based research (CBR) can be described as a marriage between the two goals of “community development” and “knowledge generation to achieve social justice ends” (Flicker et al., 2007, p. 240). It is a methodology that involves “collaboration between trained researchers and community members in the design and implementation of research projects aimed at meeting community-identified needs” (Strand, 2000, p.85). Stakeholders are ideally involved in every step of the process, “from identifying the research question to formulating action proposals that derive from the research results” (Strand, 2000, p.85).

As with other forms of participatory research, CER reflects the visionary pragmatist approach (where research is concerned with the intersection of individual agency and the impact of structural influences) in that it engages primary stakeholders, the students, in activities of individual agency even as it engages the larger community in activities that promote systems and structural change. For PSE One, CER’s ability to “link social change to the experiences and needs” of students with ID/DD *as defined* by students with ID/DD (emphasis mine, Currie, p.16-17, 1999) centers the importance of this method within the program’s philosophical stance of honoring student voice and self-direction.

For this study, we have collectively agreed upon a community engaged research protocol that identifies four stages of action: 1) identification of desired outcomes, 2) case study against standards (comparison of desired outcomes with current outcomes, 3) implementation of changes to program of study, 4) evaluation of changes to program of study and implications for system change. This paper illustrates the ways in which our research team is implementing the first stage: identification of desired outcomes.

### **Project Overview and Process**

PSE One is a non-profit that supports students enrolled in the four-year, Integrative Community Studies certificate program for students with ID/DD at Carolina College, a public 4- year college located in the Southeastern United States. Students enrolled in the program develop plans of study that incorporate interdisciplinary coursework and experiential activities including internships and service learning, that meet career and life goals. University and non-profit staff work in collaboration to provide students with support as they move through the program of study. Since its inception, PSE One has had a quality improvement (QI) process in place for the purpose of ensuring that program and certificate development occurs in a manner that reflects best practices

within the field. After a recent review however, it was determined that the QI process did not align well with the program's philosophical goal of centering student voice, as students were not as deeply involved in programmatic development as desired.

The need for an overhaul of the program's quality improvement (QI) process coincided with community engaged doctoral work by the program's academic director (lead author). A proposal was brought to the existing QI team that included an opportunity to transform the QI process into a more dynamic, meaningful, and philosophically aligned project. Team members included students, faculty, program staff, and community members. All members of the team agreed to continue their involvement in such a project, and that the change was a positive one.

### **Methodology**

At the initial meeting, the existing members of the quality improvement group, newly defined as the community research circle, discussed the intent of the research project: to ensure that students within the program were involved in program development. The community research circle decided the first step toward that goal was to gain an understanding of what current students desired from the program of study. After some discussion, two research questions were identified:

1. *How do students define personal growth as it relates to being in college?*
2. *Do students feel like they are receiving the support that they need to achieve personal growth?*

Once research questions were identified, examples of possible research methodologies were reviewed with the team. Collectively, based on the research questions stated above, a Multiple Case Study design was chosen. Cases chosen were currently enrolled students in PSE One. It was determined that 12 cases would make up the multiple case study, with three students from each cohort year, providing opportunities for cross-case, multi-year comparisons. Participants from each year were selected using maximum variation sampling (Glesne, 2011, p.45). Students of different ages, gender, race and disability with sufficient documentation for review were asked to participate with the hope that the final sample would be sufficiently varied, shown in the following table (see Table 1).

Data collection included the following:

1. Review of documents (student program applications, intake documents, person centered plans, and senior portfolio presentations)
2. Recorded interviews derived from The Council on Quality Leadership's Personal Outcomes Measures (POM) tool. This measure used by human service providers to assess quality of life outcomes for individuals receiving support (Council on Quality Leadership, 2016).
3. Transcription of full research circle meetings (of which there have been four), field notes, research journal

The community circle was in agreement that Lead author, academic director/doctoral student would lead the data collection process, and act as primary coder and facilitator.

### **Coding/Thematic Analysis**

The "coding" subset of the larger community group met to review documentation and identify the coding process. Initially, it was decided that each case would be coded by four members of

the circle, but logistically, it became necessary to decrease that number to two coders per case, with Lead author as primary coder for all cases. Frames of analysis (Hatch, 2002) consisted of each discrete response within interviews, and concrete goals identified, in the student's voice, in planning documents. Preliminary, or *a priori* codes were initially decided upon as the following: (see Table 2, *A priori* codes)

A comparison across coders (five in total including 1 student researcher) reflected a robustness in the *a priori* codes, with the following additions: (see Table 3, Additional *Apriori* Codes). Initial recommendations for categories included: (see Table 4, Initial Recommended changes).

