

"SHE WANTS TO BE LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE, OUT WORKING":

YOUNG ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

TRANSITIONING TO EMPLOYMENT.

**"SHE WANTS TO BE LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE, OUT WORKING":
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TRANSITIONING TO EMPLOYMENT.**

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (2005)

McMaster University
(Geography)

TITLE: "She wants to be like everybody else, out working": Young adults with intellectual disabilities transitioning to employment.

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 235

ABSTRACT

In recent years, both disability activists and governmental policy have emphasised the importance of competitive employment for people with disabilities for economic and social independence. However, in reality enduring barriers are faced by individuals when attempting to gain employment. There is extensive literature on disabled adults but less exists on the specific experiences of young adults with disabilities attempting to enter the workforce. The sub-specialty of geographies of disabilities is an established field however, that of intellectual disabilities has been to some extent ignored. This thesis attempts to address these limitations by examining the experiences of young adults with intellectual disabilities in transition from high school to competitive employment. It reports on a longitudinal qualitative study that examines the changing lifeworlds of a small group of young adults as they leave high school. In depth open ended interviews are used to compare and contrast the perspectives of the young adults themselves, their parents, as well as employers, a manager of a sheltered workshop and an educator from the local school board. Analysis highlights the young adults' perception on the importance of competitive work in daily life, and indicates that social relationships are of prime significance. Preparations for employment, such as transition planning, appear to be insufficient which results in varied challenges that they and their parents face in attempting to secure competitive employment. Individual work/life histories are used to identify these

challenges and the strategies utilised to overcome them. These combine to shape the evolving daily geographies of the young adults that allow particular spaces of transition, and the complex spaces of inclusion/exclusion to be conceptualised. These indicate that the young adults appear to be 'stuck' in the transitional spaces between high school and competitive employment. In addition transitional spaces that are initially assumed as segregated and exclusionary can also represent spaces of inclusion and community for the young adults. The importance of transportation in the lives of these individuals and their families is also discussed. Policy implications are suggested, including proposals for education policy in improving transition planning, and governmental social policy and service organisation policies as related to competitive employment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the young adults at the service organisation with whom I had close interactions for 18 months, I wish you happiness and success in all your life long endeavours in whatever you choose to do. I thank you and your parents for helping me to understand your daily experiences.

I especially appreciate the support and friendship of Janet Barton, as without her suggestions (and shared lunches) this thesis would have been very different. Also to Sylvia and Kevin for your ideas, thank you.

My greatest appreciations go to Dr Rob Wilton, my Master's supervisor for his patience and comments over many thesis drafts and his continued motivation. Two years ago I was totally unaware of the experiences of people with disabilities, but, with your assistance this has altered so that I am now attentive to the many issues that impact their lives.

On a more personal level I want to thank my long suffering husband, and children (Liam 8 years, Gerard, 6 years and Elise 4 years) for putting up with a bad tempered mum whilst I was writing up this thesis. Also I want to thank my friends who rallied to help look after the children and encourage me whilst I was at school especially Angela, Therese and Michele.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background.

In recent decades there has been growing emphasis placed on the importance of competitive employment for people with disabilities. However, in reality people with disabilities continue to be under-represented in the work force. This research seeks to analyse the experiences of a specific group of individuals with disabilities to gain a greater understanding of their labour market experiences. The specific group comprises young adults with an intellectual disability who are transitioning from high school to the workforce. These individuals are not only disabled by their impairment in gaining competitive employment, but also by their youth.

The emphasis on competitive employment for people with disability has been partly due to the action of the disability movement, and partly due to changes in government policy. For the disability movement, competitive employment is viewed as a means to social justice and societal inclusion. Since it became nation wide in the late 70s, the disability movement has fought to further the rights of people with disabilities by focusing on greater socio-spatial inclusion. This has included improved mobility and physical access and increased legal opportunities (Chouinard, 2001). The aim is to enable people with disability to become more fully included, both socially and

economically, in Canadian life. A key element of this is the right of equality to competitive employment. The position of disability organisations reflects this belief of full inclusion as demonstrated by this statement from Community Living Ontario:

People with developmental handicaps are citizens of Canada. As such their rights should be respected and protected. Thus they should be supported and assisted to meet their obligations and responsibilities as citizens, including the responsibilities as citizens to contribute to the social and economic life of the community. (Community Living Ontario, no date)

On the other hand, federal and provincial governments' emphasis on competitive employment has been influenced by neoliberal ideology. This ideology has led to policies on state deficit reduction, decrease in welfare and social programme expenditure, subcontracting and privatising of social programmes and the heightened emphasis on individual responsibility (e.g. Kitchin and Wilton, 2003). The outcome has been a shift from dependency on income support programmes, to the encouragement of economic and social independence through competitive employment.

At the federal level, focus on competitive employment is shown by such policy documents as "In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues" (Human Resources Development Canada, 1998) and the succeeding "Unison 2000" (Human Resources Development Canada, 2000) produced by the Federal Government in consultation with provincial and territorial ministers responsible for social services. The main aim is to produce policy that would involve the full participation of persons with disability as "full

citizens in all aspects of Canadian society” (Human Resources Development Canada, 1998). In order to realise this vision, policy directions are given on providing adequate support and eliminating barriers in the three given building blocks of employment, disability supports and income. The aim of the policy directive on employment is to reduce reliance on income support programmes and encourage economic independence by providing individual support to increase the number of persons with disability that are employed. A subsequent agreement endorsed by the Government of Canada and provincial governments as part of the Social Union Initiative to reform social policy, has led to the Multilateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities. It includes the following principle that should underlie any new policy initiatives at all levels of government:

Persons with disabilities should be fully included in Canada’s social and economic mainstream, a key element of which is successful participation in the labour market. Fostering greater self-reliance through obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment will help persons with disabilities achieve inclusion. (Government of Canada, 2003)

In Ontario, where this research is based, provincial governmental policy supports this employment initiative as demonstrated by the 1998 Ontario Disability Support Programme (ODSP). One of the ways the programme encourages the employment of people with disability is by providing employment support that puts the responsibility on individuals to define their own employment needs and find service providers to assist them. (See Chapter Two for more detailed information).

It initially appears that the focus on competitive employment in governmental policy fits with the aim of the disability movement. However, activists consider employment in the context of an enabling environment that permits social and economic inclusion. Contrarily, assumptions underlying governmental policy on competitive employment include emphasis on the individual without changing the current physical and social context. Due to the influence of neoliberal ideology there has also been a 'shifting of the burden' of providing income support from the welfare state to the individual. This has resulted in a transfer of responsibilities to the individual for their employment circumstances and reduced income support (McDowell, 2004).

The lack of alteration of the broader disabling environment in which competitive employment operates, and the shifting of the economic burden to the individual, has resulted in tensions being experienced by people with disabilities. This thesis investigates these tensions and the implications in more depth by considering the individual experiences of young adults with an intellectual disability attempting to enter the workforce. These young adults can be viewed as being doubly disabled in relation to the labour market. This is due to the general marginalisation of people with disabilities from competitive employment as well as their lack of work experience.

Although both the disability movement and governmental policy emphasise that competitive employment is a desirable outcome for individuals with disability, the reality is different. People with disabilities are under-

represented in the labour force. Trends in the labour force that have contributed to this exclusion include high unemployment rates, the spread of precarious employment, declining wages, increased job competition and loss of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs (Crysdale, King and Mandell, 1999; Lowe and Krahn, 2000). Exclusion from competitive employment is realised as a key factor in the exclusion of people with disabilities from wider society, as a lack of employment has been recognised as contributing to economic, social and political marginalisation (Barnes, 2000). Additionally affected are young adults with disability who are leaving high school to enter the workforce as they have few employable skills and experience. Approximately one half of young adults with disabilities that are no longer at school are likely to be employed compared to almost three quarters of non-disabled young adults (Human Resources Development Canada, 2001, p.22. See Chapter Three for more detailed information).

However, these figures do not convey the actual lived experiences of the individuals concerned during their transition from high school. This period of transition from the secure space of school is a time of anxiety for all youths and their parents as they enter the realm of aspirations of adulthood and its associated independence (Mitchell, 1999). For young adults with disabilities the process of transition can be significantly more difficult as they cannot necessarily meet these preconceived able-bodied norms of adulthood that include gaining competitive employment.

1.2 Aim of study and its importance.

Individuals with intellectual disability have been considered one of the most marginalised groups in developed society (e.g. Hall, 2004, 2005). They face severe social, personal and institutional discrimination that results in low employment rates, poor education, lack of control over their daily lives and exclusion in public spaces. Despite this there has only recently been a small but growing geographical research literature on this subject (e.g. Hall, 2005). The cause of lack of research has been explained by an absence of individuals with intellectual disability in both social and political spaces (Laws and Radford, 1998). While there has been some recent attention to the spatial and social barriers to competitive employment encountered by adults, the literature has not yet examined the specific experiences of young adults.

The importance of this thesis is to add to this limited geographical literature and make recommendations for changes in governmental and service organisations' policy. This will be achieved by examining the changing daily geographies of a group of young adults with intellectual disabilities as they transition from the institutional and social space of school and attempt to gain entry into competitive employment.

In a context of increased emphasis on competitive employment for people with disabilities, the main research question on which this thesis is based is, what are the experiences of young adults with intellectual disability

as they attempt to transition from high school to the work force? In particular the following are the key aims:

1. To gain an understanding of the importance of competitive employment to young adults with an intellectual disability.
2. To identify and analyse the dynamic experiences of the young adults as they transition from school and to map the changes in their daily geographies.
3. To identify strategies that young adults with an intellectual disability and their families use to gain competitive employment and overcome any barriers and challenges.
4. From the analysis recommend changes to existing education policy for transition training and planning, and governmental social policy and service organisation policy as related to competitive employment.
5. To contribute to geographic literature on disability using a political economy and feminist approach.

1.3 Definitions.

A number of different terms are used throughout the thesis. 'Transition' refers to the "movement between two different stages or roles in life" (Cook and Rumrill, 2000, p.13). In this case it is the transition from high school to competitive employment. 'Young adults' are individuals who have left high school but are younger than thirty years old. When 'competitive

employment' is referred to it is in terms of employment in which the worker receives minimum wage or above and is working in the competitive and integrated labour market.

I decided to use the term 'intellectual disability' in this thesis although different terms have been used throughout history and between and within different countries. With the construction of institutions for 'mentally defective persons' in the later half of the nineteenth century specific 'scientific' labels were given in an attempt to classify the 'problem' of people who did not have 'normal' intelligence. These included the presently recognised derogatory terms of 'idiot' and 'imbecile' (Radford and Park, 2003). Currently in Canada the term 'mental retardation', 'developmental disability' and 'intellectual disability' are common labels, whilst the term 'special needs' is used in the education system. In the United States the term 'mental retardation' is used, whilst in the United Kingdom 'learning disability or difficulty' is utilised although the label means something different in the United States (Rapley, 2004). I choose to use the term 'intellectual disability' as it was a term utilised by the service organisation with which I undertook the research and so was convenient to use. In addition the label 'intellectual disability' is not recognised as derogatory (Jenkins, 1998).

The definition I use in this thesis for intellectual disability has been influenced by three sources. First, the social model, second, a specific

definition used by the service organisation and lastly, social constructionist debates.

The social model's assumption is that disability is not random or individualised, but can be explained by the physical, economic and social environment (Oliver, 1990). The social model specifically distinguishes between impairment and disability and utilises the following definitions:

Impairment, lacking part of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body.

Disability, which is the socially imposed state of exclusion or constraint which physically impaired individuals may be forced to endure.

(Oliver, 1990, p.11).

The definition specifically includes individuals with physical disabilities but ignores those with intellectual impairments. It does not take into consideration that these individuals, similar to those with physical impairments, are both socially and spatially oppressed by society (e.g. Hall and Kearns, 2001; Hall, 2005). Similar to the medical model, the assumption is that the intellectual impairment causes the disability, and not the surrounding environment (Oliver, 1990).

The second source consists of a specific definition for intellectual disability utilised by the service organisation with which I undertook the research. The definition is:

An intellectual disability is an impaired ability to learn. It sometimes causes difficulty in coping with the demands of daily life. It is a condition which is usually present from birth, and it is not the same as

mental or psychiatric illness. (Canadian Association for Community Living, 2005)

The benefits of this definition are that intellectual disability is considered as separate from other mental and psychiatric conditions, and the actual lived experience is recognised in terms of dealing with everyday life. However, it conflates impairment and disability to create a meaning that is more in keeping with the medical model. The cause of intellectual disability is created by the individual's 'problem' as he/she has an 'impaired ability to learn'; it is not being caused by the restrictions imposed by society (Oliver, 1990).

Recent debate on the social construction of intellectual disability is the third source I used to create the definitions used in this thesis. Social constructionists (e.g. Davies and Jenkins 1997; Gillman, Heyman and Swain 2000; Rapley, 2004) argue that although different labels are adopted to describe people with different competencies, they are all reflective of medical knowledge. Medical professionals use scientific testing such as intelligence tests to diagnose a person's in/competence either in intelligence and/or in daily living. Foucault (as cited in Gillman et al, 2000, p 391) shows that through these diagnoses, professionals have the power to classify individuals and place them in relative hierarchies of in/competence. The individuals themselves and their families are not usually involved in the process, and in the majority of cases the people being diagnosed are still children so there is an imbalance of power (Davies, 1998). The diagnosis is then considered as a medical 'truth' by society. However, it is based only on assumptions about what is currently

accepted as good moral conduct and varies in different societies (Jenkins, 1998). The professional ascribing of intellectual disability as a diagnostic category creates a dichotomy between those with 'the disability' and those 'without the disability' (Gillman et al, 2000). Society assumes intellectual disability as a specific social construction of identity and makes specific assumptions about the individual's mental in/competence (Rapley, 2004). It is assumed that people with intellectual disability have a single fixed group identity that entails them being 'different' and incompetent which results in their stigmatisation. They are considered as 'different' because they challenge the western idea of autonomy and they are denied having full 'personhood' or social adulthood (Davies 1998). They may be treated as children as they do not have the material trappings of adulthood such as legal responsibility for their own actions, competitive employment, marriage, children and independent living.

The studies described above focus on the labels and underlying social constructs that have negatively affected the social identity and ensuing treatment of people with an intellectual disability. They enable us to view the impact social attitudes have but do not allow us to relate to the individual as a person. More recent scholarship (e.g. Goodley and Rapley, 2002; Klotz, 2004) argue that social constructionists ignore the actual daily lived realities of these individuals and their social relationships. Their lives are significantly more than just a pre-determined outcome due to their affixed label.

In this thesis I use the following definition of intellectual disability that is based on the three discussed influences:

An intellectual *impairment* is an impaired ability to learn. It sometimes causes difficulty in coping with the demands of daily life. It is a condition which is usually present from birth, and it is not the same as mental or psychiatric illness. (Based on Canadian Association for Community Living, 2005)

Intellectual disability, which is the socially *constructed category* of exclusion or constraint which *intellectually impaired* individuals may be forced to endure *within wider society*. (Based on Oliver, 1990, p.11).

I have decided to amend the wording of the service organisation definition and the social model in order to recognise that ‘intellectual disability’ is constructed by society and is affected by the spatial, social and economic context. Although I recognise the reality and ‘pain’ of impairment experienced by the individuals so labelled, in this thesis I want to explore how different environments affect the construction of intellectual disability.

1.4 Organisation of thesis

The thesis has been organised into six chapters. The next chapter, Chapter Two, reviews the existing scholarly literature on geographies of disability and intellectual disability. Included is literature on the importance of competitive employment, the marginalisation of people with disability from employment and the transition from school to the workforce. Chapter Three considers the context of the study including social policy in Ontario and the more local background of the field work. The methodology of the research and

means of analysis are also explained. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the experiences of the young adults with intellectual disability. It is divided into two sections. First, the perceived importance of competitive employment for young adults with intellectual disabilities is analysed from the perspectives of the young adults, their parents and an educator. The second section reviews the young adults' preparations for competitive employment prior to leaving high school and includes planning for the transition and work experiences. Chapter Five continues the analysis by constructing a work/life transition history for each young adult. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the varied and complex experiences of the transition from high school and the actual socio- spatial barriers, opportunities and processes operating. Their experiences are paired with employers where possible. Chapter Six provides a summary, discussion of theoretical implications raised by the analysis, policy implications and future directions for research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This thesis is written in the form of a geographies of disability paper although my analysis has been enriched by utilising scholarly articles from different disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and psychology. The following review encompasses both geographical literature on disability but also this wider research. Initially this chapter briefly examines some of the scholarly literature on the geographies of disability. A more thorough review of geographies of intellectual disabilities follows. The chapter subsequently focuses on people with disabilities involvement with employment, including those with intellectual disabilities, and the transition of young adults with disabilities from high school to competitive employment.

2.2 Geographies of disability

Park, Radford and Vickers (1998) have traced back the geographical research on disability and show that earlier studies in physical disability were informed by the medical model. This geographical literature was positivist in nature and many used quantitative techniques to describe the spatial attributes of various disabled populations without any critical review of the social, economic or political background. An example can be given of Golledge's

research that seeks to show that blind people inhabited a 'distorted space' within a unique world of disability (See Golledge, 1993; Gleeson, 1996). He then attempts to use geographical information such as tactile maps and GIS to decrease the disadvantages experienced negotiating the physical environment. Society was viewed as exaggerating the problem of blindness in the form of physical barriers but not creating it.

The advent of disability rights movement and disability studies scholarship led to the rejection of the medical model of disability in favour of the social model that considers disability as a form of social oppression (Oliver, 1990). This led to human rights legislation being introduced in many western countries to improve accessibility to the built environment and other aspects of society. These events led geographers to undertake more politically informed research into the ways that the surrounding environment could be disabling and lead to the exclusion of people with disabilities from society (e.g Chouinard and Grant, 1995; Gleeson, 1999a; Imrie and Kumar, 1998; Kitchen, 2003).

An increase in interest by feminist geographers' in disability literature has also led to recent research emphasis on the daily lives of people with disability and emphasis on the 'body'. Feminist research attempts to show the complex interrelation between impairment, identities and differences of people with disabilities. This is set within the context of how everyday social activities are experienced in certain spaces (e.g. Dorn and Laws, 1994).

Feminist geographers such as Moss and Dyck (1996) and Parr and Butler (1999) view the body as 'embodied' in that is comprised of mind spaces where the identity is consciously and or unconsciously formed, and body spaces that realise physical experiences. The body is continually being 'inscribed' or absorbing/reacting to both social and biological processes so creating an individual and social set of assumptions that define his/her disability and identity. The processes causing inscription are dynamic, resulting in an individual with disability continually negotiating his or her own identity. Dyck (1995) refers to this dynamic process of resisting oppression as 'radical body politics' which assists each individual to mediate and negotiate space (Also Moss and Dyck, 2002). The routine experience of an individual in a specific space at a specific time has been called a 'lifeworld' by Dyck (1995). She utilised the concept of lifeworld to show the complex ways in which gender, physical impairment and space interrelated and changed after women were diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.

Butler and Bowlby (1997) also consider the 'body' and highlight the importance of social attitudes towards disability as they affect the daily experiences of individuals in public spaces. They conclude the interrelationships that create a person's daily experience are complex. These include attitudes as defined by popular discourse such as the disabled person's need to look and act 'normally'. Other interrelations are the physical and social structure of the public places and the actual bodily impairments.

Williams (2002) has specifically investigated therapeutic landscapes and the ways in which various factors associated with the individual, in addition to social and cultural influences, interrelate in places of healing and sickness.

In addition, geographical literature on disability has taken a more political approach as academics are utilising research to further the political aims of people with disabilities. This includes Chouinard who has encouraged the inclusion of women with disabilities in 'radical' geographies (Park et al 1998). For example she focuses on the broader issues of women with disability and disability activism in Canada (Chouinard, 1999). She shows that women face barriers to activism related to lack of funding of disability organisations and the geographic distance between women activists in Canada. This lack of inclusion in activism reflects the marginalisation of women in Canadian society.

Other geographers use feminist and psychoanalytical perspectives. This includes Dear, Wilton and Takahashi (1997) who have angled their research differently and focus on the impetus behind negative attitudes from able-bodied people toward people with disabilities represented in spatial terms. They give the example of the 'not in my backyard' (NIMBY) phenomena whereby community objection is raised against situating community care facilities in the locality. Stigmatisation of the residents occurs as they represent the 'other' that threatens the existing socio-spatial boundaries of the neighbourhood. It has been shown that there are hierarchies of

acceptance of the neighbourhood care facilities that are based on 'social dimensions of acceptance' (Dear et al, 1997, p. 471). The hierarchical position of the impairment depends on various perceived assumptions of the disabled mind and body. Significantly, at the bottom of the hierarchies are those with mental impairments such as the intellectually disabled who are perceived as unpredictable and having anti-social behaviour.

Valentine (2003) proposes that the future of geographies of disability lies in undertaking enabling geographies with, rather than on, people with disabilities in order to examine issues of social justice and ethics (Also Gleeson, 1999a). This will result in academic contributions that can be made to enable people with disability to become full members of our society.

2.3 Geographies of intellectual disabilities

The sub specialty of geographies of disabilities is an established field and continues to expand rapidly. However, much of the literature has concentrated on studying people with physical disabilities and to a lesser extent psychiatric disabilities, but there has also been very limited research on those with intellectual disability (e.g. Laws and Radford, 1998; Hall, 2001). In 1980 Wolpert is recognised as one of the first to introduce intellectual disability as a socio-spatial area of study. It is from this initial study that the small but increasing geographical literature has evolved (e.g. Wolpert, 1980; Park et al, 1998; Philo and Metzel 2005). Wolpert wrote in the era of deinstitutionalisation when 'mental deficiency' asylums were being closed

down and their intellectual disabled residents were being 'normalised' into urban communities.

Wolpert's (1980) study analysed 'man-made' social, institutional and technological hazards that affected people and places. He considered various legal studies on the displacement of allegedly 'incompetent' and 'dangerous' groups who were perceived as a hazard to the 'public good' to a place away from mainstream society. This segregation allowed for the individuals to be 'protected' as well as ensuring they did not hurt others in society. Assumed to exist in this high risk group were the 'mentally handicapped' and criminals. Places were deemed to be safer once they were removed. He argued that competency was not inherent but related to labelling and as technology became increasingly challenging more individuals were considered less competent. This applied to those with an intellectual disability but also to 'normal' people who could hide these failures or could get assistance from experts that provided a "cloak of competence" (p. 400). He concluded that there was dignity in accepting the risks that daily life brings us, but that there was *indignity* in being institutionally sheltered from these daily hazards that those with intellectual disability may otherwise face (In Philo and Metzler, 2005). The key theme present in Wolpert's study that unites subsequent geographies of intellectual disabilities literature, is that society has the power to put geographical and social space between the 'normal' people and those with intellectual disability who are considered 'abnormal'.

Subsequent to Wolpert's paper there were small amounts of geographical work but to a large extent geographical literature on intellectual disabilities was 'invisible' (Hall and Kearns, 2001). This invisibility was challenged in 2001 with the publication of Hall and Kearns's paper entitled "Making Space for the 'intellectual' in geographies of disability".

Hall and Kearns attempted to address why geographies of intellectual disability literature were invisible and how this could be rectified. They argued that there were five reasons why intellectually disabled people were not researched in geography. First, they tend to be invisible in public spaces unlike the physically disabled or some mentally ill people that may be homeless. Although asylums were closed in the 70s and 80s and individuals moved to community settings, there was enforced dependency on carers and family and little reason to venture into public spaces. As they are not visible, society assumes they are leading contented lives. As marginalisation is not obvious less academic attention is focused on them. Second, they argue that 'participatory action research' which is widely used in geography for involving people with disabilities in enabling change, could prove difficult for many individuals with intellectual disability. Reasons may entail a lack of education, social isolation, control by carers and the individual's intellectual capacities. Third, there is confusion over the terminology of intellectual disability and what label to use. Fourth, while the social model is presumed to include all types of disabilities, it ignores the daily lives of individuals with

intellectual disability. It is assumed to be a natural occurrence and not a socially constructed label. Last, people with intellectual disability are not organised and political. If they are heard, it is often through their service organisations that are not part of a wider disability movement.

Hall and Kearns then suggest several ways in which intellectual disability could be more involved in geography. One way was to connect to the spatial geographies of others, such as comparison to non-disabled daily experiences or to other disabled geographies, to demonstrate that people with disabilities share many of the same barriers to full inclusion in society. However, intellectually disabled people may experience greater physical and socio-spatial exclusion compared to others with disability due to the provision of segregated services such as special schools, homes, transport and places of employment. Geographers need to understand their complex life and this has been incorporated as the primary aim of this thesis. Hall and Kearns also propose that a key way to increase geographical research would be to develop inventive ways of undertaking qualitative techniques and involve more individuals with intellectual disability. Also, the 'mind' as well as the 'body' should be incorporated into the social model. In this way mind and body interrelationships would be reconsidered to enable new concepts that link geographies of physical and intellectual disability. Finally, geographers should focus on the materiality of everyday life for people with intellectual disability

and how it relates to the broader economic and social change within capitalist societies.

Similar to the more dense literature on geographies of mental health, Hall and Kearns (2001) propose that literature on geographies of intellectual disability can be divided into two phases. I use their organisational framework to review recent geographical research in intellectual disabilities. The first phase constitutes asylum and post-asylum geographies, and the second phase comprises research analysing the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities including creation and maintenance of identity and social construction of difference.

2.3.1 Phase 1: Asylums and post-asylum geographies of intellectual disabilities

The first phase is focused on the location, movement and exclusion of people with intellectual disabilities from mainstream life both in 'mental deficiency' asylums and later in the community after deinstitutionalisation. Studies have been mainly historical and descriptive (Hall, 2004). Park and Radford (1999) undertook an historical study on Canada's oldest and largest asylum, the Huronia Regional Centre, Orillia. This study, and others such as that undertaken by Metzel and Walker (2001), summarise the history of the asylum era in socio-spatial terms. Between the 1850s and 1970, the asylum was the place for the 'mental deficient'. Its role was continually changing

during this period due to different policy objectives relating to varying uses of terminology, diagnosis and treatments. Initially asylums were developed out of paternalistic but well intentioned actions in Europe and North America to provide a separate place where ‘idiot’ children, especially those from socially and economically impoverished backgrounds, could be brought and educated to encourage independence in the ‘real world’. These smaller charity or state operated residential ‘schools’ were quickly replaced with large asylums for those children who could not be rehabilitated; commencing in Canada in 1876. The asylum was generally located in rural areas where the environment was considered as more beneficial to the inmates and land was cheaper to purchase (Metzel and Walker, 2001). As catchment areas were wide, individuals were taken away from their home communities and placed in these segregated surroundings. Subsequently the asylum also became the ‘protector’ of the increasing lower class and immigrants who were associated with ‘feble-mindedness’ and the potential to disrupt society (Metzel and Walker, 2001). This led in the 1880s to enforced institutionalisation and restrictions in the individual inmates’ lives, such as sterilisation of men and women. By the turn of the century it was the norm to expect that those with any type of mental deficiency would reside in an asylum for the ‘protection of society’. The asylum took over a custodial role and control of all social and economic needs for the remainder of the ‘mental deficient’s life. This resulted in total exclusion from the mainstream community and inmates “ceased to be citizens”

as the asylum enforced the dual conflicting components of care and control (Park and Radford, 1999, p. 94).

Using primary historical documents Park and Radford (1999) sought to examine the interrelation of social forces that influenced social policy throughout the asylum's history. They identified three different rhetorics that were used to construct 'mental deficiency' within the asylum and hence social policy. These were identified as cost, professional expertise and sexuality. The cost rhetoric positioned the 'mental deficient' as an economic problem because they were assumed to be unproductive and creating great social costs to the community. Social organisations and public discourse also considered them as criminals that would harm and corrupt others. It was presumed preferable that these individuals were placed in asylums where they could be trained and be made productive and the public would avoid these atrocities.

The rhetoric of professional expertise demonstrated that the role of the asylum altered over time. Initially, professional expertise was led by educators that in turn was replaced by medical science to classify and train the social 'problem' of 'mental deficiency'. By the 1930s the professional role developed further and the asylums became places of medical research with active involvement by key prime medical and political figures of the day. Other professionals included those from social work and the law that resulted in various legislative acts, such as the enforced detention of individuals who were seen as dangerous to the community.

Central to the third theme of sexuality is the institutional custodial policy of controlling reproduction. Involuntary sterilisation of child bearing women was seen as necessary as ‘mental defectives’ were thought unable to control themselves sexually and were apt to have many children, mostly illegitimate, which they were not capable of rearing. They would “thus pass on to coming generations the curse of Feeble-Mindedness” (Park and Radford, 1999, p. 80). Eugenics was an attempt to restrict the number of ‘defectives’ in society as all social problems were viewed as heredity.

In another study, Richards shows the changing dominant discourse with the introduction of the asylum system (cited in Philo and Metzler, 2005, p.80). She used archival documents on case studies of children with intellectual disabilities, to show that early in the 19th century ‘idiocy’ *was* tolerated and was relatively inclusive in society. With the advent of the residential state schools, new medical techniques were put forward as the ideal opportunity to improve the lives of these children. Societal reaction then was initiated against the families that cared for their children at home, as intellectually disabled children were considered evidence of their parents’ sins and immorality (Richards cited in Metzler and Walker, 2001, p. 116). This process led to an associated fear of intellectually disabled people and the places with which they were associated such as asylums and schools. Richards calls this the commencement of the ‘will to segregate’ people with intellectual disability from mainstream society.

After World War Two, parents and voluntary organisations established schools for the children with intellectual disability who were not permitted to attend state schools (Metzel and Walker, 2001). These were set up in community locations with low rents such as church basements, or near homes of parents. As the children aged, other services such as day programmes and sheltered workshops were added and these became the locations of many present day community services. Due to their locational history these services are housed in devalued spaces and many lack accessible transportation. For these reasons many of these spaces have grown to promote “congregation and segregation” rather than societal inclusion (Metzel and Walker, 2001, p.118).

By the 1960s increased discussion on the role of the asylum led to the commencement of closures and the end of the era. This same process had already occurred with mental illness asylums. The impetus for closure came from advocacy groups including parents, and the drive was for a ‘normalisation’ philosophy of care for individuals with intellectual disability (Radford and Park, 2003). One of the pioneers of normalisation was Bengt Nirje who argued that disability consists of the three components (Cited in Radford and Park, 2003). The first is the medical diagnosis, second, the broader environment including daily living conditions and social attitudes, and finally the resulting self-identity of the person constituted by the first two

components¹. It was argued to alter the environment, that is the asylum, would halt this interrelationship and the preferable surroundings would be the mainstream community where individuals would undertake a 'normal life'. By the 1980s the philosophy underlying social policy had become normalisation and community integration (Laws and Radford, 1998).

Post-asylum studies include Metzel (2005) who analyses the ways in which the social dependencies of the asylum era were recreated in the community leading to isolation from the mainstream and a lack of social networks. She demonstrates in her case study from the United States, that individuals with intellectual disability independently searching for homes in the community were affected by the location of the service organisation itself. It was shown that the individuals desired homes that were physically near to the services and the personnel who operated them. Individuals showed a life long connection and dependency on service organisations that decreased their interaction with the community and led to 'social poverty'.

Phase 2: Identity construction

The second phase of studies emphasises the complexities of the daily lived experiences of people with intellectual disability in the community. Laws and Radford (1998) argued that more research is needed involving people with intellectual disability themselves, as a basis for improving local social policies

¹ Due to the importance placed on the broader socio-spatial environment there are similarities with the social model of disability.

on community integration. The main aim of their study was to investigate if individuals with intellectual disability participated in community life, and whether they perceived themselves as part of the community. As the majority of participants had lived in institutions, the study was to evaluate their integration into society as part of the normalisation process. The research fully involved the individuals in a way to bring “voices from the shadows” and experience their lifeworlds (p. 88). The responses indicated similar daily geographies to people without disabilities in the fact that they got out of bed and went to work or school. The main difference was that the majority of individuals had a very limited social life, predominantly with others with intellectual disability. They additionally had a lack of things to do in their free time. The study concluded that while the individuals lived in a community setting they had little control and choice and so they were isolated from the community. They existed in “small action spaces” on the “outer fringes of the daily round” (Laws and Radford, 1998 p. 99; also Hall, 2004, p. 301). This reflected a long-term marginalisation of the respondents and their low levels of expectation of daily living in a community.

Hall is a more recent contributor to the second phase of geographies of intellectual disabilities (2004, and 2005). In his studies he makes the case that although individuals with intellectually disabilities are physically included in communities they remain socially excluded, living in an “asylum without walls” (Hall, 2004, p.299). He argues that, despite the philosophy of

normalisation, people with intellectual disabilities experience barriers to employment, housing, health, education and access to public spaces. In addition they experience discrimination, abuse and lack of daily control that affects their inclusion in society. This results in social exclusion which he defines as the problems encountered when individuals with intellectual disability attempt to enter the “spaces of the social and economic majority” (Hall, 2004, p.299). His studies involve group discussions held with individuals and their carers that highlighted their intimidation in public spaces. He relates this intimidation to society constructing people with intellectual disabled as the ‘ultimate other’. This daily exclusion creates a geography of being ‘out of place’ According to Kitchin (1998) this results from the power relations with the more dominant in society as those with disabilities are considered as ‘different’. They then feel anxious in the ‘wrong’ spaces frequented by mainstream society, and these spaces are then avoided in a process of self-exclusion by individuals and others in their social network (Hall, 2004, p.301). To avoid ‘being out of place’ in social spaces individuals with intellectual disabilities in the study made ‘safe spaces’. Similar to the findings in Laws and Radford’s (1998) study, they restricted their social networks to friends, family, carers and social events organised by service organisations. The safe spaces were ‘refuges’ in “which people can feel a sense of community and ‘safety’ and where their identity as a PWLD [person with a learning disability] can be valued and strengthened before their next

encounter with mainstream society” (Hall 2004, p. 303). Initially the place of refuge from a discriminatory world was provided by the institutions, such as asylums, but with deinstitutionalisation new spaces have to be found. Superficially these spaces with their associated social networks, such as care homes, are considered controlling and segregated from the mainstream but they also constitute a ‘safe space’ of inclusion for these individuals and become the new ‘normality’.

Hall concludes that policy assumes that it is the best outcome for individuals with intellectual disability to be fully included in society. However, to be fully included both spatially and socially, people with intellectual disability will have to achieve particular social roles such as to gain competitive employment, live independently and also personally feel inclusion in their daily lives. Even if they gain the social roles and associated spatial inclusion, they may experience socio-spatial exclusion on a daily basis due to discrimination (discussed further in 2.5). This exclusion within supposedly inclusionary places leads to a complex geography of exclusion/inclusion. Importantly Hall argues that the concept of societal inclusion in government policy should shift from an emphasis on economics to a new focus on social equality and justice to eliminate oppression (Hall, 2005). An example is that policy emphasises competitive employment as a key marker of economic and social independence, so demand for paid employment represents a way to be respected by society. However, as societal oppression

has been left unchallenged individuals with intellectual disabilities may experience geographies of exclusion within the workforce. Hall proposes that socio-spatial inclusion within competitive employment will only be fully realised when oppression is eliminated with the assistance of policies geared towards social justice.

A method to create inclusion would be to involve self-advocacy in producing an enabling daily environment. However, this is currently restricted due to the control by service organisations and well meaning family members. In addition, disability activists do not necessarily accept that the label of intellectual disability is a social construction created by society (Hall 2005). Recommendations are made that the disability movement should support self-advocates in their resistance against oppression and advance the demand for equality law based on social justice. A focus on social inclusion would transfer attention from accessibility of employment and accommodation to its spatial and social organisation.

Disability has become an established field of geographical study, but research on geographies of intellectual disabilities continues to be minimal. However, Philo and Metzger (2005) specify that social geographers can play a key role in assisting people with intellectual disability towards their goal of 'true' societal inclusion. They argue for more studies that continue to analyse the spatial and social exclusion experienced in daily lives. For example, geographers should consider the positive elements of institutions, semi and

non-institutional places and their intersection with the everyday world of society in a safe way. This would enable individuals with intellectual disability to have the same opportunities as others to experience the dignity of ordinary risks (Wolpert, 1980). Hall (2004) specifically calls for a critical investigation on the focus of competitive employment as a means of social inclusion when other societal exclusionary processes have been ignored. People with intellectual disability should be fully included in this course of action in order to gain full 'enabling socio-spatial justice' (Hall, 2004, p. 304). I attempt to address these requests for research in this thesis.

2.4 Employment

For the majority of adults, work is a central focus of daily life. Not only is it of great importance to society in general, but it has great significance for individuals (for e.g. Cinamon and Gifsh, 2004). In a western capitalist society we assume that work is paid competitive employment and we undertake it to earn money to support ourselves, but, it also provides other social and political functions (Sandys, 2003). Socially it represents a key marker of our position in society and offers a means for fulfilling social relationships (Jongbloed and Crichton, 1990). Employed individuals are more likely to be involved in political activities (Schur, 2003). In general, employment assists in defining our self-identity and how we are seen by others

in society. On the contrary, unemployment excludes individuals from full social and economic integration into society (Jongbloed and Crichton, 1990).

Similar to people without disabilities, Conyers, Koch and Szymanski (1998) have concluded that for disabled young adults, work is an important element in their lives. In general competitive employment was concluded as providing a sense of purpose and identity, financial gain, fulfilment of cultural expectations, productive use of time and an increased sense of independency. Lack of employment leads to a loss of social status, isolation, boredom, lack of identity and reduced self-confidence (Kitchin et al 1998).

According to statistics from the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) for 2001, only 44% of those working age adults with a disability are in competitive employment compared with 78% of non-disabled (Government of Canada, 2004, p. 39). However, 33% of those with disabilities who are out of the labour force and unemployed are potentially employable (Social Development Canada, 2004). Analysis also supports that the factors contributing to low rates of employment include gender, age, severity of disability and education levels. Gender is an issue as women with disability are even more disadvantaged than men. Young adults with disabilities also have low rates of employment compared with those without disabilities. Only 53% of young adults aged 15 to 24 years old and no longer in school are in competitive employment, in contrast to 72.3% of youths without disabilities. (Human Resources Development Canada, 2001, p.22). Severely disabled

individuals were less likely to be employed and those with less education were under-represented in the labour force

Of those who are employed, individuals with disability are more likely to receive lower salaries. Over the three years before 1999, employees with a disability earned 96% of the average hourly wage of those without disability (Government of Canada, 2004, p.41). Again gender was an issue as women with disabilities had the lowest average hourly pay of \$13.74 in 2002, compared with \$17.99 for disabled men (Government of Canada, 2004, p.41). Non-disabled men earned an average of \$18.17 per hour (Government of Canada, 2004, p41). People with disability were also less likely to have training at their place of employment or a promotion than their non-disabled colleagues (Canadian Council for Social Development, 2004).

As wages represent the majority of income for people with disabilities, lack of employment can lead to poverty (Fawcett, 1996). Those individuals with disabilities who depend on a wage for support have an average \$22,000 more per year than those on income support (Government of Canada, 2004, p.38). Also, considering all forms of household income, adults with disability are more than twice as likely as non-disabled to reside in homes with income below Statistics Canada low income cut-off (LICO) (Human Resources Development Canada, 2001, p.24). Women with disability especially have higher poverty rates as they have lower rates of participation in the labour

force, higher unemployment, lower employment earnings and less access to income support programmes (Fawcett, 1996).

In Canada there are various levels of legislation designed to protect the rights of people with disability to competitive employment. Constitutionally the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) guarantees that every Canadian is equal before the law and should not be discriminated against. It specifically mentions those individuals with mental or physical disability (Rioux and Frazee, 2003). The Canadian Human Rights Act (1977) is based on the Canadian Charter and prohibits discrimination by employers and service providers. This statute applies to all federal government offices and their employees, in addition to all federally regulated companies. The Employment Equity Act (1985) deals with improving access to employment for various minority groups including those with disabilities in the same locations as covered under the Canadian Human Rights Act (England 2003; Jongbloed and Crichton, 1990). Its objectives include the elimination of barriers to gaining employment for minority groups, and employment retention and progression once employed. Each organisation completes an annual statistical workforce survey that compares the percentage of the designated group in their workforce to the general labour pool. Reviews are also required on human resources policies and procedures to identify and eliminate any potential barriers to employment.

At the provincial level, Ontario employers' are supposed to abide by the Ontario Human Rights Code that protects those with disability and others against discrimination in the workplaces that are not covered in the Canadian Human Rights Act (Rioux and Frazee, 2003). Additionally, the Ontarians' with Disabilities Act (2001) aims to achieve a 'barrier free' Ontario by requesting annual accessibility plans from provincial governments, municipalities, public education facilities and public transportation (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, no date). People with disabilities are supposed to be consulted in the compilation of these plans.

These acts at the federal and provincial levels of government require that all Canadians with disability have the same legal rights to competitive employment as other members of society, but, they do not apply to the private sector. Also, the statistical evidence and existing research shows that these individuals are not fully represented in the workforce. There is extensive literature identifying the marginalisation of people with disability in relation to competitive employment including the creation of 'disablism' and barriers to obtaining employment. Barriers have been defined in the Ontarians with Disability Act 2001 as "anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice" (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, 2001).

2.4.1 Conceptualizing the employment experience

Literature on the competitive employment experience encompasses a variety of theoretical perspectives. That based on a materialist perspective considers what underlies the negative attitude and marginalisation of people with disabilities in relation to employment, and focuses on the broader social, economic, and political context. Historical materialists propose that capitalist societies created 'disability' and marginalisation of individuals with disability, through the creation of competitive employment (e.g.: Gleeson 1996, 1999, 1999a; Oliver 1990). It is argued that the mode of production and its economic, political and cultural relations as it develops through history, structure the social understanding and experience of impairment (Gleeson, 1999a). In geography, Gleeson (1996) theorises that capitalist societies have created disability by socio-spatial structures that have devalued the capacities of impaired people over time. He analyses English feudal society and the commencement of industrialisation in western society to demonstrate the disabling effects of capitalism. He contends that in feudal times the home and workplace were not separated. Peasants worked in the fields of the homestead, or in the home to provide subsistence for the family. The entire household contributed to this work and duties were flexible. People with impairment contributed in the ways that they could even if it involved undertaking gendered roles such as less physical 'women's work' in the home. Overall, people with impairments were not marginalised as they could be productive

and their own social space was embedded in, and part of everyday peasant life (Gleeson, 1999a).

With the transformation to the capitalist society in the 19th century, people with impairments became excluded from social spaces. With the commodification of labour their work also became devalued and this created the experience of disability (Gleeson, 1999a). Industrialisation created a separation of home and workplace as the wages for labour issue was introduced. Factories were constructed for the able-bodied; people with impairments could not physically access them or the machinery. Those with impairments could also not perform as fast as the able-bodied and were therefore considered as unproductive at work. People with impairments became excluded from the workplace and were 'cared for' in institutions or asylums that represented spaces of exclusion. Gleeson argues that this process resulted in the present state of dependency of people with disability, the devaluation of productive labour and exclusion from the workforce.

Additional scholarship has considered the extent to which new technology in contemporary society has the potential to eliminate disability and marginalisation in competitive employment (e.g. Imrie and Kumar, 1998; Oliver, 1990; Roulstone, 2002). Finklestein (cited in Oliver, 1990, p.26) proposes that there is a third phase in the historical evolution of disability after those of feudalism and capitalism. This phase entails the introduction of modern technology and activism that will result in the liberation of individuals

with impairment from the disabling workplace. Technology in this context is considered as the use of science and engineering to overcome the 'limitations of disabilities' and to assist people in their daily lives, such as gaining and maintaining employment (Gleeson, 1999, p.99). Imrie and Kumar (1998) support this perspective, and argue that the built environment is disabling as it has been built for the able-bodied and engineering has the potential to remedy this. It is proposed that people with disabilities should be given more power in the design process of urban areas to alter these barriers.

Others disagree, arguing that although inclusive building regulations and assistive technology will make the everyday experiences of people with disability more manageable, it will not decrease their social oppression and economic marginalisation (Gleeson, 1999; Roulstone, 2002). It is argued that it is the social and institutional forces that produce the disabling workplaces and these should be challenged. Gleeson (1999) gives an example of the introduction of the widespread use of computers in the workplace and their potential to create employment for people with disabilities. He argues that their introduction has not hugely affected the experience of people with disability in terms of competitive employment. Although there are many computer based companies they are spatially based in traditional commercial settings that are still inaccessible to people with disabilities. The use of computers as a means to work at home has also not led to inclusion in the workforce or revaluing of labour. This is due to a "bi-polar phenomena" that

has resulted in home-working being divided into two extremes (p.113). At one end is the individual professional contractor with an acceptably high income and at the other end exploited domestic-based individuals. People with disabilities due to their economic, academic disadvantages and physical limitations are more likely to be 'information poor' and not be able to take advantages of computerisation that the able-bodied can receive.

The increased dependency on information technology is just one aspect of the changing nature of employment being experienced during the capital globalisation of developed countries. This type of capitalism entails new spatial, technological, trade, and political power structures. These dominate and decrease the influence of the former individual governments, corporations and organised labour (Roulstone, 2002). It is argued that a global economy is creating an increasingly disabling environment for people with disabilities in terms of finding and maintaining competitive employment (e.g. Gleeson 1999a; Roulstone, 2002; Wilton, 2005). The increase in global competition and the drive by companies to lessen labour costs and be flexible is resulting in non-standard forms of employment. These include part-time, contract and temporary employment (Schur, 2002). Part-time and flexible employment may be beneficial for some individuals with a disability due to the limitations set by their impairment or those re-entering or entering the workforce (Wilton, 2005). However, further consequences of the global economy are that organisations are becoming increasingly strict in their productivity norms for

workers and employees are experiencing increased expectations over multi-tasking but have less control. Associated with this are decreases in income, benefits, job security and union representation (Wilton, 2004, 2005). This is especially apparent in the non-standard jobs for the unskilled and semiskilled and has been termed 'precarious employment'. This type of employment is increasingly common in the expanding service industry (Wilton, 2005). People with disabilities are twice as likely to be employed in non-standard work, including precarious positions, than non-disabled (Schur, 2002, p. 605). This is not always a matter of choice as a study in the United States found that 48% of part-time workers with disabilities would prefer full-time employment (Schur, 2002, p. 603). This over-representation of people with disabilities in non-standard employment has been argued as being caused by a number of factors. These include lack of employable skills and qualifications, a need to limit earnings so income support is not affected and experience of discrimination by employers in more traditional roles (Hyde, 2000; Schur, 2002). This supports the quantitative information given above that people with disability have a lower income and benefits and a higher likelihood of living in poverty compared to those without disabilities (Schur 2002).