With the completion of initial coding of all documents, the community research circle, which included members of the central stakeholder group, PSE One students, was scheduled to reconvene and collectively make strides toward semantic analysis, or determining larger domains and/or themes connecting preliminary codes/categories to each other (Hatch, 2002). The authors of this paper have reviewed the initial codes and categories, and have preliminarily identified the following themes:

1. Leveling out the playing field: access to university classes and resources
2. Critical consciousness: discovering self, cognitive awakening, moving towards action (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006)
3. Interdependence: recognizing when to give and receive support
4. Living on one's own
5. Development of career
6. Expanding financial knowledge/management
7. Building/engaging community: sense of belonging

Those categories and themes were introduced to the larger community circle as a starting place, with expectations for expansion, adjustment, additions, and/or deletions.

The circle was also asked to discuss ways in which the second research question could be addressed by the data, as analysis up to this point speaks more to the first research question. Once final themes are identified for both questions, the circle will be asked to discuss implications, to consider how they would like results to be reported (beyond dissertation activities) and to make decisions about the ownership of the research.

### **Feedback on Analysis**

The research circle gave verbal agreement with the overall categories and themes presented by the lead author, offering minor suggestions regarding the collapsing of some codes ("we should move high-expectations into the self-exploration category," "we should collapse achievement to other categories"). More significant feedback included the following: 1) confirmation that the data does not speak to the second research question, 2) codes were present regarding external motivators for college, but not categorized as such and 3) initial coding did not capture "barriers" to personal growth.

This feedback resulted in the following recommendations for data collection and analysis:

1. A second round of interviews were necessary to follow up on how students perceive the ways in which they receive support

2. A new category/theme regarding “external motivation for college” was necessary
3. Existing data required re-coding for barriers
4. Peer interviewers were needed for the second round of interviews
5. Modified human participant training needed to be developed and approved by the IRB so that student co-researchers will be able to take on the role of peer interviewers

Since the time of the initial data analysis meeting, modified training was approved by the IRB, and has been completed with PSE One student, staff and community researchers. In the summer and fall of 2016, peer interviewers will receive more experiential training before completing rounding two of interviews, and resulting data will be collectively analyzed.

### **A Word on Poetic Analysis**

The community circle has given initial approval of the use of poetic analysis, which will be facilitated by lead author, whose experience as a poet lends itself to this alternative method of analysis. For students with ID/DD or others who may communicate in different ways, poetic analysis can be an effective way to analyze data by capturing the “essence of what’s said, the emotions expressed, and the rhythm of speaking” (Glesne, 2011, p.250). Although this technique creates a “third voice” that is a combination of researcher and respondent, we believe that when co-created with input from the student providing the data, the student’s “authentic” voice can come forward. Rachele Chadwick’s (2012) “I” poem technique is used, where the respondent’s “I” voice is systematically highlighted throughout the transcription. Words and phrases connected to the “I” are then used to construct the poem, using poetic conventions like repetition, line breaks, and rhythm. Respondents will be asked to review, edit, change, make additions to, or write a completely new poem if so desired. We are in the very early stages of this aspect of analysis, but Author 3 offers her poem here as an example of this method,

I think  
this program  
it’s been good  
it teaches me more  
more about independence  
independence in learning new things  
I have the right  
sometimes  
I have the right  
the right  
I have the right  
to speak my mind  
to speak my mind about my feelings  
to speak my mind about what I know  
to go anywhere I want to  
to take charge  
to keep it as it is  
I only let friends and family  
have my number  
you know

if they want to share it with somebody else  
they ask me  
they ask me  
they ask me first  
its my choice  
its my choice to pick my path  
to choose what I want to do in life  
I do it on my own  
I teach myself  
I teach myself about routines  
I have support  
I ask for support  
when I need it  
I'm a bookworm  
I go to the library  
the reaching resource center  
have my own library card  
for checking out books  
I volunteer at the library  
see the young kids coming in  
and help with morning reading  
I meet new people  
in Carolina College classes  
and peer companions  
peace and conflict studies  
African American studies  
People with disabilities in American Society  
No,  
I can't think of any places  
that I can't go  
I have two places  
I want to live  
NC or Richmond  
I want to be a counselor  
for young kids  
or people with disabilities  
I want a partner  
and a family  
I feel respected  
when people see me  
for who I am  
some girls can be a tomboy  
I feel respected  
because I help out  
I help with the community  
I didn't used to be in front of people  
but now  
I get in front of people

because I had a chance  
I had a chance  
to help

Poems such as this will be used to reflect and compliment thematic analysis. The involvement of student respondents in co-creation of poetry will also serve as a way to member-check and ensure that student voice comes to the fore as authentically as possible.