Other literature has focused on the expectations that employers have of workers especially in terms of speed of performance, productivity and appearance. Within the increasingly competitive global economy there is an expectation that all workers, whether disabled or not, are expected to be

progressively more disciplined and perform at a certain rate (Roulstone, 2002). In this way for example, call centres have targets for number of calls and grocery check-outs have goals of number of items scanned per hour. Due to their impairment, people with disabilities may not be able to meet this 'norm' so creating barriers to their successful employment. The emphasis on the individual body in the workplace has led to studies on 'interactive service occupations' where the person is expected to conform to a certain identity and performance as this service is the product being sold (e.g. Crang, 1994; Hall, 1999). In the process the worker internalises the expected performance codes and requirements of the position and this then becomes part of their identity and embodied performance. The job becomes part of who the individual is, an embodied worker (Hall, 1999). In this way the disabled worker is viewed as 'out of place' as their appearance and actions disrupt this concept of an optimally embodied worker. Dyck (1995, 1999; Moss and Dyck, 1996) considers daily lifeworlds to analyse the actual and varied bodily experience of employment for individual women in the process of developing multiple sclerosis .The interrelationship of embodiment, identity formation and workspace are explored. The research concludes that employment performance abilities and the identity of these women are affected by the complex interconnections of the inscription of a 'deviant body', transforming corporeal body and the individual experiences in the workplace (Dyck, 1999).

As introduced previously, Canada and other developed countries have introduced legislation to encourage the employment of people with disabilities. This legislation has been demanded by disability activists as a means to social and economic inclusion for people with disabilities. However, complications arise because it has been argued that this social policy, influenced by neoliberal ideology, can be considered from different perspectives and the prime aim of the state is not necessarily the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities (Hyde, 2000). From a 'fiscal policy' perspective, the shifting of responsibility of economic burden from the state to the individual represents a saving in the income support budget. In this way, deinstitutionalisation can be viewed as reducing social spending on long-term facilities and placing the burden on individuals and families to find competitive employment in the community (Hyde, 1998). From a 'labour market policy' perspective, these policies are viewed as ways to control the labour force and hence maximise the efficiency of the capitalist economy (Hyde, 2000). One way of viewing this argument is by considering that in Marxist terms, people with disabilities are part of the 'reserve labour force'. They will only gain the opportunity for competitive employment in a booming economy when employers need extra labour (Russell, 2002). This labour will be concentrated in lower paid, non-standard employment due to their lack of employment skills (Hyde 1998). Conversely in times of high unemployment

employers will lack incentive to employ minority groups in the labour force, such as people with disabilities (Jongbloed and Chrichton, 1990).

Other studies have analysed the success of social policies to increase the representation of people with disability in the workforce. These have argued that legislation has not had the desired effect due to the coverage of enforcement, and the lack of alteration to social systems that underlie disablism (e.g. England 2003; Gleeson 1999a; Jongbloed and Chrichton, 1990). For example, even in the federal public sector and federally regulated private firms covered by the Employment Equity Act, the representation of people with disability employed since 1996 has decreased (Human Resources Development Canada, 2004). Representation in 2004 was 2.3%, less than half the bench mark of 5% (Human Resources Development Canada, 2004, p. 65).

England (2003) uses a case study of the Canadian banking industry to assess the performance of the Employment Equity Act for people with disability. Despite the legislation, since 1990 the overall representation of people employed with disabilities has decreased. She also examines whether the banks have addressed discriminatory barriers and exclusionary policies and procedures. She accepts that banks have made genuine advances such as altering policies, introducing advisory committees and disability awareness training, but these initiatives have not altered cultural practices. These practices include daily experiences of negative attitudes from co-workers and managers that construct the identity of people with disability as 'out of place'

in the workplace. She proposes that the Act alone is not sufficient to alter informal workplace practices and the marginalisation that people with disabilities experience in the workforce. Broader transformation is also needed in income subsidies, education and training to increase the access of people with disabilities to competitive employment.

Another aspect of social policy is the duty for employers to provide accommodation in the workplace. The duty to accommodate is designed to enable workers with disabilities to undertake their job and is included under various human rights legislation and Supreme Court of Canada decisions (Hatfield, 2005). Accommodation can be denied in the case of 'undue financial hardship' to the employer and for health and safety reasons. It is perceived by some employers that people with disabilities should not be offered employment, or assisted in an existing job as accommodations are expensive. Yet nearly 70% of people with disabilities require few if any accommodations and the majority of accommodations in the workplace cost less than \$500 or require minor changes such as modified work days (England, 2003, p.433; Hatfield, 2005, p.25).

2.5 Intellectual disability and employment

For those that support the normalisation process competitive employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities represents a prime goal in gaining financial independence and increased social inclusion (e.g.

Cinnamon and Gifsh, 2004; Gosling and Cotteril, 2000). Similar to those in 'mainstream' society, these individuals have social and economic reasons to want to work and if given the appropriate support have been shown to perform equally well as those without disabilities (Gosling and Cotteril, 2000).

In this section I will first analyse the spaces that constitute the employment system of people with intellectual disability and their experiences in these 'workplaces'. These comprise sheltered workshops, supported employment, alternative employment systems, competitive employment and alternatives to employment. Typically the key aim of all these spaces, except alternatives to employment, is to provide progression towards competitive employment. The reason for the inclusion of sheltered workshops and supported employment in this section is that although they may not be considered by society as 'mainstream work', workers in these sites consider it 'work' as they receive some form of remuneration and it fulfils the role of a daily routine (Sandys, 2003).

Sheltered workshops were introduced in Canada as part of community services after World War Two (Sandys, 2003). Initially their role comprised some vocational training for future employment and/or provision of long term activities for those unable to enter mainstream activities. After the 1970s more emphasis was placed on support and training for progression to competitive employment. A prime role of the workshop was its revenue production predominantly in the form of contracts from local firms in packaging or

collating items. This role has become increasingly important due to the effects of the broader political and economic context. Hyde (1998) argues that in the United Kingdom due to neoliberal policies to reduce social spending and increased competitiveness within local markets for contracts, that the role of revenue production has become dominant. This has resulted in enforced increases in productivity for the workers and expectations of being increasingly competitive. This conflicts with the workshop's supportive role as a non-competitive environment.

There are benefits to this form of work organisation for people with intellectual disability. Many studies have reported that the workshop represents a 'safe' space that creates a routine in daily lives and individuals can socialise and feel valued as part of a team (E.P. – Li, 1998; Gosling and Cotteril, 2000; Hyde, 1998; Lemon and Lemon, 2003; Sandys, 2003). Innovative workshops can provide interesting work for which individuals can feel proud of their accomplishments and training is organised for progression to future supported or competitive employment (Sandys, 2003). A quarter of respondents in one study, perceived long-term placement in the workshop preferential to supported or competitive employment (E.P.-Li, 1998, p.2009). The workers' perception of the benefits of the workshop is also affected by a number of perceptions of mainstream integrated workspaces. These include the threat of discrimination by employers, inflexible jobs with little security and lack of individual knowledge of types of jobs available (Gosling and

Cotteril, 2000). Other reasons given were that individuals have low self-esteem concerning potential to achieve an integrated job and were wary of learning new transport routes to access workplaces. Some also had previous negative experiences in work placements. Financial considerations are important as an increase in income would affect disability support income. This has been termed the 'benefit trap' whereby earning more than the stated maximum would reduce or eliminate disability income payments (Sandys, 2003). For parents, workshops represent a daily means to keep a son or daughter safely occupied. This is especially relevant in the case of severe disability when the parents may otherwise have to give up their job to look after their child (Lemon and Lemon, 2003).

While there are perceived benefits to placement in a sheltered workshop, critics have argued that the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages for individuals with intellectual disability. It has been suggested that workshops are exploitive in that they give low levels of remuneration for hours worked (Lemon and Lemon, 2003; Sandys, 2003). In one study, weekly average pay in a workshop was only \$37 (Taylor, 2005). The low pay can be caused by a number of factors. First, due to increased competition in the economy as explained above, workshops may offer lower prices in order to gain contracts so reducing possible piece rate amounts to be shared amongst workers. Emphasis on competition also encourages supervisors to speed up work performance in order to adhere to contract deadlines and avoid penalties.

Second, in Canada workers do not have the legal status of employees and are not covered by minimum wage legislation (Gosling and Cotteril, 2000; Sandys, 2003). Third, perhaps one of key reasons is the benefits trap and effects on disability income. Lack of control over the work is perceived as another disadvantage of the workshop environment (Sandy, 2003).

Perhaps the principal controversy associated with the workshop, besides inadequate remuneration, is that it is argued as being both spatially and socially segregated from the rest of the community (Taylor, 2005). Society then assumes this is the most suitable work organisation for individuals with intellectual disability and them and their work becomes devalued. Related to this is that training is often specific to the workshop and does not represent a transitional placement towards competitive employment (Sandys, 2003). Some studies show that although up to a third of workers wanted the opportunity to progress to further employment opportunities, only approximately 2.5-3.5% in any one year obtained competitive employment (E.P.-Y. Li, 1998 p.209; Hyde, 1998; Sandys, 2003, p. 208; Taylor, 2005). Reasons for this have been cited as a lack of formal progression plans and the conflicting roles of the workshop as a business and a social organisation (Hyde, 1998). With increased pressure for competitive production, it is argued that the workshop staff may wish to retain the most productive employees who would otherwise be likely to succeed in an integrated setting (Hyde, 1998).

These criticisms of sheltered workshops and their lack of adherence to the principle of normalisation, especially lack of progression to employment, led to a policy change toward supported employment in the 1980s (Gosling and Cotteril, 2000). In the United Kingdom where the emphasis was on reducing social spending, supported employment was considered as a more cost efficient program than sheltered workshops (Hyde, 1998). Supported employment has been defined as “paid employment in an integrated, competitive work setting where on-going, individualised training and support is provided to a person with disability” by job coaches (Sandys 2003, p.623). Underlying it is the opposite concept to sheltered workshops as it initially focuses on an integrated employment position and then the provision of training and support. The fundamental philosophy is that all individuals have the right to be in competitive employment rather than having to demonstrate they are ready to progress from a segregated setting. Significantly, recent emphasis has been on encouraging the ‘natural support’ of employers and co-workers rather than job coaches (Mank, Cioffi and Yovanoff, 2003). This has implications as to whether it is realistic to depend on the surrounding ‘natural support’ in an integrated work environment when businesses are experiencing increased demands for speed and competitiveness within the global economy.

Proponents have argued that supported employment brings many benefits to the individual with intellectual disabilities. These include having a ‘real’ job in an integrated workplace with a sense of purpose. Pay is

potentially higher than workshop pay as it is governed by minimum wage legislation (Sandys, 2003; Wehman, Revell and Brooke, 2003). Some studies show that individuals in supported employment are more satisfied in their jobs compared with those in sheltered workshops (Gosling and Cotteril, 2000; Hyde, 1998; Sandys, 2003). The employer also receives benefits including a productive worker with associated support (Wehman et al, 2003). Supported employment may entail the whole workplace becoming more team orientated and employers expressing pride in 'helping the community' (Sandys, 2003; Wehman et al 2003). Families gain as the individual is viewed as a valuable member of society, and the tax payer benefits as supported employment is more cost efficient than segregated placements (Wehman et al 2003).

However, although the principle of supported employment is considered as beneficial there have been problems achieving the goals (Conley, 2003). One barrier to implementation has been the lack of funding resulting in insufficient job coaches to undertake the supported placements and the creation of waiting lists (Conley, 2003, Gosling and Cotteril, 2000). Obtaining suitable job placements with potential for growth in wages and hours has proved difficult in some areas so limiting choice for individuals (West, Wehman and Revell, 2005). This may reflect a wider effect of the economy on the availability of all job positions (Sandys, 2003). Placements opportunities have also been restricted by availability of public transport as many individuals depend on it to access workplaces (Conley, 2003). Once in a

placement changes and terminations are not uncommon and many individuals who lose their positions either remain out of the workforce or return to sheltered workshops or other segregated workplaces (Moran et al cited in West et al, 2005). Some placements have not been acceptable as they lack challenges and provide little opportunity for social interaction in addition to providing fewer hours on average than the sheltered workshops (Sandys, 2003). Actual pay has not been as high as expected and this has been argued as being partly due to the restrictions imposed on the maximum earnings for disability benefits (Gosling and Cotteril, 2000). Another reason for lower wages is the expectation from some employers that individuals with intellectual disability are not as productive as 'normal' employees (Sandys, 2003). This has led to a variety of wage schemes designed to circumnavigate the requirement for a legal minimum wage. Under one 'scheme' the employee is paid minimum wage for part of the day but is expected to work the remainder of the day under the pretext of unpaid training.

Although supported employment is considered an opportunity for progression into an inclusive society data shows otherwise. Some individuals experience low satisfaction in supported employment placements due to feeling less valued than co-workers, having poor relationships with co-workers and employers' unrealistic expectations about productivity. In Hyde's (1998) study this contributed to a third of individuals in supported employment placements not wanting to progress to full competitive employment (p.209).

This figure was less than for workers in the sheltered workshop. Figures indicate that only 2% of those in a U.K based government funded scheme progress into competitive employment each year (Gosling and Cotteril, 2000p. 1005). Hyde (1998) argues that the supported employment programme has not been beneficial for individuals with intellectual disabilities as it should be viewed within the broader context of the capitalist society that values the employer above the worker.

Mank et al (2003) undertook a study to analyse the success of supported employment programmes over the last twenty five years. Wages and hours worked had not varied considerably during this period and people continued to be in entry level jobs; especially in the food and custodial service industries. By considering the “typicalness” of the workplace experience as compared to non-disabled workers, it was shown that integration into the workplace and work adjustment had all increased. Other benefits identified were that society was increasingly accepting individuals with intellectual disabilities as workers with a job to do, and they were not so readily labelled as ‘disabled’ (Sandys, 2003). The numbers of individuals experiencing supported employment is increasing. For example, in the United States 15% of all individuals with intellectual disability in adult day programmes are involved in supported employment (Wehman et al, 2003, p. 44). Despite this there are still more individuals in non-competitive settings. This is also true in

Canada where numbers have grown in supported employment since 1985, but they have not decreased in sheltered workshops (Sandys, 2003).

New forms of employment models for people with intellectual disability have been recently introduced due to the perceived disadvantages of workshops and the slow implementation of supported employment. There are various forms including self-employment, cooperatives and social firms. All endeavour to emphasise individual human rights including self-advocacy and the integration of individuals with an intellectual disability into the community (Lemon and Lemon, 2003). Lemon and Lemon (2003) give an example of a successful catering business that was established as a worker cooperative. The partners were eight individuals with intellectual disability and with the assistance of one support worker administered the daily operations of the business. Instead of a more individualised, person centred planning approach as in supported employment, this approach emphasises group planning and advocacy within the context of community planning and support. It was demonstrated that there are many advantages to the individual of this style of employment. Primarily, individuals can demonstrate their success in self-employment and associated with this self-satisfaction is the increased social status of being a 'business owner'. Individuals have more self-determination as they can define their own work environment without the control of a supervisor and are not subject to the insecurity of competitive or supported employment. Although work environments may appear to be initially

segregated this model implies community interaction. In the catering cooperative case study, company members interact with customers, their families and other businesses on a daily basis. There is also a cost benefit as instead of eight job coaches that would be needed in supported employment only one worker is employed.

However, there are challenges associated with self-employment and cooperatives. Sandys (2004) describes five such concerns. First, many small businesses, whether owned by people with disability or those without, have the potential to fail especially if the owners have few skills or lack access to capital (Sandys, 2003). Second, studies have demonstrated that average income may only be slightly more than earned in workshops but is less than earned in supported employment placements. Third, average hours worked are also less than supported employment. Fourth, unlike other jobs there are no arranged benefits, and lastly there is the potential of isolation in self-employment. The attainment of societal inclusion and control may not materialise as in Ontario some cooperatives have been attached to, or transformed from sheltered workshops. The members have little choice over contracts and remain in a segregated environment with only the illusion of control.

Competitive employment represents the desired goal from a normalisation perspective, yet similar to all people with disabilities, those with intellectual disabilities remain under- represented in the workforce. Based on

estimates for the U.K less than 10% of people with intellectual disability were in competitive employment (Rose et al, 2005 p. 9). Besides the social and discriminatory barriers that people with disability face when seeking and maintaining employment, those with an intellectual disability have diverse capabilities and impairments that particularly affect employability. These may include poor concentration and communication skills, difficulties understanding instructions, health concerns and lack of self-esteem and motivation (Rose, Saunders, Hensel and Kroese, 2005). As discussed in relation to sheltered workshops and supported employment, some individuals are also in a 'benefit trap' whereby they receive more in disability payments when out of the competitive labour market than they would working in part-time, low paid jobs (Rose et al, 2005).

Hall (2004 and 2005) argues that even for those individuals with an intellectual disability who have obtained competitive employment full societal inclusion cannot be assumed to follow. This is due to the negative attitude and discrimination by employers and co-workers that still exists despite legislation. In this way the worker with intellectual disability is spatially included but he/she can still continue to experience daily social exclusion in a 'hostile' workplace. Others with intellectual disability may decide to undertake self-exclusion from competitive employment in order to avoid these issues and discover other safe spaces in a more spatially segregated setting, but where they also experience social inclusiveness. This may include institutional

settings such as the sheltered workshop. For this reason, Hall (2004) argues that competitive employment should not necessarily be the main determinant of social inclusiveness as it does not always provide the utmost benefit to the individual. He suggests that there is a need to re-visualise employment and value alternative readings of 'inclusion' such as communities of individuals with intellectual disability.

Cummins and Lau (2003) reiterate Hall's view and stress that the individuals' own sense of community is more important than the view of others. Cummins and Lau argue that lack of social skills make competitive employment stressful and individuals with intellectual disability may prefer being with people that face the same experiences as themselves. It should not be assumed that relationships with non-disabled people are preferable to relationships with other individuals with an intellectual disability. Both Hall (2004, 2005) and Cummins and Lau (2003) agree that social, economic and political discrimination needs to be eliminated so the spaces where individuals with intellectual disability decide to work or live are valued. This varies widely from the concept underlying normalisation which proposes that only mainstream employment and accommodation is the goal.

May (2001) considers an alternative to work which he labels 'significant living without work' for individuals with intellectual disability (p. 91). These productive daytime activities replace the social aspects associated with competitive employment. They enable an individual with intellectual

disability to increase social relationships to combat loneliness, to contribute to society and in addition foster belonging and self confidence. These spaces should be available to those who have severe impairments, and others who cannot or do not want to work in a competitive environment. However, Sandys (2003) argues against this type of alternative to work as she proposes that it undervalues individuals. They should instead undertake activities that are valued by society and that leads to social inclusion.

In conclusion it appears there are two conflicting views connected to the importance of competitive employment for people with intellectual disabilities. First, the goal of competitive employment is of prime importance in enabling those with a disability to undertake a 'normal' life of social and economic inclusion within mainstream society. The second view is that employment does not always represent the best experience for people with disabilities and does not necessarily result in full societal inclusion (e.g. Hall, 2004, 2005). Different ways of viewing work and types of social inclusion then have to be considered. A key tension is whether to accept or challenge society's emphasis on the inherent value and social status associated with competitive employment. Despite this tension, both viewpoints agree that although social policies have emphasised social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities, social, economic, and attitudinal barriers to participation in mainstream activities including employment still exist. This

especially relates to those individuals with intellectual disability who represent one of the most marginalised groups in society.

These factors interrelate to create a complex experience of employment for the people with intellectual disability who are the focus of my thesis. This picture is further complicated by the youth of the individuals in the study. In the neoliberal context of contemporary society, expectations are that the majority of people when they reach adulthood will be responsible in varying degrees for their own economic well-being, principally through competitive employment. Young adults with intellectual disabilities confront this expectation when they transition from high school and attempt to gain entry to the workforce.

2.6 Transition

Transition from high school is one of the markers of leaving childhood and entering the socially respected status of adulthood (May, 2001; Mitchell, 1999). This process, plus the attainment of adult status by moving away from home and having ones own family, leads to individuals being considered as full and active citizens (May, 2001; Mitchell, 1999). A significant part of attaining adulthood in western society is represented by obtaining competitive employment due to the social, economic and political reasons discussed previously.

For high school leavers with disabilities and their parents, competitive employment represents a goal of adulthood, but in reality this may be elusive. Before the 1970s, in times of higher employment levels, many school leavers who had milder intellectual disabilities and were not institutionalised, found employment in non-skilled, low paying positions that others did not want to undertake (May, 2001). With an increasingly competitive labour market the decreasing unskilled jobs are being filled by people without disabilities who have low educational attainment (Tomlinson and Colquhoun, 1995). School leavers with disabilities are also at a disadvantage in applying to the increasing number of technical jobs as they lack both skills and educational achievements. Similar to adults with disabilities young adults are presently under-represented in competitive employment

A study by the Canadian Centre of Disability Studies (Blackford, Enns and Morris, 2000) identifies a number of barriers that young adults with disability encountered when seeking competitive employment. These comprised systemic barriers that included lack of public transport or unreliability of assisted transport to get to employment. Also included was the perception that young adults had insufficient training and employable skills. The 'benefit trap' was also given as a disincentive to work. The biggest barrier was stated as negative attitude by employers as they made assumptions about young adults with disability without them having the opportunity to demonstrate their individual work performance. Other barriers included lack

of self-confidence to apply for jobs and the effect of the economy and lack of jobs for those with disabilities.

The process of a planned transition from high school is therefore important in the lives of young adults with disability so that their opportunities for employment are maximised. Ideally the planning process for transitions is initiated at high school and involves planning and coordination with the school, parents, adult community service organisations, and employers. The main emphasis of current transition planning is to ensure involvement of the individual student so they experience 'self-determination' in their future plans (Laragy, 2004).

There are many studies on the components of a successful transitional programme. These elements have included an appropriate school curriculum, integrated work experiences during school, parent and student involvement, an encouraging social network, supportive community service organisations, positive relationships with local employers and a good job match (Berkell and Brown, 1989; Crysdale, King and Mandell, 1999; Hughes, 2001). However, it has been argued in practise this combination rarely occurs and the implementation of transition programmes has been erratic (Priestly, 2003). This may lead to individuals having little choice in the process and few opportunities to successful employment.

The transition process can be considered as incorporating different stages over a period of time (Fish cited in Mitchell, 1999, p. 755). First,

preparations at school, second, the transition phase incorporating further education and vocational training. Third, the initial years of employment.

High schools have the main responsibility for initiating the transition process as it has been realised in recent years that their responsibilities include preparing, training and supporting students for community integration, and not solely academic education (Berkell and Brown, 1989).

In Ontario there are various policy directives to assist schools in the transitional planning process for students with special needs. One requirement is the production of a transition plan as part of each student's Individualised Education Plan (I.E.P) (Ministry of Education, no date). The transition plan is compiled in conjunction with the school, adult service agencies, parents and the individual student (see Chapter Three for more specific information on Ontario). Although the goal is a smooth transition this is not always realised. Cooney (2002) argues this is because the professionals in the planning process have more control over the process than the parents and the student. He argues that there should be open dialogue as every individual responsible for the transition plan has different perspectives so leading to a more successful plan. It is especially important that students are given more empowerment to decide their own future, as self-determination and participation in the decision making has been shown to result in increased employment opportunities (also Laragy, 2003).

In addition to detailing transition plans, high schools should provide educational courses, vocational courses, work placements and social skills instruction that facilitate the transition process for their students (Kramer and Blacher, 2001). Studies have shown that one element of a school transition programme that is most likely to make a difference in employment outcome is the introduction of cooperative education and placements (Crysdale et al, 1999). Cooperative (co-op) programmes allow for individuals to have short term placements in a workplace with either support of the school or the organisation. This permits an improved understanding of the workplace and how it operates. However, the programme is dependent on schools having good communication with local businesses (Crysdale et al, 1999).

The second transition phase incorporates different service organisations and state organisations that provide additional vocational training and education for individuals not yet ready for employment. It is argued that the length of this phase is increasing due to higher unemployment rates amongst individuals with disabilities. Additional skills training and college based programmes have become available to accommodate those individuals who cannot gain access to the work force (Mitchell, 1999; Priestley, 2003).

In the literature, concerns have been raised about this phase. Priestley (2003) argues against the present role of the transitional institutions of service and state organisations. First he proposes that the accepted rhetoric is

young adults will obtain valuable skills and competitive employment through these courses, although many parents and professionals have low expectations this will occur (Priestly, 2003). Many of these training spaces have been aimed at assisting specific disability groups, such as those with intellectual disability, resulting in segregated environments that reinforce exclusion. Courses also focus on obtaining 'life and social skills' that encourage social inclusion but have less employment potential than learning traditional work skills (Tomlinson et al, 1995). It is viewed that this emphasis on social skills training is to bring the young adults with disabilities up to the same 'competencies' as a 'normal' school leaver. Even work skills taught may be inappropriate for the current labour market (Riddell, Baron and Wilson, 2001). Many individuals do not progress to competitive employment and may remain in state and service organisations undertaking vocational programmes, day programmes or sheltered workshop placements. According to Riddell et al (2001) the training is uncoordinated and creates fewer opportunities to employment rather than more. Overall, critics propose that this stage has condemned many young adults, especially those with intellectual disability to "a nether world of repeated, unresolved transitions in which true adult status is neither envisaged or attained" (Priestley, 2003. p. 113).

Timmons, Whitney-Thomas, McIntyre, Butterworth and Allen (2004) have studied the involvement of parents within this phase and have demonstrated that the transition period not only affects the young adult with

disabilities but can also profoundly affect their families (also e.g. Dixon and Reddacliffe, 2001; Timmons et al, 2004). Families are identified as passing through three simultaneous processes as their children leave high school (Ferguson et al cited in Timmons et al, 2004, p. 19). These are, first, the 'bureaucratic transition' of the transfer from school to adult community services. Second, the 'family transition' as the family changes its established schedules to accommodate the changes in their son/daughter's life. Third, the 'status transition' of the child moving through to adulthood. During this period parents adopt many roles such as prime organiser, political advocate, decision maker, teacher, coordinator with schools and community services (Timmons et al, 2003). There appears to be a gender division of labour whereby the mothers' of children with disabilities tend to be more involved with transitional plans than the fathers and parents with non-disabled children. Usually, this is a period in 'normal development' when parents would be decreasing their support and allowing their children to become more independent. However, those parents whose children have disabilities are negotiating the ways in which they can assist their children and provide safety and security but also offer flexibility and independence. This may result in a lack of self-determination for the child in their future.

Tensions amongst families are especially apparent during the 'bureaucratic transition' when parents have to build up relationships with service organisations for vocational training and education programmes after

leaving school. Although arrangements to use the services of a specific service organisation are included in a good transitional plan developed at school, many parents do not have this benefit and are unaware of the choices for their children. Parents frequently face confusion and stress in this phase (Berkell and Brown, 1989). This is especially true of parents who have not been involved in their children's schooling. The study by Timmons et al (2003) found that for parents advocating for their children this period is characterised by complex relationships between dealing with service organisations, coping with daily life and experiencing uncertainty about the future. The biggest challenge for the parents was finding and negotiating with service organisations for services such as vocational training. Parents perceived service organisations as inconsistent in service, and complex to access. Many parents were not aware of the methods to access the organisations or find out about them as their services were not advertised. There was also little coordination between these agencies and schools during the transition process.

These studies show that although the framework is present the actual reality of producing and undertaking a transitional plan for a young adult with disabilities is complex and may not necessarily achieve the perceived goal of competitive employment. Some of the challenges to ensuring a more positive transition are ensuring self-determination for the young adults, a coordinated planning approach between schools, service organisations and employers, and

the dissemination of appropriate information and support to parents. The support of parents is especially important.

Similar to adults with disabilities, young adults entering the workforce face issues that are set within the broader social, economic and political context, including societal attitude and under-representation of people with disabilities in the workforce. Priestly (2003) suggests that because of this, many individuals with intellectual disabilities will not realise competitive employment but will only experience the services of agencies involved in the transition phase and will never quite attain the social status of 'adulthood' (Priestley, 2003).

2.7 Conclusion and framework used

Since the 1990s there has been an increasing interest in the geography of disabilities. The underlying perspective has been on issues of social justice and ethics so enabling people with disabilities to become full members of society. Within this sub-specialty there is a currently small, but growing, interest in intellectual disability that also encompasses issues of social justice and socio-spatial inclusion. In both fields, competitive employment is recognised as an area of concern and debate. Quantitative evidence shows that Canadians with disabilities are marginalised in the workforce although social policy emphasises competitive employment. This marginalisation is set within the context of social policies influenced by neoliberal ideals and the broader

changes due to the global economy. Individuals with intellectual disability are especially excluded from the labour force although there is a programme of planned progression in the form of sheltered workshops, supported employment and vocational training programmes. Within this group, young adults with intellectual disabilities struggle to gain competitive employment when they leave high school. Although the ideals of transitional planning are clear, transition in practice appears to be complex and difficult for some young adults and their parents. This can result in a lack of competitive employment opportunities and the failure to move from the 'transitional spaces'.

Within the literature there are calls for further research to understand the potentials and pitfalls associated with the goal of societal inclusion for individuals with intellectual disability (e.g. Hall, 2001, 2004, 2005; Philo and Metzler, 2005). Hall especially has stressed that "it is vital that social geographers respond to this" aim of improving social justice (2004, p. 304). He asks that geographical knowledge is increased by analysing the physical and socio-spatial experiences of the daily lives of individuals with intellectual disability, and how this fits into the broader economic and social change in the global economy (2001). This would include researching the 'spaces of safety and inclusion' that have been developed within localities (2004). A main appeal that Hall makes (2004) is for geographers to critically investigate the focus on competitive employment as a means of social inclusion within the context of continuing societal exclusionary processes. There is then a need to

re-visualise employment and any alternatives. Throughout the research process people with intellectual disability should be fully enabled to contribute (Hall, 2001, 2004, 2005; Laws and Radford, 1998).

Within existing research the emphasis on the transition process is placed on the actual mechanical operation of the programmes rather than on larger conceptual issues. Literature on the transition from high school to employment for young adults with intellectual disabilities is totally absent within geography. Some aspects such as the contested role of transitional institutions as segregated 'holding spaces' for competitive employment are eminently geographical in nature and demand more investigation (E.g. Priestley, 2003; Sandys, 2003).

In general, current literature is international, especially from the U.K. The nuance by which the daily lives of Canadians with intellectual disabilities vary from the stated literature needs to be determined within the context of more local economic, social and political factors.

This thesis is an attempt to provide some answers to the above demands. With the assistance of young adults with intellectual disabilities, and their parents, I seek to understand their daily lives through the transition from high school to seeking competitive employment. Emphasis is placed on their perceptions of the importance of competitive employment, the young adults' preparations and subsequent experiences of seeking employment. This includes conceptual discussion on transition such as inclusion in safe spaces.

This is analysed within the context of the roles of various support programmes, employer attitudes and the broader environment of economic, political and cultural change.

In order to investigate these issues my analysis is informed by political economy and feminist perspectives. Political-economy theorists would specifically relate the process of disablement to economic structures and the role of the state in society. Historical materialists such as Oliver and, in geographical literature Gleeson, enlarge this to specify that the mode of production, and it's economic, political, and cultural relations as it develops through history, structure the social understanding, experience and place of people with impairments in society (Gleeson, 1999 a). In this way a predominant theme of this thesis is the effect that present day capitalist society has on the employment situation of the group of young adults in the study.

The feminist viewpoint foregrounds the concept of gender and seeks to question the primacy of the economy, including competitive employment, as a way of valuing people over other dimensions of life. It also queries the assumption of independence, brought about by neoliberalism, as a 'norm' for all members of society (e.g. McDowell, 2004). These questions underlie the analysis. Feminist methodology has also been adopted as this thesis is qualitative in nature. The actual lived experiences of the individuals over the transition are captured in life/work histories that can be viewed as summarised lifeworlds (Dyck, 1995).

Chapter Three

Context and Methodology

3.1 The Provincial context

For a greater understanding of the study it is necessary to be aware of the local context of Ontario and relevant social policy. Specifically policy relating to education, ODSP, and other employment supports is pertinent. The role of community service organisations is also applicable to the local context.

In 1980 the Amendments to the Education Act legislated that school boards had legal responsibility to provide educational services for children with intellectual disability (Winter, 2003). Students attend various classroom settings from totally segregated to fully integrated depending on local school board policy. Students can attend high school until the end of the school year in which they turn twenty one years old to a maximum of seven years (Spero, 2003; field notes September 12, 2004).

As was introduced earlier, high schools are responsible for initiating transitional planning for their students in order to ensure a smooth transition from education to post secondary pursuits, such as employment. For any student identified as 'special needs' this is mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education in the form of a transition plan as part of an Individualised Education Plan (IEP) (Ministry of Education, no date). The role of the IEP standard is to ensure that each student in his/her school years is involved in a

consistent planning process in relation to learning goals for the Ontario education curriculum. On an annual basis learning expectations are supposed to be planned, and progress to previous goals noted. For children over the age of fourteen years a transition plan is required. The plan states the goals after high school such as employment, and the actions to meet these goals in addition to the time-frame and names of those responsible to provide the action. The plan can be developed in conjunction with the student, parents or guardian, the principal, school staff, community organisations and post secondary institutions.

The operation of the ODSP has a major impact on the individuals in the study. It is administered by the Ontario Ministry for Community and Social Services and is available to any individual identified as disabled from eighteen years of age. It comprises two types of support, income and employment (Peppin, Beatty and Baker, 2003). There are a number of issues related to the income support. For those individuals living at home the ODSP payment received monthly is currently \$708. Any employment income earned above the allowance of \$160 per month is reduced by 75% (Lemon and Lemon, 2003, p.425). In addition the benefits are not linked with the cost of living and have not been raised for some years. The aim of employment support is to reduce barriers that people with disability have to gaining competitive employment. Employment support is organised along the individualised model or person-centred planning. In this way individuals and

their support network are supposed to make a tailored plan for competitive employment by identifying goals and the support needed to gain them (Galambos, 2003). Supports identified may include vocational assessments, additional skills training or supported employment placements. These services are then contracted to local service organisations.

There are other employment programmes that assist people with disabilities to gain competitive employment, for example, for young adults with disabilities there is a limited number of employment supports such as Job Connect administered by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

For service organisations providing employment support to people with disabilities, there are a number of funding opportunities. This includes the Opportunities Fund at the federal level and Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities which is a joint federal/provincial scheme (Sandys, 2003). Provincial funding aimed specifically at programmes for individuals with intellectual disabilities includes the Foundations Program. In 2001 the Ontario government pledged six million dollars to this programme in order to assist individuals in the transition from school to community based services, including employment and living (Brown, Percy and Garcin, 2003, p. 383)

Employment and residential services for individuals with intellectual disabilities are provided by a network of community services organisations. These became necessary to support individuals after the deinstitutionalisation

initiative and in response to person-centred planning. At the height of the asylum era in Ontario in 1970, there were twenty institutions with 7,256 residents (Radford and Park, 2003, p. 10). There are presently three left to close and a total of 6,000 people have moved to the community (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2004). There are more than three hundred service organisations in Ontario that support local residents and those transferring from institutions (Brown and Percy, 2003, p.47). There have been a number of issues raised concerning the service organisations. First, they gain the majority of their funding from the provincial government and this is proving insufficient (e.g. Lemon and Lemon, 2003; Brown and Percy, 2003). Under-funding has resulted in waiting lists for services. In the case of employment services this results in young adults remaining unoccupied at home (e.g. Toohey, 2005). Although already strained, the actual potential demand for services is unknown. Rough estimates are that approximately 227,000 Ontarians have some form of intellectual disability but only 63, 000 are known to use the service system (Brown, Percy and Garcin, 2003, p. 380). This has massive implications for future service delivery. Additionally there are concerns about whether the services are provided equitably across the province (Brown, Percy and Garcin, 2003). Service organisations although responsible for justifying use of public money are self-managed and have different qualities of service. Also because not all agencies provide multiple services one family may to be involved in more than one organisation. The

system of community service organisations is therefore complex and has limitations.

In the course of the study efforts were made to find numeric data such as waiting lists across Ontario, however, this proved difficult and could be due to the limitations in communication between service organisations.

3.2 The organisational context

The research was conducted in conjunction with a service organisation located in metro Toronto. This non-profit organisation offers a number of programmes specifically for individuals with intellectual disability who live in the community. One of the programmes offered is for employment, and comprises a vocational training centre for high school students and young adults, a sheltered workshop and supported employment placements. The supported employment programme provides individuals with work duties in a competitive employment setting with the assistance of a job coach. The aim is to obtain skills for competitive employment. There are two coaches that support approximately thirty people. Funding is from multiple governmental sources. Others gain vocational skills in a sheltered workshop where the goal is progression to supported employment or competitive employment. Revenue for the sheltered workshop is obtained from business contracts, such as packaging for local companies.

The vocational training centre has been in operation since February 2004 and is located in a building of a small residential institution. Its roles are the provision of job skills and social skills training, in addition to assessments for competitive employment. Two groups of individuals utilise the services. First, high school students as part of a co-op placement to prepare them for the transition after school. Prior to the opening this support was provided to individual students in their classroom. The centre was established in partnership with the two local school boards and the service organisation, as it was perceived to be more beneficial for groups of students to be in a 'work place' where they could learn employable skills. The principle means of funding is from a Provincial Foundation's grant. The second group of users is mostly comprised of young adults. They are funded in the programme by individualised ODSP employment support and attend for twelve week assessment periods and to improve skills. The goal of the centre for these individuals is to progress to supported employment placements or competitive employment.

One of the major issues confronting the service organisation is lack of funding. In 2005, only eighty percent of the budget was funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services resulting in an operating deficit in excess of one million dollars (Field notes of vocational training centre parents' meeting, January, 12, 2005). This resulted in waiting lists of approximately ten people for the fifty three funded places in the sheltered workshop and twenty

for the sixty supported employment placements. Parental advocates have become involved to improve the situation for their children. Parents with children in their later years at high school and those that had recently left were involved in a meeting with the service organisation to discuss their children's future (Field notes January, 12, 2005). The meeting was entitled "Congratulations you're graduating now what?". This group of parents were especially concerned as the waiting lists meant that their children would have no opportunities when leaving school. There were also few other alternatives as there were waiting lists for all day programmes. Waiting lists would also increase over time as there was little turnover in the programmes and more students would be added to it every year as they left high school. These concerns led to a parent's advocacy group becoming established to make their children's plight known and to obtain additional funding. It was also in the process of establishing a day program that would be run by parent volunteers and provide meaningful experience for their children whilst on the waiting- list for support services.

3.3 Methodology

Feminist geographers have advocated for the use of qualitative techniques, and I decided to adopt this methodology in my thesis as it allows the researcher "to understand lived experiences and to reflect on and interpret the understandings and shared meanings of people's everyday social worlds

and realities” (Limb and Dwyer, 2002, p.6). The research comprised both in-depth open ended interviews and participant observation.

In-depth open ended interviews allow “people with disability to speak for themselves” (Laws and Radford, 1998, p. 82). They also enable the researcher to empathise more closely with the individual being researched and minimise the power relations (Limb and Dwyer, 2002). I was first a volunteer then a casual employee in the vocational training centre for eighteen months which allowed me to approach the service organisation directly to gain permission to undertake the interviews. The interviews were held with young adults with intellectual disability, their parents, employers on the supported employment programme, the manager of the sheltered workshop, and an educator. Criterion sampling was used to obtain the young adults and their parents as respondents through the vocational training centre (Patton, 1990). The criterion for interviewing was that the young adults should have been identified as having an intellectual disability and would be leaving high school in 2004. A snowball sampling technique was used through the supported employment programme to approach employers and two young adults that had left school previous to 2004. The educator and manager of the sheltered workshop were approached directly. All potential respondents were initially given letters of information that briefly explained the aims of the research and invited them to become involved in the study.

In total twenty four interviews were held (See table 3.1, p.80, for list of interviews held). Six young adults with intellectual disability were involved in the research. A longitudinal study was undertaken on the four students that had left high school in 2004 in order to enable a dynamic view of their changing lifeworlds during the transition to the workforce. All but one young adult, Karen, were interviewed twice, approximately five months apart. It was decided not to interview Karen as she had communication and language issues that would make interviewing stressful for her. Shirley preferred to undertake her second interview with her parents, although all other young adults were interviewed on their own. Similarly two interviews were also held with at least one of the parents of each young adult. A single interview each was held with the two young adults that had left high school previous to 2004. This was to enable a longer term view of the transition experience to be analysed. Their parents were also interviewed. In total seven parents were involved in interviews of which five were the mothers. This illustrates the additional involvement that mothers have in their children's transition and the female gender division of labour that has been noted in literature (e.g. Timmons et al, 2003). A total of five employers who provided placements to the supported employment programme were interviewed once. This comprised managers from a coffee shop, medical supplies store and three grocery stores. The sheltered workshop manager and an educator were additionally interviewed once each. The educator had a prime role in the transition process for students

with special needs. She was responsible for co-ordinating “services, programs and training opportunities for special education staff and students” for seven local high schools (Interview, educator). There were approximately one hundred and fifty students with intellectual disability taught within these high schools

TABLE 3.1: Interviews held

	Position	Name	Date 1 st interview	Date 2 nd interview	No. of interviews
Young adults and parents	Left school 2004	Michael	July '04	December '04	2
		Michael's mother	July '04	January '05	2
		Karen's mother	September '04	January '05	2
		Shirley	July '04		1
		Shirley's mother and father	July '04		1
		Shirley, mother and father		December '04	1
		Lucy	August '04	February '05	2
		Lucy's mother	August '04	February '05	2
Young adults and parents	Left school previous to 2004	Vicky	July '04		1
		Vicky's father	July '04		1
		Julian	July '04		1
		Julian's mother	July '04		1
Employers - managers	Coffee shop		August '04		1
	Grocery Store A		September '04		1
	Grocery Store B		September '04		1
	Grocery Store C		September '04		1
	Medical Equipment Store		September '04		1
	Sheltered Workshop		December '04		1
Educator	Consultant special education		March '05 (email received)		1
TOTAL INTERVIEWS					24

The interview guides were used as a starting point to initiate answers, and discussions were held around these points. The interview guides are included in Appendix 1. In the first interview the young adults that left school in 2004, were asked about their vocational training, their understanding of the importance of competitive employment and goals for the future including any perceived opportunities or barriers. The second interview considered their employment achievements since the first interview, any opportunities or barriers experienced, and their long term goals. The parents' interviews had the same themes. The two young adults that had left previous to 2004 were asked similar questions, but the emphasis was on the actual employment experiences since leaving high school.

Interviews with employers focused on the experiences of being part of the supported employment programme, and perceived opportunities and barriers for young adults with intellectual disability gaining competitive employment. The interview with the sheltered workshop manager followed a comparable format but also included the role of the workshop. The educator's questions were aimed at the role of high schools in preparing students with special needs for employment and the opportunities and barriers to achieve this goal.

These different perspectives on the experiences of transition and employment produce a 'triangulation' amongst the different groups. It allows for a deeper understanding of the same issue and areas of difference of opinion

gives researchers a basis for more investigation (Limb and Dwyer, 2002). It also allows for rigour in the research process.

All interviews were held at the time and place most convenient to the interviewee. Young adults and their parents were mostly interviewed in their homes, although one interview was held in a coffee shop and another at the vocational training centre. Interviewing in a 'safe space' and using language appropriate to their understanding was pursued in order to allow the young adults to feel more comfortable. It was hoped this would lessen the high degree of acquiescence noted in other research which may be related to the imbalance of power between both parties (Laws and Radford, 1998). Interviews with employers were all held in their workplace. The educator was not available for a personal interview, but answered emailed questions. All interviewees, except for the manager of the sheltered workshop, agreed to tape recording the interview. Written notes were made at the time of the interview with the workshop manager incorporating as many direct quotes as possible. Interviews lasted approximately one to one and hours. Although open ended interviews provide a great depth of understanding of the respondents' view of the world, they do not cover all aspects of the person's experience that can be gained from direct involvement and observation (Patton, 1990).

My involvement in the service organisation provided me with great insights upon which to base participant observation from which I compiled field notes. These field notes have been incorporated in the thesis to deepen

understanding of particular issues. My duties involved training young adults in vocational and social skills in the vocational training centre, in addition to being a job coach for one individual on a supported employment placement. It not only led me to observe situations more closely, but led me to be more accepted and be less threatening to the individuals and their families than an outside researcher. I became very involved in these young adults every day lives, but I still cannot really appreciate their lived realities as I do not have an intellectual disability. This research is a 'window' to their experiences of transitioning from high school (Laws and Radford, 1998).

In line with feminist research, ethical considerations were paramount during the entire length of the study due to the vulnerability of this particular group of individuals. At all stages of the research process and my duties in the vocational training centre, I was open about my purpose and invited questions. The interview process was considered in detail to ensure utmost ethical treatment. Although the young adults were over the age of consent, it was decided with the service organisation that one parent or guardian should be asked to sign the consent form. The son or daughter was then approached to ask if he/she wanted to take part in the research. In the event he/she did not want to then their wish would be respected. None of the young adults did in fact refuse to take part. When agreed I then read the young adult a simplified version of the consent form for them to keep (Appendix 3). Before undertaking the interview I stressed that he/she could refuse to answer

questions or have a rest from the interview if they became tired. All other respondents were asked to sign consent forms and these are attached in Appendix 2. Prior to every interview all respondents were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that it would not affect the support they gained from the service organisation. To further protect individuals all names used in the thesis are pseudonyms.