### Conclusion

As we are just beginning the collective data analysis phase, we are not ready to embark on a discussion about research implications related to specific findings from case study data. We can however, speak to the ways in which our community engaged research efforts have the potential to reflect Collins' (1998) concept of visionary pragmatism. By engaging in CER and following its two most basic tenets, doing research with stakeholders in order to bring about social change, we are supporting students in exploring their own agency as they participate in research activities, think critically about data, and make decisions about what needs to be researched and how results can impact not only their program (program evaluation) but the larger academic community as a whole (pedagogical recommendations).

Postsecondary education programs are in a unique position to move beyond some of the limitations of participatory research mentioned earlier. When implemented fully, CER's emphasis on co-research and identification of community needs challenges the call for objectivity and neutrality so prevalent in traditional research, and the collective action resulting from such inquiry does indeed have the potential to actualize its ideological aims that promote social equity. We look forward to the completion of this stage of the process, so that we can begin to translate student desires into programmatic and systems change.

### References

- Brantlinger, E. (1997). Using ideology: cases of non-recognition of the politics of research and practice in special education. *Review of Educational Research*, 67(4), 425-459.
- Brantlinger, E. (2009). Slippery Shibboleths: The shady side of truisms in special education. In S. Gabel (ed.), *Disability studies in education: readings in Theory and method* (pp. 125-138). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Carlson, E., Engebretson, J., & Chamberlain, R. (2006). Photovoice as a social process of critical consciousness. *Qualitative Health Research*, 16(6), 836-852.
- Chadwick, R. J. (2012). Fleshy enough? Notes toward embodied analysis in critical qualitative research. *Gay & Lesbian Issues & Psychology Review*, 8(2), 82-97.
- Collins, P. (1998). *Fighting words: Black women and the search for justice*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Council on Quality Leadership (2016). Personal Outcome Measures. Retrieved from <http://www.c-q-l.org/the-cql-difference/personal-outcome-measures>
- Currie, D. (1999). Gender analysis from the standpoint of women: The radical potential of women's studies in development. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 5(3), 9-44.
- Flicker, S., Savan, B., McGrath, M., Kolenda, B. & Mildenberger, M. (2007). 'If you could change one thing....' What community-based researchers wish they could have done differently. *Community Development Journal*, 43(2), 239-253.
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Grigal, M., Hart, D., & Weir, C. (2012). A survey of postsecondary education programs

- for students with intellectual disabilities in the United States. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 9(4), 223-233.
- Hart, D., Grigal, M., & Weir, C. (2010). Expanding the paradigm: Postsecondary education options for individuals with autism spectrum disorder with intellectual disabilities. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 25(3), 134-150.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: Suny Press.
- Kavale, K. & Forness, S. (2000). History, rhetoric, and reality: analysis of the inclusion debate. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(5), 279-296.
- Lykes, M.B. & Coquillon, E. (2006). Participatory and Action Research and feminisms: Towards Transformative Praxis. In Sharlene Hesse-Biber (Ed.). *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Neubert, D. A., Moon, M. S., Grigal, M., & Redd, V. (2001). Post-secondary educational practices for individuals with mental retardation with intellectual disabilities within a third level setting. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 37(4), 285-292.
- Saltmarsh, J., Hartley, M., & Clayton, P. (2009). Democratic Engagement White Paper. *New England Resource Center for Higher Education*, Retrieved from [http://repository.upenn.edu/gse\\_pubs/274](http://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/274)
- Smith, J., Brown, L. Blackhall, L, Loden, D., & O'Shea, J. (2010). *New partnerships linking universities and NGO's on education for development engineering-case study from engineers without borders Australia*. Paper presented at Joint International IGIP-SEFI Annual Conference 2010, 19th-22nd, September. Trnava, Slovakia.
- Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*, 2<sup>nd</sup>(ed.). New York, NY: Zed Books, Ltd.
- Stoecker, R. (2003). Community-based research: From practice to theory and back again. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, (Spring), 35-46.
- Strand, K. (2000). Community-based research as pedagogy. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, (Fall), 85-96.
- Torre, M., Fine, M., Alexander, N., Billups, A., Blanding, Y., Genao, E., Marboe, E., Salah, T. & Urdang, K. (2008). Participatory action research in the contact zone. In Cammarota, J. & Fine, M. (eds), *Revolutionizing education: Youth participatory action research in motion* (23-44). New York, NY: Routledge
- Ware, L. (2009). Many possible futures, many different directions. In S. Gabel (ed.), *Disability studies in education: readings in theory and method* (103-124). New York, NY: Peter Lang.