3.4 Analysis

The transcribed interviews were then read and a number of common themes identified. These themes were then used to code the transcripts by utilising QSR N6 software. These were subsequently organised into three key issues. First, the perceived role and importance of competitive employment in the everyday lives of the young adults and their parents. Second, the preparation that the young adults had undertaken towards obtaining competitive employment whilst at high school. These issues comprise the analysis discussed in Chapter Four. The third issue was the young adults and their parents' actual experiences of the transition from high school. This comprised in-depth data and analysis that is organised in Chapter Five as the young adults' work/life histories. Life history research is becoming increasingly utilised in social sciences as the actual complex daily lived experiences of individuals can be used to provide a greater understanding of

broader social processes (e.g. Wilton, 2005). In addition they emphasise the action of the individual and give greater depth than quantitative techniques.

Chapter Four

Understanding the Importance of Work and Preparing for Employment

4.1. Introduction

Societal views in developed countries hold that youth are in the process of transitioning to adulthood with its related aspirations and responsibilities. A key marker of an adult is the attainment of competitive employment with its assumed social, economic and political benefits (e.g. May, 2001; Mitchell, 1999; Priestly, 2003). It is within the context of these dominant assumptions that the desire for competitive employment is internalised by the young adults and their parents as a desirable outcome of a 'normal' adulthood. They realise that there are advantages associated with competitive employment but are also aware of various disadvantages.

Chapter Four is divided into three sections. The first section gives a profile of each young adult. The second analyses the importance of competitive employment to the young adults, and the third covers their preparations at high school for competitive employment. In the analysis the young adults' viewpoint is contrasted with that of parents and the educator.

4.2 Profiles of the young adults

In order to understand the personal experiences of the transition, a brief profile is given of each young adult involved in the study up to the time of

their leaving high school. Lucy, Karen, Shirley and Michael all left school in June 2004, just before the first interviews were held. Vicky and Julian had left school in previous years.

Lucy

Lucy, who had Downs Syndrome lived at home with her parents and sister and was 20 years old at the time of the first interview. She had left school earlier that year. She went to a separate board high school, where she was included in regular classes but had modified work and additional skills training in a resource area. She undertook various co-op placements in school such as assisting the custodians, and external co-ops such as in an hotel and the sheltered workshop. She also attended the vocational training centre for her last semester at high school. Her mother explained that her disabilities affected her daily life in a number of ways, including the fact that she could become confused if her routine was changed and although her comprehension was good she “needs short concise instructions” to achieve goals.

Karen

Karen lived at home with her parents and brother and left a separate board high school a few months before the first interview at the age of 21 years old .Her first language was French and she attended a French high school in a town approximately half an hour away from her home town. She was in a segregated ‘special’ class with a few integrated lessons. At school Karen had a few co-op placements including in a super-store, the school cafeteria and office work. She attended the vocational training centre for a few weeks in her last semester at high school. Besides an unspecified intellectual disability, Karen also had communication problems which were exacerbated by her limited lack of English. Her mother explained this “but with the other people it is so hard because she doesn’t understand the people around her, because it is so hard for them to understand her. It’s very, very, very hard for them”. For this reason it was decided not to interview Karen but only her mother.

Shirley

Shirley was 20 years at the time of the first interview and had just left public high school. She lived with her parents at home. Although she initially had integrated classes these were reduced towards the end of her time at school. She attended co-ops such as in the building maintenance and laundry department of a local non-profit organisation, and the vocational training centre in her last semester. Her impairments included

an unspecified intellectual disability that made communication difficult and physical problems that affected her mobility.

Michael

Michael left public high school at 19 years of age where he had mostly segregated classes. He was first interviewed shortly after. He lived at home with his adoptive mother. The co-ops he attended in his last year at school included janitorial work with a non-profit organisation, and the vocational training centre. Besides an intellectual disability, Michael had a muscular condition that affected his balance when walking. He also had behavioural issues and his mother said she was advised “Well because of Michael’s violence that the doctor has said to us he should not work for anyone..., he shouldn’t go into the public because of his violent tendencies.”

Vicky

Vicky lived at home with her adoptive parents. She was 29 at the time of the interview and graduated at the age of 21 years, eight years ago. She attended a public high school that included integrated lessons with “special attention” (father’s interview). Her co-ops at high school included assisting in a nursery school, custodial work in a doughnut shop, hairdressers and general assistance in a non profit organisation for animals. Her father explained that her disabilities did affect her daily life but “she can function”. Her main difficulties are with reading, maths and the concept of money. She also has Type 1 diabetes.

Julian

Julian lived at home with his mother. He was 23 years old at the time of the interview. He went to a public high school where he was mainly in a segregated classroom and left at 21 years of age. At school he had a co-op placement in a grocery store collecting shopping carts that developed into a permanent part-time position at weekends. His mother explained that his disabilities affected his daily interactions with people as he had difficulties with communication and reading, and was very shy.

4.3 Understanding the importance of work

The importance of competitive employment was derived by asking all respondents to describe the perceived benefits and disadvantages that the young adults could gain from this type of employment. Responses tended to

focus on a number of issues and these were divided into three categories. First, social relationships, second, other benefits and disadvantages to the individual and third, material gain.

4.3.1 Young adults' perspective

When questioned concerning the importance of competitive employment in terms of perceived advantages, all young adults, except one, considered social relationships as the most important element. The young adults emphasised the social aspect by referring to the increase in friends that they perceived as being obtainable through competitive employment. As Lucy expressed she enjoyed “being with like friends...I like working its more fun...Yes and making new friends”.

Other benefits identified by the young adults as being obtainable from employment included the perception of being integrated into the local community, part of becoming an adult, bringing a purpose to daily life, and as a route to social independence. Michael explained that employment would not only increase his social relationships, but would allow him to feel more involved in the community.

Oh boy, what are the good things about working? ... To get to basically know about the people you are working with, the employees you are working with, your boss, everything... I noticed that life is not just being around your friends and family, it's about getting out and knowing other people and know how other people come about things.

In this way competitive employment was viewed as a means to extend social relationships from immediate family and friends, and to encompass members of the local community, such as employers and co-workers; hence a method of feeling integrated within society. Michael also viewed competitive employment as part of a natural progression to obtaining adulthood and stated:

My main goal is to get a job, help out around the house, and everything, and get my [driver's] licence...Get to do the main things as everybody else.

He has internalised that competitive employment was one of the numerous social markers that comprised the role of adulthood. Vicky did not refer to this adult related goal but emphasised that employment was a means to achieving something purposeful and was a way to avoid boredom at home. She said the advantages of work were "Because, you are not watching T.V a lot and that's it".

Julian was the only young adult who did not mention social relations as being a benefit of employment. Instead he emphasised independence from his parents as the main advantage. He explained that competitive employment was important:

Because I could make some more money. Then I want to show my mum I can do anything on my own without she. She got to be aware and then I can do it.

Julian wanted his independence from his family. Research has shown that parents of individuals with intellectual disability are more controlling of their children's lives during this transitional phase compared to those who have

children without disabilities (Timmons et al, 2003). Julian therefore viewed competitive employment as providing the means to gain his own social independence as an adult.

None of the young adults mentioned personal material gain as a direct potential benefit of employment. Michael however mentioned financial compensation but in a different context. He considered that a wage could be utilised not for himself, but to assist family and friends. He had detailed plans as regards to where he would assign his wage:

I am not like some kids that are like “Oh, I just want to work just for the money factor”. I don’t mind working for money but if I could help other people out if they are short... some of my friends and that, that have got jobs, that they are like “ The money I have made from my jobs is just for me and I not sharing it with my parents or nobody”... The money won’t be just for myself it will be for my mom to help her pay her bills, pay her taxes and stuff like that. Help her pay off her debts and whatever. I will give 10 or 20% to the church and I will give money to people that I think deserves it...

In this way Michael planned to use his material gain to strengthen social relationships by contributing to his local community.

All young adults, except Michael, said there were no disadvantages to competitive employment. Conversely, Michael viewed that being employed would encompass a number of challenges. These related to social relationships, issues of responsibility and those related to the physical work environment. Michael realised that his behavioural problems could create problems in any social relationships with an employer, potentially leading to termination of employment. Michael also thought that competitive

employment would have responsibilities, as indicated in his discussion on his ideal job as a car mechanic.

Like you are working on somebody's car that they bring in to the [mechanics] shop and so how you put a bolt where it not supposed to be. If somehow somebody's car "goofs up" and you are having a big fine to pay, because it's their car that messed up but you are the one who fixed it.

He understood that employment did bring adult responsibilities and he was unsure if he was ready to accept them. This uncertainty may be indicative of many young adults contemplating employment. An alternative reading could indicate that Michael was not ready for competitive employment and would remain in a situation where he was 'no longer a child and no longer an adult' (May, 2001).

In addition Michael saw potential problems with the physical environment of the workplace and pointed to safety concerns and the possibility of work related accidents. He was specifically anxious with the possibility of tripping over items on the floor at work due his mobility impairment.

4.3.2 Parents' perspective

The parents of the young adults believed competitive employment was important for their children due to a wide variety of potential benefits. Both young adults and parents viewed competitive employment as a marker of

adulthood, as providing a daily purpose to life and as a means to social independence. Parents also put low emphasis on material gain. However, they differed as parents mentioned the importance of employment in creating self-esteem and pride, and social relationships were not given such a high priority.

Karen's mother viewed that competitive employment was a method by which her daughter could be similar to her non-disabled friends that were maturing into adults. She said of Karen:

She wants to be like everybody else, out working... Before she was at school, because she was the age of the school and now she is 21, and all the kids are going to university or they are working. You know, it is not the way you are going to stay home and do nothing all the day. She wants to work like everyone. Right now she taking the bus every morning and she doesn't want I drive her. She wants to go by herself; she wants to be very independent. She see other people what they are doing and she likes to be like every people.

By seeking competitive employment her daughter would be fulfilling parental expectations to be like her friends and follow the accepted role of obtaining adulthood. It would involve her daughter undertaking 'normal' experiences that would unsettle her 'disability' label. This pursuit of a socially accepted role is central to the concept of normalisation and social acceptance (Radford and Park, 2003).

This quote is also interesting as it indicates that a sense of purpose was considered by many parents as a prime benefit of competitive employment. Other parents, such as Vicky's father, specifically pointed to the boredom that could result from a lack of daily purpose. He said employment for his daughter would mean:

...to have a purpose, to be doing something that is valuable to somebody. And that people are probably depending on her, this is what I think. .. She gets bored around the house even though there is plenty to do around the house too, and she does it.

The need for a sense of purpose that creates a meaningful day could be considered in relation to the young adults' experiences of school. During their school years, these 'special needs' students were provided with a structure to their day, daily routine and a location for 35 hours per week. Leaving high school created a potential 'vacuum' and parents viewed that a new source of daily structure needed to be sought in order to avoid boredom and the loss of skills. Parents saw their alternatives as competitive employment or the heavily oversubscribed day programmes operated by local service organisations.

Another major theme voiced by the parents was the perception that personal independence could be gained for their adult children through competitive employment. Julian's mother echoed her son's strong comments on employment being a possible means to this social and economic independence .She stated:

I think Julian want to be independent...I would like Julian to have a job that he could be able to go there and have his own place. A future.

Shirley's parents also stressed the importance of independence for their daughter. However, unlike Julian, Shirley did not want this as she was very dependent on her parents. Shirley's mother perceived the benefits of employment as:

I think it's the communication with other people, its showing her what the real world is like for working and its showing her what the expectations is and that mommy is not there to do it for her. That you are given a job and you have to do it and you do it to the best of your ability.

Her mother wanted to ensure that Shirley was aware that independence and responsibility associated with employment were goals associated with adulthood. Independence could additionally be considered as a benefit to the parents as well as their children. For without this independence provided by employment, parents would have less freedom and this could affect their own daily routines and employment prospects. Especially affected would be the mothers as they take more responsibility for their children's routines. For example, Karen's mother explained that she would have to resign from her job to look after Karen if employment or some day programme had not been forthcoming after she had left school.

Increased self-esteem and pride was also a factor that the parents believed their adult children could potentially realise from competitive employment, and Karen's mother showed this as she said:

I think it [competitive work] is like for Karen it is the best way to see other people and meet people and doing something for, you to know to be very proud of. A job is something you should be very proud. If you are doing a very good [job] you are so proud of you...

Unlike the majority of young adults only one parent mentioned social relationships as the main advantage of employment:

I go to church and I have a lot of friends in this building. You have to interact to stay human; you know what I am saying? If you don't work then you better get into something else. (Michael's mother)

Interestingly, Michael's mother realised that social relations could be gained from other community sources such as attending church, and does not view employment as the only means of social inclusion.

Dominant discourse assumes that material gain is the prime reason for the importance of competitive employment, but similar to their adult children the majority of parents interviewed did not mention wages. Only Lucy's mother considered that wages were more important than any other benefit of employment. Her opinion changed after her daughter gained a position at the sheltered workshop and she explained:

I think she [Lucy] likes feeling, although it is a small pay check, I think that makes her feel good about herself. That she brings in money and she goes to the bank and she puts it in the bank and then she can go and shop. You know. It is not just been handed to her, she is working and she is getting it. So it empowers her in that way...don't care if it's a small wage but I think if she is going to be doing it [working] she should be making a wage somewhere...But I wouldn't have her leave the [sheltered workshop] on a wage which makes her feel valued to go and work voluntarily, no.

The amount of money earned was not the issue, but she thought the process of Lucy obtaining it denoted her independence and increased Lucy's self esteem. As a result her mother would prefer Lucy to get a small wage rather than undertake the voluntary work with children that Lucy said was her goal. This difference in opinion was because for Lucy employment represented a means to enable social relationships. The issue of independence through pay was not

so important to her. Obtaining a volunteer position would also satisfy her need for social interaction. For her mother paid competitive employment primarily denoted social independence.

Conversely all other parents said that financial remuneration was not a main motivator for their adult children to seek competitive employment. As described above motivators, including a means of purpose, were valued higher than any wages. In this way, the majority of parents said they would consider unpaid volunteer work for their adult children if competitive employment was not available. Shirley's father emphasised that the pay was immaterial and the prime objective was that his daughter be kept busy.

I think the volunteer probably works for her as long as she is active and she is kept busy. That would be the key piece. .. If she is busy and active doing something I think that is our goal.

Parents recognised that there were also disadvantages associated with competitive employment although the benefits outweighed the disadvantages. The main discussion on the disadvantages of competitive employment was centred around the material effects on ODSP. In the majority of cases parents did not initiate the discussion and so had not previously considered this as a disadvantage. Competitive employment could actually cost parents money due to reductions in their child's ODSP if the \$160 /month earnings cap was exceeded. Although parents were not fully aware of the implications of employment income on ODSP they did express concerns. Karen's mother

replied when asked if she would prefer competitive employment for her daughter rather than receiving ODSP:

Yes, and she if she can make money without the special service, the pension [ODSP] its better, no?...But the problem is I think is with the government we never know how they going to react. Like if Karen is on the pension [ODSP] and she find a job and she is on the payroll and she have a regular pay and she doesn't have anymore this disability pension. But if she doesn't make the job or maybe the employer change their mind and say, "No, we don't keep Karen". The disability pension going to say "Oh, she was able to find one job she will be able to find another job" and cut the pension... Because I know we have to understand the government... It is very hard for a regular person to find a job how is it for them?

This quote raises a number of interesting points. First, Karen's mother implied that to be receiving ODSP has negative connotations and in some ways it would be beneficial for her daughter not to receive it. She may be referring to the benefits of employment as well as the stigmatisation associated with receiving income support. Second, government policy incorporates the dualisms of either able to work and 'non-disabled', or not able to work and 'disabled'. In this way if an individual is employable, that is 'non-disabled', he/she is not eligible for ODSP. There are limited opportunities to be on a continuum and still receive sufficient benefits as Karen's mother was suggesting. Third, the ODSP imposed ceiling on employment incomes can result in a 'benefits trap' where people with disability either remain dependent on ODSP or accept low paying competitive employment (Rose et al, 2005). Fourth, Karen's mother shows her awareness of the competitiveness of the labour market and the precariousness of jobs for all workers especially for

those with disabilities (Wilton, 2004). Lastly in some ways, it is surprising that parents are unaware of the full implications of employment income on their adult children's ODSP income. However, research indicates that parents do perceive a lack of relevant information during transition (Timmons et al, 2003). Furthermore the benefits system is complex and difficult to negotiate.

Nevertheless, the majority of parents ² agreed that the perceived benefits of competitive employment for their adult children were more important than any deductions that would be made from their ODSP. This is an opposite view to some studies that indicate that the 'benefits trap' provides a disincentive to seek competitive employment (e.g. Sandys, 2003).

It is also interesting to note that when discussing disadvantages to paid employment, none of the parents readily mentioned the potential of their adult children to experience discrimination from employers, co-workers or customers. However, the actual experiences of employment show that some of the young adults did in fact experience exclusion (see Chapter Five).

4.3.3 Educator's perspective

The educator perceived that young adults with intellectual disabilities would gain "independence and feeling of self worth" from competitive

² Except Shirley's parents who wouldn't make a commitment due to their accepted lack of understanding of the ODSP process

employment. However she valued this employment as only “somewhat important” to these individuals as she believed the main aim should be:

... for many students having meaningful activity during the day is the most important goal to aim for. I do find it [competitive employment] important but meaningful leisure opportunities would also be productive.

It was therefore the daily sense of purpose, whether in employment, volunteer work or recreational activities, that was the priority, and gaining income was not even mentioned. The concept of providing a purposeful schedule could be considered as replicating the role played by the school and extending this function past the student years into the adult years.

The educator’s perspective could be analysed in different ways. First, the belief that the students with severe impairments would not be employable due to their impairments, but it was still important that they have a purposeful day. Second, for all students with an intellectual disability, competitive employment should not necessarily be the goal as a sense of purpose was more important. This re-emphasises the view that the importance that society attaches to competitive employment should be re-evaluated (Hall, 2004, 2005).

The only shortcoming the educator mentioned associated with competitive employment was the potential effect on the individual’s ODSP.

4.3.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the importance of competitive employment was understood differently by the young adults themselves, their parents and the educator. The majority of young adults perceived that the main consequence would be to enable increased social relationships. For parents, employment primarily represented a means for their children to gain independence, fulfil the role of adulthood and provide a purpose to their day. These benefits were also mentioned by the young adults but with less emphasis. The provision of a meaningful day was reiterated by the educator as the key advantage of competitive employment.

The majority of respondents assumed that the potential benefits of competitive employment for the young adults would out-weigh any disadvantages. Only one young adult mentioned any shortcomings. Parents discussed the potential effect of employment on their children's ODSP but the majority agreed that a paying job would be more beneficial than receiving ODSP. In the educator's view the effect on ODSP would be potentially negative.

From the responses a number of themes can be noted. First, the importance of competitive employment as a key marker of adulthood. Second, the lack of significance given to the material aspects of employment and third, alternatives to work.

In dominant discourse competitive employment is considered a 'normal' status of adulthood and becoming a fully included social and economic citizen (May, 2001). This perspective underlies the dominant philosophy of normalisation for individuals with intellectual disability, practiced by many service providers (Radford and Park, 2003). Thus, the importance of competitive employment is as an enabler to social inclusion within society. The young adults and their parents reiterated this discourse, and saw community inclusion as being attained through following the 'normal' teenager role and achieving employment as a marker of adulthood.

One interesting result was the low emphasis placed on the significance of competitive employment for providing material gain. Popular assumptions are that material gain is one of the main benefits of employment, but for the young adults social issues were considered more important (Sandys, 2003). The majority of parents also demonstrated this by agreeing that if competitive employment was unavailable they would consider voluntary work for their children.

The provision of a purposeful day was considered by all respondents, in varying degrees of importance, as a key benefit of competitive employment. Given the emphasis placed on social relations and meaningful daily activities, this raises the question of alternatives to work or 'significant living without work' (May, 2001). In this way the social benefits of work could be realised by alternative day time activities. However for society to value this type of

arrangement a reconsideration of the emphasis placed on competitive employment as the principle means to social inclusion would be necessary. (e.g. Cummins and Lau, 2003; Hall, 2004, 2005).

4. 4 Preparation for employment

Prior to leaving high school, the young adults undertook activities that should assist them in seeking and gaining competitive employment. This preparation comprised two elements. First, a high school based programme including an I.E.P transition plan, transition guidance and a suitable educational curriculum. Second, work experience in the form of co-op placements and the vocational training centre. Although respondents agreed that these pursuits had provided opportunities towards competitive employment, the parents of the young adults suggested that improvements could be made.

4.4.1. High school

There were two main issues discussed connected to the high school based programme. First, I.E.Ps and the planning process including transition guidance, and second, curriculum content and structure.

Generally the young adults had no complaints and were content with the guidance they received and their involvement in their transition planning. Michael explained the extent of his transition guidance:

They explained to me what type of jobs there is, how I would need to control myself, temper wise, attitude, and they explained to me you can't do this. You can't do certain things, certain things you can do.

For Vicky although she believed that she had received adequate guidance she said that her only concern was "I did not have a clue about what I wanted to do". This comment implies that the guidance was insufficient as she had no arrangements for employment or vocational training post high school.

A relevant educational curriculum is an important element of an in-school transition programme. Generally the young adults had few comments on the appropriateness and usefulness of these classes. This may be because they were unaware of any alternatives or due to the power relations with their school/teachers they simply accepted the situation.

Contrarily to the young adults, their parents believed that the transition process at high school had not been developed to its fullest potential. Criticisms were made at both the I.E.P planning process and the curriculum content and structure.

Suitable transition guidance and planning at high school is necessary so that each student maximises his/her potential employment opportunities. This process is facilitated by the completion of the transition plan as part of the I.E.P. A key element is the opportunity for student and parent involvement. The parents in the study had different experiences with their sons/daughter's I.E.P and transition guidance received from their high school. Lucy's mother

expressed satisfaction that her daughter's school had attempted to adhere to the goals of Lucy's I.E.P. Other parents, such as Shirley's father, were much more sceptical about the usefulness of the IEP. Shirley did have an IEP at school and he said "they [school] set objectives each year; it was a good paper trail. I would say that was really no practical application in some cases".

A specific concern expressed by some parents was the perceived lack of communication with their child's school leading to inadequate transition planning and lack of support. Two of the parents of the four young adults who had recently left high school, Lucy and Shirley, were unaware of their daughter's actual leaving date from high school. Lucy's mother explained:

I asked at the beginning of the [school] year...I think they [school] got back to me about December, January to tell me "no", it was her final year... I thought she had the extra year... That was a little bit of a surprise because when she was going into High School I wanted to keep her back the extra year, they told me "Oh no, she has until she is 21"... You know what, you can only fight for so long and I said, I said "technically she is not 21" and they said she had the seven years and that is all she had... So I thought fine, I will make sure other parents know this, so if they want to keep them [their children] back an extra year because of where their birthday falls, then it's their right and I will let them know about it.

This shows the confusion in the parents understanding of school board policy and lack of communication with the school. Both parents assumed that their daughters would complete the school year in which they turned 21 years old, and did not realise that there was a seven year maximum of attending high school. According to Lucy's and Shirley's parents' their daughters left a year

earlier than they had assumed and this resulted in difficulties undertaking meaningful transitional planning.

Although Karen's mother judged that the school had provided a good educational foundation for her daughter, she still thought that improvements could be made in providing support. This was especially related to her repeated attempts to gain a resume of Karen's vocational experiences whilst at high school.

I look and what I decided to do I asked the school where she was, if it was possible to help me to build a resume because I realised she didn't have anything. How can you find a job, she is like everybody? If she looking for a job you have to bring something about her, what she did, what she can do and everything, and I didn't have any resume from the school...They want to do [produce a resume], but they didn't have chance to do it... I never have any call, I never have anything. But, do you know what? I am little disappointed about that, but they did a very, very good job with Karen.

This quote is also interesting, not because it highlights the importance of support issues during transition, but also because Karen's mother assumed that her daughter is "like everybody" so that the normal requirement for applying to a competitive job, such as a resume, would be necessary.

Attempts were also made by parents to explain the elements of a successful transition plan with adequate transition guidance. Shirley's parents thought that due to a change in special needs staff their daughter only received suitable transition guidance in her last year at school. Her parents said:

There was nothing until the very last year when [a new Special Needs Teacher] took over. Which was Shirley's last year and you can't undo four years in one year...She sat down with us, and Shirley...So the first semester, there was a lot more interaction, a lot more emphasis on

skills development in the first semester. Then a path or plan was set out for the second semester... She also looked at programmes, the courses she had for the second semester were very much preparing her for the time when she was finished school. Math was focused on, money; reading was focused on specific reading skills that would help her when she was out of school.

They perceived that the elements of a successful plan involved interaction with parents and students and the goal of increased skills development over a longer period of time.

Opposite to their children, parents had many comments on the appropriateness of the curriculum content. Half of the parents thought that the skills their adult children had learnt at school were beneficial and provided a good base to assist them in gaining competitive employment. Lucy's mother was especially impressed with the school programme:

...in the last couple of years they were doing a lot of co-op placements that would take up more than half the day. Then she would come back and she would do a little bit of, like she would do her gym and her, another, like some literacy and some basic math. That is something she still, she has improved over time... But it was more in the resource room that stuff was being handled and they worked on social skills and, you know, the circle of learning of the types of people you would let into your social circle that it was appropriate between...I thought it was excellent.

The combined on-site work experience and in-school teaching, that included social skills in the segregated special needs resource room, was considered a great benefit by Lucy's mother.

However, the remaining parents thought that more could be achieved and cited experiences of problems they had encountered. These focused on the lack of a well planned programme with good teaching staff, as well as the

types of skills being taught. Shirley's father emphasised that his daughter's experience at school previous to the new teacher being appointed was not satisfactory.

There are some schools that were, that are certainly better preparing their students than at others where there was absolutely no co-operation [at Shirley's school] We had no preparation for her [Shirley]..., but overall there was a total lack of planning and communication and just letting Shirley do what she wants...But generally speaking the teachers weren't giving the direction and guidance I expected... If she wanted to put her head down and go to sleep that was O.K....She did. She misbehaved, that was O.K. They didn't treat her as a regular student and that was one of our biggest beefs with them.

This experience suggests a lack of consistent programming organised by the head of department could affect individual's behaviour and their potential to learn skills that would prepare them for employment. Shirley's parents also point to their daughter not being treated like a 'regular student'. This may reflect her parents' expectations of a 'normal' role development and that she could perform like a 'normal' student if given appropriate support. It is also interesting to note that Shirley's parents' perceived there was a difference in quality of programme between various schools.

Michael's mother commented that the planning of the school curriculum could be improved. She concluded "...they [school] waited for the last and sort of crammed it into him. Now, they knew he was going to be there so many years, you know. They didn't use that time wisely for him". The importance of the calibre of the teaching staff was also echoed by Michael's mother:

There has only been two teachers that I would really recommend specially for the children over there [special needs department at school]... And the thing that is, they have to learn that each person is an individual and each one has a different personality and different needs. You know. They are not, excuse me for a moment, dummies... These kids have got so much to give, but they need those special people.

Michael's mother realised the potential that each student had and this should be nurtured by appropriate teaching. She also commented there were restrictions to undertaking this given limited school board resources.

The types of skills taught at school were criticized by parents, for example the inclusion of computer training was mentioned frequently as necessary for employment. Shirley's mother explained:

She [Shirley] had a computer since day one and then they [High School] allowed her to slip and didn't allow it to be pursued because it didn't fit with their integration programme as far as dealing with things, they tried to teach them [things that] were beyond her. But she is quite good on the computer. .. With proper coaching and mentoring there maybe something she could do [as employment].

There is a conflict between what Shirley's mother viewed as a suitable vocational skill to gain competitive employment, and what the school could accommodate for Shirley when considering the needs of the other students outside of the special education unit. Shirley's parents assumed that due to the increase in high technology jobs that were available in the globalised economy that it would be appropriate to train Shirley in computer technology. However, studies such as Gleeson (1999) have cautioned that computers have not made any significance difference in the employment rate of people with disabilities.

4.4.2. Vocational programmes

Vocational programmes teach students specific work skills that are supposed to assist them in a competitive employment situation. The young adults' experiences and opportunities provided by co-operative placements and the service organisation's vocational training centre are considered in this section.

Co-ops ranged from those held within the school such as helping in the school cafeteria to those external to school. All young adults had attended at least one co-op placement and were positive about the skills they had obtained as being beneficial to gaining competitive employment. They also expressed their enjoyment in participating in the co-op programme such as Vicky "I liked all my [other] ones, the other co-ops placements I did in school too".

Learning co-operation with co-workers and superiors in a real workplace setting was considered an important skill obtained from the co-op placements. For Michael they taught him "Just how to cope with others especially if they try to get on your nerves". Lucy just enjoyed "Working together" and having fun and this indicated social relationships were viewed as an important element. Gaining confidence was also considered as a benefit as Julian said of his co-op collecting shopping carts in a grocery store

I have learnt to get my confidence...It help me, I mean the boss like me... And then he say "hi" to me on the spot...Because I was a good worker...

The young adults did not perceive any disadvantages to having a co-op placement unless it was inappropriate for some specific reason. This is demonstrated by Michael who was considered for a placement in a primary school. Besides agreeing he would not enjoy this type of placement his aggression related to his behavioural issues would make it inappropriate for him to work with young children. This situation could be seen as the result of poor preparation by the schools, maybe due to lack of knowledge about Michael's behavioural issues or a lack of available co-op placements.

In addition to co-op placements all the young adults interviewed attended the vocational training centre operated by the service organisation. They all perceived that the skills learned at the vocational training centre would assist them after they had left school. Similar to the advantages of the co-op programme they mainly talked about the practical skills. For Julian "It help me do my laundry. Make up my own bed and make my own breakfast". For Shirley "I liked to do the files and work there". They also realised that the soft skills of teamwork and correct behaviour at work were very important skills to learn as Lucy said "I liked doing that, folding towels and baking...Teamwork, listening to people". Vicky agreed that it was important to learn "to work with other people." The majority of young adults perceived the programme at the centre was successful and no improvements were needed.

Parents concurred with their children's views that co-op placements were beneficial and perceived that they had obtained employable skills. The

skills learned included not only basic job skills such as folding towels (Shirley's parents) but life skills such as independence and responsibility. Lucy's mother explained that her daughter had learned some basic work skills in a hotel laundry placement but believed that the pride from completing a task was probably more important to her daughter. For Julian a co-op placement in a grocery store had given him the opportunity to obtain a permanent part-time position at weekends in the store.

Bus training was an additional skill learned by some students in conjunction with their co-op placements. Co-ops gave students the opportunity to learn how to use the local public bus system to travel to their workplace. Parents supported this type of training but expressed some concerns related to their child's understanding and reactions in the event that the bus altered from its schedule. Lucy's mother recounted a situation where her daughter and another student "got very upset and very confused and they were on their own" when a bus did not arrive on time to pick them up from a co-op placement. Other students, such as Shirley, could not use public transport due to their mobility impairments and so had to rely on special transport or their parents to convey them to their placement. Bus skills were considered an important acquisition as none of the students had driver's licences and would probably not obtain one in the near future due to their impairments. Learning the bus routes and the confidence to use this type of transportation also had the

potential to increase the students' independence in other activities, such as taking up recreational pursuits.

The majority of parents supported the opportunities and skills that the co-op programme brought to their children, but again there were a number of areas which they felt could be improved. Specifically concerns were expressed about the appropriateness of some placements, lack of choice between placements, lack of communication with the school and whether the placements were a realistic representation of competitive employment.

Karen's and Vicky's parents' gave examples of co-op placements that were inappropriate for their adult children. In both cases their daughters were expected to use cash registers in their placement which resulted in them becoming upset. Karen's mother believed that her daughter could have used the cash register successfully if she was given more time but the workplace was "too rushed, it's too busy, too hard" for Karen. Vicky's father explained that his daughter was expected to use the register even though she had difficulty understanding basic maths. A lack of accommodation for both young adults led to stress as they were expected to perform as non-disabled workers. Moreover their experiences can be related to societal and employer's expectation of a certain embodied performance in terms of speed in service sector work (e.g. Crang, 1994).

Lucy's mother expressed concern that her daughter had not had the advantage of a co-op placement working with children. This was Lucy's

employment aim and her mother had claimed she had told the school many times of her daughter's wishes. However, when a placement became available in her last year of school another student received it. Her mother assumed this was due to lack of communication with the school. She also said there was a lack of choices in placements. Due to this concern, Shirley's father had arranged a job placement for his daughter at the non-profit organisation where he was a manager. However, he expressed disappointment that there was a lack of communication with the school:

It was arranged basically, I arranged it [co-op placement], they [school] couldn't find a co-op placement. So I talked to our staff and arranged for building services manager and housekeeping supervisor to take her under their wing... She started on the co-op programme but there was never once when there was anyone from the school came and saw her at the co-op programme... Nobody came, nobody came, nobody came over the entire year... But she got a mark, I mean she got a mark based on our supervisor and we actually had to call the school. The school didn't call us. ..They didn't follow it up, never, not once.

This perceived lack of support could be due to a number of reasons. First, it may be due to a lack of educational assistants that could support students in co-op placements. It could also represent a lack of communication with Shirley's father concerning the support the on-site staff at the placement could provide. It would appear that Lucy's father had the advantage of being in a position to arrange a co-op placement for his daughter but other students were not so privileged. However, Lucy's father later arranged for a number of students from his daughter's high school to attend co-op placements at his

workplace. This demonstrates the importance of social class and social capital in creating opportunities for special needs students.

Lucy's mother thought that although the concept of the co-op placement was beneficial it did not simulate the length of a realistic work day. For some students the placement may have incorporated one or two mornings per week, and would not prepare them for working a full day.

Similar to their children, the parents agreed that the vocational training centre had provided skills training in work activities in addition to life skills. Karen's mother explained that her daughter's confidence had increased and she viewed this as an important ability to have in competitive employment.

The parents, although very supportive of the programme, had a number of suggestions for improvement. The majority perceived that the programme should be extended until their son or daughter gained successful competitive employment rather than "you go there, you spend six weeks and then after that, that's it" (Julian's mother). This could be associated with the need to fill the daily 'vacuum' created by leaving high school. Other suggestions involved introducing activities that would involve the learning of particular practical skills such as car mechanics (Julian's mother), sorting mail (Shirley's mother), and sewing (Karen's mother). Shirley's father stressed that it was important for individual capabilities to be considered so they could learn suitable skills and be a "viable contribution to the workforce"

Some parents also stressed the need for the provision of feedback on their child's performance and an evaluation of job suitability. Both Karen and Shirley's parents thought it would be beneficial for an evaluation to be undertaken in the last year of high school. This would enable them to gain some type of recommendation or direction as to what their daughters should attempt to accomplish after leaving school. Shirley's mother emphasised that more frequent written communication would be positive as "several of them can't come home and say well they did this and this and "I rated at this and this is why" ".

In general the young adults and their parents supported the vocational programmes as positive experiences that were a suitable preparation for gaining competitive employment. However, parents stressed the importance of a programme that was long-term, well co-ordinated with emphasis on the 'real' expectations of competitive employment and practical employment skills.

4.4.3 Educator's perspective

The educator was asked her opinion of the school board's programme that dealt with preparing students with intellectual disabilities for employment. Specifically she was asked for her perspective on the role of the school board in the transition process, any issues associated with these responsibilities, suggested improvements and any barriers to competitive employment.

She saw the school board's role as providing both pre-placement education comprising task training and soft skills in a school setting, and both in school and out of school co-op placements. The educator agreed that each student should have formal transition guidance before they left school as this was mandated by the Ministry of Education on the I.E.P. However, she identified improvements that could be made both internally within schools and externally. Internally staff turnover caused inconsistencies in the transition programme between schools. This variance between schools had been identified by the parents. External to the school she emphasised the importance of good communication between all the parties involved in transition support for each student. This entailed collaboration between school, the home and community agencies. Therefore “³depending on the level of readiness of all three parties, transition planning may be exceptional or “just” okay!” (Interviewee's original emphasis). Transition could also be improved by earlier communication between the three parties. She especially stressed the importance of parental involvement in the transition process as “I believe families (or their designate) are the most important component of this process- if they are involved, the process moves along more smoothly”. This coincides with the parents' views for more involvement. She also pointed out that it was “overwhelming for both schools and families” but they needed to be aware of

³ All quotes from the Educator are in their original form with original emphasis. These form part of her e-mail response to the interview questions.

the best services for their child. She thinks the most efficient way to provide this would be through a central point of referral.

The educator explained the complications of arranging co-op placements. The many factors that had to be balanced included the aptitude of the student, the availability of the placements and the wishes of each family. She also believed that compared with placements for non-disabled students, co-op placements for students with intellectual disability were hindered by three factors; “transportation, support for employment, awareness of employers as to what the student CAN do” (Interviewees original emphasis). She proposed the transportation issue could be solved by the local bus companies providing passes for support staff to undertake bus training and parents to buy passes for their children. The issues of support in the placement were more complex and there had to be a balance between working independently and adequate support. She expressed:

I think we have to prepare students to work INDEPENDENTLY as possible on the job (that is the reality of post secondary placements) and at the same time we need to encourage “supportive” placements and perhaps volunteer or senior students as support in a work placement (Interviewee’s original emphasis)

There is conflict between encouraging adult independence as part of normalisation and providing some type of suitable support. She suggested that improvements to the programme could include:

More placements (both employment and meaningful leisure activities) would also be helpful-we need to prepare the students for real opportunities that will be available for them Post 21[years old]-right

now we are not really sure what those opportunities will be!
(Interviewee's original emphasis)

For her it was not only co-op placements in workplaces that were required, but any type of meaningful activity that would prepare the individuals for life after school. There appears to be a great deal of uncertainty as to what the schools should be preparing their students for after they leave school, but she shows in this statement that competitive employment is not necessarily the main goal for all students with intellectual disability.

4.4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion the young adults perceived that they had received adequate preparation for employment through both high school and vocational training. The parents differed with this view as although they realised the benefits associated with these programmes many believed improvements could be made. Comments were aimed at the on-site high school programme and a perceived lack of transition guidance. This was due to lack of communication from schools which resulted in a lack of support and confusion over information. Parents were divided in their views on the suitability of the curriculum content and the standard of teaching.

The educator's perspective helped to situate some of the young adults and parents experiences. This included that staff turnover affected the efficiency of the transition programme and explained the variations between schools. She also reiterated parents' concerns on the suitability and availability

of co-op placements and explained the difficulties in obtaining and arranging them. Her stress on the importance of early and good communication with parents additionally echoed the parents wish to be involved in their children's transition planning.

From these different perspectives five key issues can be identified. First, parent involvement in the transition process, second, student self-determination in the process, third, enforcement of policy, fourth, the nature of the co-op placements and finally the importance of transportation.

Parents comment that high schools could improve transition planning by involving them more; also the educator puts a high priority on parents being involved. However, there is a resulting tension as although both parties accept parental involvement would benefit the planning process, there appears to be hesitancy of who or how it should be initiated. This tension may also reflect the broader shift of increased responsibility being placed on individuals and their families. This emphasis on family responsibility highlights class differences, as a middle class stay at home mother would have the time to be more involved in her child's transition, compared to a family where both parents are employed full time. This could result in a student receiving insufficient preparation for employment unless an advocate is arranged.

Increased parental participation may lead to a more successful transition with more information and less confusion being experienced (Timmons et al, 2004). However, this has the potential to affect the student's

self-determination. It is interesting to note that in the discussion with respondents the importance of the students' contribution was not mentioned. This lack of input in a transition plan may challenge the student's contribution and affect self-determination for their future life. Self-determination is presently a key concept underpinning transition theories (Laragy, 2004).

The participation of parents and students in the planning process is a requirement of each student's transition plan as part of the I.E.P. Therefore, these activities should be occurring but in reality there are deficiencies. This raises questions concerning enforcement by the Ministry of Education and the responsibilities of the school boards. It could also be argued that these services are not always being enacted correctly due to lack of educational funding and the shortfall being experienced in some school budgets.

The fourth issue considers the nature of the co-op placements. Although the young adults appeared to enjoy their co-op placements, they can be considered to represent and reinforce the devalued work of people with disabilities. In-school placements for students with intellectual disability included cafeteria and janitorial duties. These could represent menial jobs for the able-bodied students so reinforcing the disabled identity and devaluing the work of students with disabilities. External placements were also congregated in similar service jobs in the community and non-profit organisations. An alternative reading of the type of placements could involve the lack of skill individual students have for more advanced jobs. Additionally, the restriction

on type of placement may represent the difficulties that schools have in securing placements. This situation is similar to that experienced obtaining supported employment placements. It may relate to a general lack of job opportunities due to the economy, the school having undeveloped relationships with local businesses, and discrimination by employers or lack of understanding of the work capabilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities (Sandys, 2003). Placements are more likely to be in service industries as there are more positions available in this sector and in non-profit organisations as these organisations may show more benevolence in addition to being under funded and needing free assistance.

The ability to be mobile and transport oneself around is a skill that encourages adult independence. In scholarship it is presumed that barriers to transportation and the built environment are experienced by people with physical and sensory disabilities, with less attention being given to those with an intellectual disability (e.g. Imrie and Kumar, 1998). The young adults in the study were able to decrease dependency on parents by bus training. Travelling by bus entails the students mixing socially with members of the local community and being included spatially. It also represents an opportunity for members of the public to learn to accept individuals with intellectual disability. As a special needs teacher explained co-op placements give the opportunities of bus “train[ing] students that normally would not go if they were in school only. But also in training the public, as we get odd looks, but

we say “Its O.K we have an E.A [educational assistant] here” (Field notes, December 9, 2004). One of the reasons that individuals with intellectual disability have been ignored by society is because they are not obvious in public spaces (Halls and Kearns, 2001). Bus training challenges the view of anomaly and encourages community inclusion. Contrarily, the inability to use the public bus system leads to other alternatives such as segregation on special transit. This form of transportation creates dependency as the individual is reliant on the sometimes unreliable service.

Chapter Five

Work experiences: work/life histories

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Four, the young adults had a set of expectations about the importance of competitive employment and in general perceived that they were sufficiently prepared. However, when they left high school and were looking for competitive employment there was a range of different outcomes that had implications for them and their families. In fact none of the young adults attained the privileged goal of competitive employment during the period of the study.

In this chapter, the experiences of the young adults as they attempted to join the workforce are presented in the form of individual work/life histories. For the young adults who had recently left school this traces the time period from shortly after leaving high school until the time of their second interview. For the two young adults who had left school in previous years, their work experiences from leaving school to the time of the interview are examined retrospectively. Each work/life history considers the young adult's perception of his/her ideal job, perceived barriers to competitive employment, the benefits and disadvantages of his/her current situation, including effects on the family, and the young adult's future employment goals.

This chapter also examines the employers' perspectives of young adults with intellectual disability as workers. Employers' views are 'paired' with the young adults' work/life histories. In this way the perspective of the manager of the sheltered workshop is paired with Karen and Lucy's work/life histories as they both gained a placement in the workshop. The perspective of the coffee shop manager where Vicky gained a supported employment placement is paired with her work/life history. Unfortunately Julian's employer at the grocery store could not be interviewed but the comments from three other managers from similar grocery stores in the same town are given. Michaels' and Shirley's life/work histories stand alone as they were not successful in obtaining any type of vocational experience.

5.2 Work/life histories and employers' perspectives

Lucy's work/ life history

In her first interview Lucy said that her ideal competitive job would be to work with children in a day care setting. Her mother agreed that this would be a suitable and realistic goal for her daughter. However, her mother was also aware that there were barriers for young adults with intellectual disability entering competitive employment. She thought that the main barrier involved employers' attitude as she explained:

I think one of the main barriers is that people don't realise how employable special needs people actually are... Well because they have only been integrated for the last 15 years and many people who are in human resources don't know enough about being with special needs

that they can see their worth. O.K they only see the down side of employing, trying to employ a special needs person... Well I don't think customers are upset with special needs... I think it might be the employers that may see them, as you say, not working as fast as another person could work. But it doesn't mean they can't do the work they just won't produce as much.

Lucy's mother viewed that the employer attitude was due to a lack of past social integration, knowledge and perception over their productivity. She pointed out that many managers and owners of businesses were not in integrated school settings so would find it difficult to accept workers with intellectual disabilities. In future she hoped attitudes would alter due to integrated classes in school and "because they are not feared anymore". She also suggested that improvements in hiring could be made by more legislation and tax incentives for employers.

It was apparent at the first interview that Lucy had received insufficient transition guidance. Both Lucy and her parents saw competitive employment as their objective, but when Lucy left school there were no plans for employment in place. Two months later her mother told of her relief when Lucy received an offer by the service organisation for a full time placement in the sheltered workshop⁴. Her mother explained:

I was really, really thrilled when I got the call saying that there was a place for her in [the sheltered workshop] if she would be interested,

⁴ In the majority of discussions with the parents the sheltered workshop was not referred to by name but was given the label of the semi-integrated business in the same building. This may be because the business was assumed to be more socially desirable and its name was less stigmatising than the 'sheltered workshop' label (Field notes, January 13, 2005).

because I didn't know where she was going or what she was doing, what I was going to be able to figure out for her.

The hesitancy to seek work previous to the offer from the workshop highlights the lack of understanding and confusion experienced by Lucy and her parents during the transition. It additionally points to Lucy's mother having to assume responsibility for her daughter's activities although she was uncertain what they should be or how to obtain them.

Lucy was in her second week of the sheltered workshop placement at the time of the first interview and she and her family were having both positive and negative experiences. As Lucy had undertaken a co-op placement at the sheltered workshop the previous year she knew the expectations of the work and expressed satisfaction that she would be there for a longer period. She enjoyed the work and meeting new friends. She was also looking forward to her first pay cheque as she was going to buy a bicycle. She says of the work "It was easy" and explained that her duties in packaging were to "Put the pens in the box, put it on the skid. Then the skid goes down and the other person puts them in the box".

Although Lucy and her mother were excited about Lucy's position at the workshop they had two major concerns. These included Lucy's lack of enthusiasm for working full-time, and the effects of her transition from high school to work on her family.

The main concern from Lucy was “I don’t like working full-time. It is really tiring working all the time.” Her mother was aware that Lucy has a short attention span and found any change challenging and she had arranged for her to work part-time for the first week before commencing full days. Lucy’s mother thought there were a number of reasons that caused this reaction to full-time hours. First, Lucy’s co-op placement had involved spending only a maximum of two hours at any one time at the workshop so this did not represent a realistic picture of a full-time position. Second, it was a response to leaving the security of school. Third, her social relationships with school friends would suffer, especially during the summer vacation when they were at home during the day. Her mother had tried to compensate for this loss of her school friends by arranging more Special Olympic sports for Lucy. Although this would entail Lucy being more socially active, Lucy’s mother was concerned about Lucy’s future social relationships as her friends at Special Olympics and the sheltered workshop would mainly have intellectual disabilities. By contrast Lucy had been in an integrated classroom at school with non-disabled students and it can be ascertained that her mother was concerned that at work she would become more segregated from society.

In order to alleviate Lucy’s concern her mother had tried to motivate her by explaining that work was a positive experience:

So I am working on the fact that sometimes work is fun and sometimes it is hard, and sometimes you just don’t want to go. Everybody feels like that but it is all about getting her to understand that, that being an adult is different from being a child, you know.

Then you have to remember that she still is, basically a child at heart. It has been stressful because she wants, she doesn't want to leave it behind.

Lucy's mother was attempting to instil in her daughter the societal expectations of work as a role and the responsibility of obtaining adulthood. However, Lucy was at that time unwilling to accept this role and appeared to be 'suspended' between childhood and adulthood (May, 2001).

The transition from high school to what Lucy and her family perceived as work, not only affected Lucy's daily life but also that of her family. This resulted in general stress on the family especially her mother. Lucy's mother attempted to decrease the potential effects of strain on herself by giving Lucy three weeks to settle into her new position before she started back in her own job after the summer break. This action indicates the gendered impact on the organisation of her mother's own employment as her father's work habits were unaffected.

Transportation issues were also discussed as a concern and had begun to affect the family. Both Lucy and her mother wanted Lucy to eventually take the local bus to and from work. The bus only ran directly to the workshop once in the morning and once at the end of the day. As neither Lucy nor her mother enjoyed getting up early to catch the bus, Lucy's mother was giving her a lift to work every morning. This entailed complex arrangements as Lucy's mother also had to take her other daughter to school in the opposite direction and get to her own work promptly. Another expressed concern was

that Lucy's mother was hesitant permitting Lucy to ride the bus home in the afternoon although she had bus training at school. She was apprehensive that her daughter would get confused if there was any change in the bus schedule, and would need to teach Lucy to use a mobile phone in case of problems. The issue of transportation was complex for Lucy's mother. Not only did it cause stress due to new family schedules, but there were tensions related to Lucy's independence. Her mother wanted her to be independent and take the public bus, but she was also worried about her daughter's safety on the bus.

Lucy's mother had a number of short-term goals for her daughter. These included getting Lucy settled in the workshop and taking the bus in the afternoon. Her main concern was "... if she's happy there I am happy, if she's not happy then I am going to have to do something else". This shows her anxiousness about Lucy finding the workshop a positive experience as well as her lack of knowledge of concrete alternatives at that time. She also reconfirmed that the workshop was very different from Lucy's employment goal of working with children. She explained "You know. When you see that and you know that there is all this love there and she is packaging in the workshop".

Lucy and her mother were interviewed six months later. Lucy had continued her full-day position in the workshop, and some achievements to the goals and corrections to the previous concerns had been made. Lucy had got used to full-days as she said "I like full-days now" and she explained her work

as “It is really fun...I like breaks ...[We] Listen to music and I usually go to the vending machine”. Lucy’s mother explained that Lucy was proud of her accomplishments at work and having a daily purpose. The dominant positive experience was increased social relationships. Although these relationships entailed socialising after work with other young adults from the workshop, the segregation issue did not seem to cause as much concern to Lucy’s mother as it had been previously. In fact Lucy’s mother perceived that the segregation of the workshop from mainstream employment was a benefit to her daughter:

And I see that [segregation] as a plus because you have to look out for their [young adults with intellectual disabilities] well being, you have to look out for them being exploited by others. It’s in a controlled environment, their people ... Then what I like is the fact that they all feel as though they can contribute to society. And there are not many employers who are going to take on a whole pile of special needs.

In this way she perceived the workshop environment as a ‘safe space’ compared to competitive employment where employers and co-workers may be discriminatory (Hall, 2004). Individuals could therefore fulfil the societal expectation of work in the safe environment of the workshop. This is contrary to some disability advocates demands for competitive employment as a means to social inclusion. Lucy and her friends had found social inclusion within a segregated environment (Hall, 2004, 2005).

Within the workshop Lucy continued to have more positive experiences. This included her undertaking work duties demanding increased accuracy such as working with more complex machinery. Her mother was

pleased with this progress and the supervisor had commented on Lucy's increase in maturity since September.

Lucy had not yet been trained to take the afternoon bus home from the workshop. Her mother was still anxious about Lucy's capacity to cope with any irregularities in the bus service in addition to the length of the bus trip. However, for Lucy's independence she had told Lucy she would be coming home twice a week on the bus. Lucy however expressed her anxiousness over this arrangement.

Not all the concerns have been eradicated. Although Lucy appeared to enjoy her job she sometimes still complained to her mother about having to work. In order to motivate her, Lucy's mother occasionally took her out of her placement for a day. This raises issues over the importance of work for Lucy and her mother and its assumed flexibility.

Lucy's mother still reflected on the difficult initial period of transition:

Actually I thought the transition was pretty good. I mean I had three weeks of hell, like I told you before because she wasn't really into the work idea. Right, but once she got accustomed to it, she was fine.

However she still bears the burden of transporting her two daughters to and from school and work. The situation had been compounded since the first interview. This was the result of her husband increasing his shift work so that he had less availability to assist in transporting the family, and her youngest daughter had an after school job in the far side of town with varying start

times. Lucy's mother was clearly stressed with the continually changing and complex transportation arrangements for her daughters:

There are some days all I want to do is come straight home [from work] but I can never come straight home. There is always something going on, somebody to pick up or how to route it so I can be in two places at the same time because she finishes at ten to four and K_____ has to be at work before four... And I have an irregular heart beat so stress affects it so I was like "I cannot take it, you [her husband] are going to have to get home in the morning [from night shift] and drop Lucy in the morning". Because I have two jobs before I even get to work.

Lucy's mother was experiencing health concerns that were aggravated by the stress of the changing family transportation arrangements since her daughter left school. This quote also raises questions concerning gendered societal assumption.

As far as Lucy's work goal, it remained working with children. She was content for the present with her placement in the workshop, but would prefer a job with children and said she would consider a volunteer position. Lucy's mother was confident that her daughter would gain competitive employment and thought this would probably be gained through the supported employment programme. In the interim Lucy's mother was satisfied that her daughter should remain at the sheltered workshop although the length of this period was not specified. Four months after her second interview, Lucy continued her workshop placement with no alternative activities planned (Field notes, June 2005).

Karen's work/life history

In her first interview Karen's mother said that Karen's employment goal, "her dream" would be to work in an office environment or as a cosmetologist. When Karen observed either a specific office building or hairdressers she frequently expressed her desire to work there. Karen had internalised an idealised notion of work with its importance being represented by a certain place of work rather than the actual work duties. Her mother thought it was unrealistic for Karen to be a cosmetologist but that she could work in that general environment. She said:

I know she will never be able to do the makeup but maybe working in the department and putting all the products on the shelf and anything like that. I know, I can understand that nobody wants to have any makeup from Karen, because nobody is going to trust her.

Karen's mother perceived that customers would not want Karen to apply makeup although she had developed some informal skills as she had practiced with her cousin. To customers, Karen would have an inappropriate appearance and communication skills that would not meet the glamorous image of a cosmetologist. This directly relates to societal expectation of an idealised embodied performance that Karen would not be able to meet (e.g. Crang, 1994).

More generally, Karen's mother believed that young adults with intellectual disability would meet further barriers to gaining competitive employment. Employers would be less likely to appoint these individuals because although they would undertake satisfactory work, it would take them

twice as long as an 'average employee'. She suggested "If they [employers] don't have to pay them very much, maybe they hire them". Potential employers would be more willing to hire if they paid by a type of piece rate system, possibly resulting in less wages per hour than non- disabled workers. Karen's mother was attributing disability to the 'problem' caused by individuals' impairments in relation to speed rather than the view that societal expectations disabled people (e.g. Oliver, 1990).

Similar to Lucy, Karen and her parents had insufficient transition plans. Even during her last semester at school her mother expressed concern over her daughter's future. She explained:

Like last [semester] spring it was my period, January to June, it was the period I was so worried what happens, what are we going to do with her[Karen], because she didn't have any job, she didn't have anything. We looked to the future and said "What are we going to do?"

Karen's school did not help with any employment opportunities as it was located out of town and any jobs would have involved travel causing difficulty for Karen. The only method that Karen's mother had of finding any information was through a friend who had a son with autism. The friend had connections with a local service organisation, and it was through this, three months after leaving school, Karen was offered a full time placement in the same sheltered workshop as Lucy. Karen and her mother's experience demonstrate the confusion and stress of an inadequate transition plan as well as the benefits of social networks for both support and specific information.

At the time of the first interview Karen had been working in the workshop for three weeks. Her mother believed that she was enjoying the placement, especially the independence of getting up on time, preparing lunch and getting the bus to work. The only concern Karen had expressed to her mother was that she did not have a locker assigned to her unlike the other workers. Her mother viewed this as her daughter “want[ing] to be like everybody”. Karen wanted to conform to the role of worker including having a locker. However, Karen’s mother had concerns about the suitability of the workshop for her daughter. This opinion was expressed the first time she visited the workshop and observed that more than half of the workers “were sitting on their chair and doing nothing. Some asleep on the desk”. Karen’s mother did not want her daughter to face the lack of motivation she saw at the workshop. Even though she understood that individuals with intellectual disability had different work abilities, she explained her concerns in more detail:

My biggest concern right now is if I am doing a very good choice for Karen ... I know she enjoy it [workshop], she like it but we worked so hard since she was born to integrate this girl, to all the activities, the school activities. Like all the parents with special needs I think we work so hard to our kids be part of the community. Right now what I am doing I’m sending her to a place which is only special needs...It’s for me its taking the easy way and I think if I am working a little bit harder I can find something for her at another place. And I don’t like the way I am doing right now. But, it is very important that Karen can try it. You can’t take any decisions before she try it...Maybe, maybe, I think it would be the best way to, to make sure about my decision is try another job... So I give her this chance but I would like she try another chance before we take any decisions before the rest of her life.

This quote shows the uncertainty that Karen's mother had as she assumed the workshop represented exclusion from the community for her daughter although she had tried in the past to encourage integration. Karen's mother wanted her daughter to be happy in life and make friends which she appeared to be doing in the workshop. She thought that young adults with intellectual disabilities found it difficult to make friends and Karen was further hindered by her communication skills and lack of English. These concerns reveal her mother's conflict between her daughter's happiness and friends versus her perceived exclusion from society. Also complicating this issue was the fact that although Karen's mother did not want her daughter in the 'segregated' workshop, she believed Karen's segregated classroom at high school was beneficial as "she would never understand what they talking about in the [integrated] class".

Similar to Lucy's family, Karen's mother appeared to be the one most affected by her daughter's transition from high school. This was due to mixed emotions concerning the workshop and stress related to transportation. The issue over using the public bus to travel to work were similar to Lucy's and related to concerns over her daughter's reactions to unforeseen circumstances. Nonetheless, Karen had been trained on the bus and was using it daily to travel to the workshop.

There was also an important positive effect of Karen leaving high school and gaining a placement at the workshop. If she had not received the

placement her mother would have had to resign from her employment as it was assumed that Karen could not stay home on her own. This illustrates substantial demands on her mother's time and the assumed gender roles of mother looking after the family. It may also indicate some over protection as Karen was capable of being independent on the bus so she may be sufficiently capable of staying at home on her own.

Karen's mother was unsure over any immediate work goals for her daughter due to her uncertainty over the suitability of the workshop placement. She would still look for other employment opportunities and would remove her from the workshop at anytime if necessary.

Four months later at the time of the second interview, Karen remained in the workshop placement. She continued to enjoy it and expressed pride to her mother over her work performed. Her mother was less anxious about her daughter's placement as she had increased her social relationships and appeared happy. She also appeared to be improving her English, but her mother still viewed the workshop as an interim arrangement. Increased social relations had been facilitated by after work activities, such as dances, arranged by the workshop. She also pointed out that Karen might not be able to make meaningful social relationships in an integrated workplace as "[I] don't know if the 'regular people' going be very comfortable to be friends with Karen. They will be nice with her at work but that's it". Karen's mother continued to

be anxious of her daughter travelling on the bus but Karen had only experienced some minor problems.

Karen's mother expressed her expectation that her daughter would gain competitive employment in the future, but expressed uncertainty about how to obtain it. One method she had considered was for Karen to undertake a supported employment placement. However she thought Karen should remain in the workshop for one year so that she would have the opportunity to gain more maturity and improve her English. She thought that it would be difficult to find competitive employment for her daughter as:

How it going to be [to gain a job for Karen], it's going to be very hard...I am going to have to push, push, push because if I don't push nobody is going to come to my house and say " We are looking for a job for Karen". Nobody.

This quote also illustrates the extent to which Karen's mother had accepted that she was solely responsible for her daughter's future.

At the time of the second interview, Karen's mother had also used social networks to try and assist her in identifying prospects. A friend had informed her of a vocational course that had vacancies and was held in a nearby town. Karen's mother was concerned that she was not told about the course by the service organisation that operated the workshop. This experience illustrates a lack of information sharing, both between different service organisations and between local service organisations and the people who they supported.

The manager of the sheltered workshop

The views of the sheltered workshop manager were obtained during an interview and site visits. Her perspective highlighted a number of issues that can be related to Lucy and Karen's experiences. These comprise the role of the workshop, social relationships, its role as a segregated workplace, the progression to competitive employment and the meaning of workshop placements as 'work'.

The main goal of the workshop cited by the manager was to enable the workers to gain suitable skills for supported or competitive employment:

I wear two different hats. Here the primary goal is a supported service as part of [the service organisation]. Also we know if they are ever going to be in competitive employment – we are the boss. We are here to support as well as support and encourage them to move on.

However, the other goal of the workshop was as a business that had the primary purpose of obtaining and filling packaging contracts for profit. This business was highly competitive as the workshop had to compete with other profit making businesses for contracts. The actual revenue realised was a direct reflection of what happened in the economy. A downswing in the economy would result in less business contracts and lay offs.

These two goals were in conflict, for example, it tended to be the more productive worker that was given the opportunity for progression to supported or competitive employment. The manager agreed she had to "suck it up...May

be difficult for us but it is what is best for them. Our objective is to increase integration”.

It was also the manager’s opinion that the workshop was perceived as a safe space by the workers compared to supported employment. The manager explained:

It is a Catch 22 situation because they are comfortable “Why should I move? – I have ODSP and my friends are here”...There is social isolation “out” in supported employment. They never get touches. Although they may be invited for lunch they will not be invited to meet socially after work... In here they are compatible; they are top dog if they are running the equipment. They like what they do. Then send them out ‘there’, they are low man on the totem pole”

The workshop manager perceived the workshop as a space of conformity and belonging that contrasted with the supposed exclusion experienced in the local community. In the workshop individuals had close social relations and work skills that were appreciated. They had no concerns over money due to ODSP. These individuals may have expressed wishes to remain permanently in the workshop, even if this conflicted with their parents’ views that it was not acceptable as a replacement for the primary goal of competitive employment. It was the manager’s view that due to the stigma associated with the ‘workshop’ label, some parents believed it preferential for their adult children to remain unoccupied at home rather than attend the workshop.

Although the manager believed the workshop was a safe space for individuals with intellectual disability, she did not consider it a segregated workplace. This was because another business operated in the same industrial

building as the workshop. The business employed twenty five competitive workers of whom half had disabilities. This meant workshop 'employees' could move to employment in the business if they were suitable but still have the support of the workshop if necessary. So in this way the manager explained "We are part of an integrated workforce. So we work together. So it brings the prestige up".

The main stated role of the workshop was to enable progression to supported or competitive employment, yet there were no formal training programmes or performance reviews. Any gain in skills was undertaken on an individual basis such as encouraging work ethic or increased personal hygiene. Of the fifty five workers, thirteen were involved in some type of part-time supported employment placement outside of their regular workshop duties. Only one or two individuals left the workshop each year and progressed fully to supported or competitive employment. However, as the manager put it "It's a revolving door" as two to three returned each year as they would lose their jobs due to changes in the economy. Job loss affected their self-confidence so they returned to the workshop where they would feel safe and may give up on the "outside" opportunities for competitive employment.

In broader terms the manager perceived that it was both employers and customers that created barriers to competitive employment of individuals with intellectual disability. The employers were unaware of the potential of such employees. While employers could be mandated to employ workers with

disabilities she believed it was the customer who was the main barrier. Customers demanded the best price for products. The employer would then have to balance rigidity of consumer prices with the flexibility and speed of workers with disabilities. This is reflective of the conflict that the workshop had between its two roles.

Lucy, Karen and their parents considered the workshop placements as 'work'. The manager also talked about placements as "real jobs". She explained that the workers "they work hard. For the last twenty to thirty years workshops were doing make work projects and they didn't have real jobs". One reason that it was viewed as employment was that workers were aware of the customers visiting the workshop and recognised that they had a job to perform for them. Workers also received payment in the form of a training allowance for their services. Remuneration was calculated by dividing the revenue received from contracts completed daily by the number of workers. This equated to a maximum of \$10 each day per person but only \$160 per month. As all workers received ODSP, the monthly maximum related to the ceiling in earnings permissible by ODSP. If an individual's pay was above the maximum then the excess was kept to a less productive period. There were no formal employment agreements and individuals were not covered by minimum wage legislation.

The manager's perspective, coupled with those of Lucy and Karen and their parents, highlights the complexities behind a placement in the workshop.

The workshop provided the benefits of increased social relationships, but also represented to the parents a workspace segregated from the mainstream. The theoretical implications of these issues are discussed in Chapter Six.

Vicky's work/life history

Vicky's employment goal was to obtain competitive employment in a video store or in child care. Her father supported these aims, especially child care, but cautioned that she would not be academically capable of obtaining any professional qualifications such as Early Childhood Educator (E.C.E).

Unlike Lucy's and Karen's parents, he believed that the main barrier confronting young adults with intellectual disability gaining competitive employment was not the employers, but the customers. He explained that customers did not understand and were impatient with such young workers in that they assume "We are smart, are you stupid?" This was especially apparent when the disability was non-visible as in the case of his daughter. The quote makes apparent the perceived binary between 'non-disabled' and 'disabled' and the societal expectations over embodied performance of workers.

Similar to the previous young adults, Vicky had no employment arrangements in place for when she left high school. Her father had also made a number of assumptions including that her disabilities would act as a barrier to competitive employment. He said:

“... I guess the only concern was what is she going to do when she got out of school? She can't get a normal type of job, she is just not capable

In the eight year period since leaving high school, Vicky had undertaken two supported employment placements through the service organisation. The first position she had held for almost eight years and was in a small privately owned coffee shop. There she received a training allowance of \$50 for a 20 hour week. Initially she washed and dried dishes by hand in the kitchen, but she then progressed to duties serving food in the dining room

Vicky enjoyed meeting and socialising with the customers, but overall the placement was a negative experience for her. The main concern, as she and her father perceived it, was the manager's and customers' unrealistic expectations for speed of work. She explained:

It was so busy there, and I couldn't take it anymore! Because it was so busy, busy, busy there... Yes, it was hard to keep up”.

Both the employer and customer wanted “service immediately” (Vicky's father). She was offered no accommodations in the position and she felt that her quality of work was continually being questioned by her manager. Although she did have support from the service organisation it was not apparent to them that she was having difficulties. These negative experiences led to Vicky becoming increasingly stressed and this in combination with complications arising from her diabetes led her to leave her position.

After recovering from her experiences at the coffee shop, Vicky attended the vocational training centre for four months to update her employment skills. This led to another temporary supported employment position at a non profit organisation for children with disabilities. The position was part-time and she was responsible for laundering all bed linen and making the beds. Unlike the previous position she enjoyed her work, especially as she saw her role as primarily assisting the support staff. She was also paid \$7 per hour compared to \$2.50 paid by the coffee shop. Vicky believed that she had choice in selecting the position and was well supported. Her enjoyment of the position was apparent as she wanted a full-time position “because I want to get really busy with stuff and make friends with the staff and children”. She perceived no disadvantages to the placement.

Competitive employment was not viewed by Vicky’s father as the next step. He thought that it would be better for his daughter to stay within the supported employment program, as he assumed she was not capable of competitive employment. Besides concern for her employment situation, Vicky’s father was anxious about Vicky’s future living arrangements and availability of sufficient income. This was especially apparent as her medical supplies for her diabetes amounted to \$250 per month and were not covered by ODSP. Her father elaborated on this:

No, the concern is we [parents] are not going to be around forever. We’ve got to figure out what we are going to do with her, like is she going to live on her own, or what, how?... Like she can’t do normal

things like she's sure not going to get married, she could but I don't think there is any possibility of that right now.

Vicky's father assumed that his daughter would not be able to undertake a 'normal' adult role of independence due to her disability and would be dependent on her family. The concerns for her future once her parents were no longer capable of caring for her were compounded by the long waiting lists for group home places available in the local area.

Vicky's work/life history show that supported employment was assumed to be a desirable outcome for her, however, her experiences varied considerably. The coffee shop placement was an undesirable experience for her as it contributed to her ill health. The second placement, although positive was only was temporary and Vicky would not be able to remain there.

Manager of the coffee shop

The manager of the coffee shop where Vicky had her first supported employment placement was also interviewed. He gave his experiences of arranging supported employment placements for young adults with intellectual disabilities.

For the manager, a good worker represented an employee who had a clean appearance, was polite with the customers and was well motivated. He believed that it was possible for a young adult with an intellectual disability to fill this role but that it would be dependent on their individual impairments.

However, he expressed readiness to be understanding and assist individuals if they showed willingness in the job.

The manager was aware of the supported employment programme as he had taken part in it previously and had approached the service organisation to offer his business as a placement. He said that the reason he wanted to participate in supported employment was because "I want to help the community... I believe it is nice to do something for the community, especially for the kids."

There were a number of issues that relate to the experiences of the manager with the supported employment programme. These included issues of speed of work, appearance and flexibility.

The manager explained that small businesses were very competitive and he would pay an experienced person minimum wage but he or she would be expected to conform to a certain pace of work. However, he felt that individuals with intellectual disability did not meet his expectation over this speed. He said that "they see you run, they don't care they standing there and they talk, you know what I mean?"

Appearance was also very important to the manager as he would not permit anyone to serve the customer in the dining room that 'looked' like they had an intellectual disability as it might affect his sales. These individuals would work in the kitchen washing up dishes with no customer interaction. Vicky was an attractive woman who had no visual signs of

disability and had good communication skills. Her duties included the dining room. The manager said of Vicky:

Like Vicky for example. Vicky is very nice. She is very polite she doesn't look [disabled], but she belongs to [the service organisation for the disabled]... You know. When a person come up to you and serve [the] customers. You yourself how do you feel [if they look disabled]? Appearances, you know what I mean?

This quote highlights societal expectations of a certain embodied performance for workers in food service settings. A certain appearance was expected in the manager's view, and someone who 'looked' disabled would disrupt this expectation and affect customer opinions and reduce business.

The manager also expressed concerns about the supported employment programme, especially the flexibility needed in scheduling. There was a balance between permitting time off for medical appointments and still operating the business efficiently, as he said "I have to depend on those kids to do my work."

Although the manager indicated that he was motivated by benevolence, he had benefited by gaining extra labour who received less than minimum wage. He also made a number of assumptions that affected the young adults' experiences. This was based on the assumptions of 'desired' embodied performances and expectations over service and personal appearance. This was especially apparent with Vicky and her placement at the coffee shop. Vicky was placed in a work space that was normally occupied by non-disabled workers and the manager judged her performance by the standards of

competitive employment. This resulted in stress on Vicky that led to her leaving the placement.

Julian's work/life history

Julian's ultimate employment goal was full-time competitive employment in an office environment such as a bank. He thought that he had the appropriate skills for dealing with money, mathematics and reading that the job would require. His mother believed that it was more important that Julian was happy rather than specify what type of competitive employment, although she thought a technical job such as in computer or car repair would be suitable. The only barrier she viewed to her son or others with intellectual disabilities achieving their employment goal was a lack of suitable skills training.

When Julian left high school he had no plans for his future except to continue his competitive week-end job at a local grocery store. His mother expressed concern:

Because when Julian finished school I used to worry about you know, as I say, "What is he going to do? Who is going to give Julian a job?" Can I go to work and say Julian get a newspaper and look through it and find something. It had me like stressed. Stressed because I used to like at points blame myself for everything that happened to Julian...Everything is me.

Like other mothers she felt that she was solely responsible for finding an employment position for her son during the transition and did not know where

to go for advice. This reaction again points to a lack of suitable transition guidance from school.

In the two years since leaving school Julian had short-term placements in the vocational training centre and two temporary supported employment placements, in addition to his week-end work at the grocery store.

Julian's duties at the grocery store were collecting carts and assisting in bagging groceries. He enjoyed the work and the social relationships with both co-workers and customers. He liked pushing the carts as it gave him exercise and as he said "if much buggies I could take them because it give me strength to do it". His supervisor had told his mother that he was a good employee. Julian had also been presented with an award for customer service for assisting a senior with a full cart of groceries, for which he was very proud.

His mother, though, perceived the position as unsuitable for her son due to the physical work environment and the belief that he should have a job with more challenges. She said:

...what Julian was doing was pushing the buggies and you don't need no skills for that. And that was it. To me I didn't feel comfortable just sometimes I would go there and I would just see him, the weather would be so cold and he would be out there, you know that's not for Julian...Oh, he love it, he love it ...and I want Julian to try to advance in something more challenging than [the grocery store]. To me the way I look at it, yes. Give him a little pocket money but to me that is *nothing*. I need Julian to have something that he has to work, try to work his brain. Not looking and thinking "I have to take that cart and put it there". But not always there outside in the cold... I think I should be pushing more for Julian. I think that when a child has something in his head that he will always try to fight to get it. And I think that is what I think Julian tries to do, to show that he can do something more than pushing the buggies.

Although his mother admitted that Julian was content, her expectations for him were more than an unskilled job. This view conflicted with her stated belief that the goal for her son should be happiness. It was also questionable if Julian could live up to these maternal expectations. His mother's focus on finding another job might also impact on his self-determination for the future.

In order to advance Julian beyond the grocery store, his mother had attempted to identify courses that he could attend. In fact this was not possible as Julian required one-on-one training due to his communication and comprehension issues, and course organisers were not willing to provide accommodations. Julian's mother had even considered attending a computer course with him so she could help but had decided against this as it would effect his self-esteem.

At the time of his interview, Julian was in a short-term supported employment placement in a non-profit organisation as well as the grocery store. The placement was for one day per week and duties included assisting with office work. Julian said he preferred it to grocery store as it was a different experience. He explained this⁵:

“It just a new experience. Because I am always active... In [the grocery store] I am doing this, doing something like that, like I did in the past...It is the same job over and over. I always wanted to work in an office. ..All the people are nice.

⁵ It is interesting to note that Julian expressed contentment with the grocery store position earlier in the interview.

Julian liked the new routine of the office and benefited from social relations in an integrated workplace. His mother also supported the placement. She said:

Now when they told me now they had this opening at the [office], my heart lifts that was so nice. That is what Julian did ever want something like that. To work in an office, to help do little errands and stuff like that... Everything is good. Because there the lady talks to me in the evenings and she says "Julian is so wonderful". Nothing negative to say about it.

Julian's mother approved of the placement as she thought it provided more skills for her son and did not require him to go outside.

Similar to Lucy and Karen, Julian's transition from high school to the workforce appeared to predominately affect his mother, rather than his father. Julian's mother had found the transition process from school very stressful because she felt she had inadequate support finding a full-time competitive position for her son. She was also concerned as she said "It is boring for him... From Monday to Saturday out of those 7 days Julian is in the house 5 days".

One attempt to gain support from one ⁶source had been unsuccessful as Julian had been told he could not be helped as he already had some form of employment in the grocery store, even though it was only part-time. Julian's mother explained:

I called them up and made an appointment and they came and see me. But when the gentlemen came he told me that they are only there to help those teenagers that is not working. O.K he said that because

⁶ Julian's mother could not remember the agency from which she had attempted to gain support.

Julian is working they really cannot help Julian. That hurt me I cried right in front of the man.

This quote is interesting as it shows that social policy defines the dichotomy between either 'to work' or 'not being able to work' and needing assistance. There is no area in-between where individuals such as Julian can be helped. There is a focus on finding any type of employment whilst neglecting progression to more skilled positions.

For the future Julian and his mother believed it would be realistic for Julian to obtain a competitive position, although he was presently in a short-term supported employment placement.

A month after the interview Julian was offered competitive employment for thirty hours a week as a janitor in a fast food restaurant (Field notes, August 2004). His mother turned down the offer and Julian's name had to be added to the supported employment waiting list as no support was available for additional placements. The supported employment officer was told by his mother that she did not want Julian washing floors. Again, this raises the question of whether the expectations Julian's mother had of her son were realistic. For her, the privileged goal for her son was work that she believed was not menial, whether supported or competitive employment, and Julian had little input into the decision.

Managers of the grocery stores

Three grocery store managers who were part of the supported employment programme operated by the service organisation were interviewed. The issues discussed included their views on the elements of a 'good' employee, differences and similarities between disabled and non-disabled employees, the benefits of the supported employment programme for employee and employer, and their experiences of the programme.

The managers mentioned that a 'good' worker should have good work ethics and attendance, but experience was not necessary. Similar to the coffee shop manager, willingness to work was considered very important.

...if they have work ethic, that's half the battle. Experience, I can train them. But, just the willingness to show up on time and be responsible, and look at their scheduled shifts and come. That is very important.
(Manager grocery store B)

In general it was perceived that an individual with an intellectual disability would need more assistance and would be slower at work than a non-disabled employee. However, all employers agreed that they should be given the opportunity to gain competitive employment. The manager of grocery store B explained:

I think if they do it [their work] well. I don't really have a problem with it. If they can contribute and they can execute their work exactly like a regular person. I really don't see why there should be any discrimination between because they have been labelled as having a disability. If they can do the job well then as far as I am concerned they don't have a disability.

Significantly, there appears to be a conflict. The managers have expectations that the young adult should be able to perform comparable with other non-disabled workers to obtain a competitive position. On the other hand, the employers recognised initially that individuals with intellectual disability could need accommodations such as more assistance to perform the duties and may not be productive as a 'normal' worker.

The managers agreed that the supported employment programme had benefits for both the employer and supported employee. The manager of grocery store A summarised the advantages:

It is good for the reputation of the store, its good for the community to see they [individual with intellectual disability] are out there working. It's good for the individual. They are out doing something rather than sitting at home or doing nothing... I think it is good for us to show that we can help out. She [current supported employee] is very productive, don't get me wrong, like its cheap labour but she is very productive. So even that way, cost effective she is worth what we pay her.

This quote is interesting for a number of reasons. Similar to the coffee shop manager a benevolent attitude was assumed. Placements were considered beneficial for individuals as they encouraged social inclusion, increased self-esteem and created a meaningful day. However, the grocery store benefited from increased reputation and the provision of 'cheap labour'.

Discussions about the actual experiences of the supported employment programmes raised a number of issues. The concerns include the performance of supported employees, relationships with customers and progression to competitive employment.

The managers expressed overall satisfaction with being part of the supported employment programme, but they did raise concerns about the productivity of some supported employees. Although they did not identify them as such, the managers had made workplace accommodations in order to offset any production issues. These accommodations had included re-arranging work shifts for less busy times, simpler duties and providing a co-worker as support. The manager from grocery store C explained in more detail:

Well, the disadvantages they are not as productive as I would like them to be. But again I understand that and they are providing a service for me so I am able to compensate for that without a problem. I haven't made any allowances; I just accept it that is the way it is. My main concern is that they show up for work, because they are part of the team and they are scheduled to come in to work, and they have been very good.

This quote emphasises that the manager was aware of the supported employees' performance when he commenced the supported employment programme. As they assisted in his business he was willing to accommodate them. Another accommodation made by the managers was the adjustment to the perceived "one-dimensional" focus of some supported employees (manager grocery store C). Supported employees were considered as only being able to undertake one duty. The manager from grocery store D explained this:

I really can't really ask them to go from one task to another because they are used to doing that one task, that [is] what they like to do and that is what they want to do. So to try and take them off that and try

and put them somewhere else to learn a different task is very difficult for them. I found that with all of them. Yeah. So keep them in one area in that way they don't get confused and they are not overwhelmed with what they are doing, and they know what they are doing and they are doing it well.

The accommodation provided was to maintain the supported employee on one schedule only. In the present competitive economy, employees are being called upon to become more flexible even in unskilled precarious positions and so multitasking in the workplace is becoming increasingly expected (e.g. Roulstone, 2002; Wilton, 2004). It is interesting that the managers did not perceive the changes in workplace practices and schedules that they had undertaken as accommodations. It may be because workplace accommodations are perceived only as expensive physical alterations (e.g. England, 2003; Hatfield, 2005).

Overall, the managers perceived that the biggest barrier to young adults with intellectual disability obtaining competitive employment, or supported employment placements, would be the perception by potential employers over the lack of performance. This can be related to employers' concerns over the embodied performance of disabled workers compared to that of non-disabled workers. The ability to multi-task was not mentioned as a barrier.

In all placements, respondents implied that the supported employees had been accepted by their co-workers, but this would be difficult to confirm without observation or interviewing employees. The relationship with customers was also explored. About half of the supported employees involved

dealt with customers. At the commencement of the programme in their stores, managers had expressed that there may have been concerns from both the customers and employees but this had since diminished. The manager of grocery store C explained his experience:

It was just difficult at the beginning, it was difficult. It was difficult for the employee and it was difficult for the customer. They are dealing with someone who has a handicap...The customers are sometimes a little impatient but, once they know, they can see once they come up to them, or they see them a few times and they understand what the problem is. Then they are very good about them...I mean if a customer has a question soon as they approach them they don't know any different, *they think they are an employee*, they are wearing my uniform. Like I said that particular employee has a problem, can't understand the customer or doesn't understand the question then they can come and get myself or one of the department managers and handle it from there. Then we explain to the person what the question was and where the product is or whatever their concern was is taken care of... I think customers, they live in the community, and they like to see that because we are all living in the same community.

This manager suggested that customers assume a certain non-disabled embodied performance as the workers were dressed in a uniform like a 'real worker'. However, once the worker was known as being disabled, maybe by their lack of communication skills, then allowances were made for their performance.

One of the key roles of the supported employment programme was progression to competitive employment. However, only one of the three managers interviewed (grocery store B) had knowingly appointed an employee from a placement to a permanent competitive position, and this was after two

to three years. The reasons given for this lack of appointment was mostly related to restriction in staffing budgets.

Although Julian worked as a permanent part-time employee in a grocery store the perspectives of the managers' on the supported employment programme can be used to explain his experiences. Julian had good social relations with co-workers and this is reflected above by the managers acknowledging their supported employees as part of the organisation. However, the job had not progressed past a week-end part-time position to a full time position. This is indicative of the lack of progression from supported employment placements. Julian and the supported employees were said to have good relationships with customers and this indicates some level of community acceptance and social inclusion. However, Julian did not meet any of his co-workers after work so there are questions over whether he did in fact experience inclusion beyond co-locations of the workplace (Hall, 2004; 2005).

Shirley's work/life history

Shirley, her mother and her father had very different views of plans for Shirley's future employment. For Shirley her ideal competitive job would be working in a video store because "I like tapes, I like TV and music" or a pizza restaurant. Shirley described what she would need to know to work in a pizza restaurant "Ask what [customers] want and [put] cheese on it and throw it in the air and its good". Her mother felt it was most important that her daughter

be able to enjoy her job and suggested that working with children was an activity that would be suitable. Her husband disagreed with that proposal as he was aware that Shirley would not be able to work in a day care unless she had an E.C.E. He explained “You couldn’t hire someone like Shirley to do day-care on her own because she doesn’t have the skills and the responsibility level”. It would therefore only be a volunteer position. Her father believed a more realistic goal would be working in a service or office environment, possibly with computers.

Shirley’s parents perceived there were barriers to their daughter and other young adults with intellectual disability gaining competitive employment. The barriers were related mainly to employer attitude. Shirley’s father thought employers were unaware of the implications of employing such individuals and the necessary allowances that were needed in their work performance:

Just understanding the limitations that young adults and adults have with special needs. You can’t expect some of them to do what quote a ‘normal person’ a ‘normal worker’ would do and a ‘normal employee’ would do. As long as you are prepared to understand that and accept, that’s critical... Yes, that and focus on how long can you focus on other specific tasks and every individual is different, whether special needs or normal people, you know and how you balance your time.

Shirley’s father argued that the performance of young adults with intellectual disabilities should not be compared with able-bodied workers and so there were different expectations in their roles. He also alluded to the fact that the

'intellectual disabled', similar to all 'non-disabled' were not a homogenous group, but were comprised of many individuals with differing abilities. This comment attempts to break down the binary between 'disabled' and 'non disabled' and to recognise differences.

Shirley's father suggested ways in which the employment barriers could be decreased, including being proactive and bringing groups of potential employers together to introduce employment schemes. In addition, he envisaged some type of financial assistance from the government to help pay salaries.

At the time of the first interview, Shirley had been volunteering for the summer in a child care centre at a non-profit organisation where her father was a manager. Her parents had not sought any other position for her, such as a competitive job, as they believed she was not 'ready'.

Shirley volunteered at the centre two mornings a week and her duties included playing with the children and helping with the snacks. Accommodations were made for her mobility impairment as a chair was provided for her use. She was enjoying working there as she said "I like helping kids... It's fun! Hug me, its nice. The kids, they hug me". Her mother also thought she was happy in the position and explained how Shirley expressed pride in her performance as "she has a big smile on her face as if she really, she feels like that she has accomplished something". The skills Shirley's parents thought she was obtaining included working with children,

showing interest in the accomplishment of others, increased self-esteem, and observing rules and instructions.

The effects on Shirley's family of her transition from high school were two-fold. First, Shirley was more reliant on her father for transportation. Due to her mobility limitations she could not travel on public buses. The second affect was related to the stress of uncertainty. Although her parents were content with Shirley's volunteer position, they expressed concerns about long-term plans for entering the workforce. Her father explained:

I think the transition is difficult because I don't think she is anywhere near ready to move into that kind of scenario [competitive employment]...I don't think she has enough experience. I don't think she understands...But, I don't think she has the skills to work. I don't think she understands what work means. Because she was allowed to get away with so much in school up until this year, she didn't develop really great work habits.

The lack of employable skills was seen as directly attributable to the school system and the lack of transitional planning. Their main concerns were identifying ways in which Shirley could obtain more employable skills, and then ascertaining how to gain advice and support on finding a competitive job. They viewed a supported employment placement as suitable to achieve this goal, conditional upon their input into the types of duties. Her mother said:

There are certain jobs that I will not allow...For instance going into the [government building] and just cleaning off tables. I have seen that. It doesn't teach her anything. It doesn't help her go anywhere up. It's just clean off the table, and she knows how to clean off a table. So that's not really teaching her anything.

Shirley's mother had certain expectations of her daughter and it excluded what she viewed as menial work. It may be unrealistic for Shirley to obtain higher employment expectations and her mother did not appreciate that there are other skills, such as life skills, that could be obtained in such placements. Both parents also agreed that Shirley should not be placed in the sheltered workshop as her father said:

We don't see the workshop as being a viable way to go... We would like to see her more integrated. I think she is very sociable and we think she can do more but, we may be blowing smoke too.

The workshop was considered as unsuitable as it was perceived as a segregated workplace. It was interesting that although Shirley's mother had higher expectations of her daughter, her father realised that Shirley may not be able to meet them. Due to the uncertainty and Shirley's lack of skills and work ethics her parents wanted Shirley to return to the vocational training centre after the completing her volunteer placement.

Four months later, at the second interview, Shirley had completed the summer voluntary position in child care and was now at the vocational training centre two mornings per week. The placement was being funded by ODSP employment support as part of an assessment to determine what work opportunities were available to Shirley. Shirley's parents perceived that she was slowly gaining additional skills such as increased initiative and responsibility.

The detrimental impacts of Shirley's transition on her family had increased. Her mother had been especially affected as besides two mornings a week, there was no meaningful daily routine for Shirley and they spent the time together at home. Shirley's mother explained that this caused conflicts between them:

Well, I think that, you know, I'm just trying to pull at straws right now, I'm just trying to find something for Shirley to do because it is certainly detrimental to her and to everybody else that she is home, everyday...There is nothing at home and I think she should be out doing things with other people, other than her mother, because it gets where she is trying to reverse roles. She is trying to be the mother and telling you know, what to do, what to wear, what. There's been a fair amount of conflict with her and I lately because she, we are under each other's feet all the time and she needs to be out, so.

The importance of employment as a means to a purposeful daily routine, to counteract boredom and provide social relationships is clearly demonstrated here. It also shows the effect of the 'vacuum' in Shirley's daily life created by the absence of high school.

Shirley's parents continued to express uncertainty over her future. They still believed she was not yet capable of obtaining competitive employment and the alternatives such as the service organisation's day programmes were full. Shirley was on a two year waiting list for a day programme. Her father blamed this predicament on the provincial government.

Yet the provincial government is telling us that it is putting in more money into people with disabilities and the one minister, when I was at a session, said you know "This is important, this is great for us, pat us on the back". But it seems that nobody seems to know where that money is going to. So I think that those are issues that, you know. A

daughter who is spending most of her time at home sitting watching movies or whatever, no real opportunity for socialisation. I mean those are concerns.

Although governmental rhetoric was that support for people with disabilities and their social integration was a priority, in reality those individuals did not benefit and remained unoccupied and isolated. This can be viewed as partly due to lack of government funding.

In her desperation Shirley's mother had pursued a number of other possible options. She had attempted unsuccessfully to obtain a position for Shirley as a greeter in a local superstore. She had also considered asking a video store for a position but Shirley would need support and she did not know how to obtain it. In addition Shirley's mother was attempting with other parents, and with the advice of the manager of the vocational training centre, to establish a parent run day programme. Shirley's mother explained:

Everybody [parents] has a different skill. There could be somebody in there, you know, is good with cooking, somebody else who is good with arts and crafts, somebody else who is good with whatever. Having a location, having so that our young people aren't sitting at home while we are trying to find them something to do in a work force. At least they have got some place to go, someplace to be with each other and to learn from each other and have fun at the same time.

The parental advocacy was seen as essential given the fact that their daughter and her friends were being disadvantaged by the lack of day programmes and supported employment. Although their prime goal for Shirley was competitive employment, they were advocating in the interim for 'significant living without work' (May, 2001).

For Shirley's parents the preferable course of action would be a supported employment placement possibly in a video store as this was Shirley's goal. They believed it was a realistic assumption that after a year or so of supported employment she would be prepared to be independent and apply for a competitive position. Their second choice would be a volunteer position in a child care setting. Shirley's mother thought that as long as her daughter was content a long term unpaid position would be acceptable. Similar to the first interview, both parents were unified in their decision that they did not want their daughter to have a position at the sheltered workshop. Her father said:

Is she capable of doing something else other than that? We think so. But I just wonder whether there is not a better, a better opportunity, a growth opportunity for her from an employment perspective by working out in the 'real world' as compared to a sheltered workshop...I think she would get into a routine and it would be fine and probably wouldn't bother her at all. Probably bother mom and dad more than her, but I would just question whether it is the right thing. Well whether it is the right move for her.

Shirley's parents continued to be concerned about the segregation of the workshop, although her father commented that it would probably not worry Shirley. This statement can be compared to the work/life histories of Lucy and Karen. Both their parents had expressed anxiety about the segregation of the workshop but in reality their daughters seemed perfectly content in the placement.

Shirley's parents appeared to have high expectations of their daughter. On one hand they expected her to be able to obtain a competitive position, for example in a video store after one year of supported employment. Nevertheless they currently expressed concern over her lack of work skills and attitude. In reality, Shirley was still having problems with simple tasks such as putting pillow cases on pillows in the vocational training centre (Field notes, November 30, 2004). They were also determined that she should not attend the sheltered workshop or undertake 'menial' service work in supported employment placements, even though these positions could have resulted in her gaining the skills she required. Shirley's transition was also complicated with her parents' need to keep her happy and occupied. To her parents, transition was a time of confusion which was compounded by a lack of knowledge of how to access support and lack of information on the operation of other programmes, including the ODSP employment support programme.

Michael's work/life history

Michael's ideal job would involve servicing and designing cars. He thought he would need knowledge in car mechanics, art, and computerised graphic design to apply for this type of competitive employment. He perceived there would be few problems obtaining this goal after he had undertaken appropriate training. The only complications he thought would involve travelling to the workplace unless it was local. He did not have a driver's

licence and had difficulties travelling on the public bus due to his mobility impairments. As a result he relied on his mother for transportation. His mother differed in what she assumed would be an ideal job for Michael. As he was very caring with children with disabilities she suggested that working in such a day care would be appropriate. She knew Michael did not agree but she thought that this would be a realistic goal. Although he would need certain courses she was prepared to assist him.

When considering young adults with intellectual disabilities in general, she argued that they would face barriers to competitive employment. These she attributed mainly to societal attitudes. The main barriers she said would be “Making society understand that they [individuals with intellectual disability] have to work also. They need a place in society”. In this way she advocates for societal inclusion through competitive employment.

Michael had left high school a few weeks before the first interview and had no formal plans for employment. His mother expressed concern at the lack of transition planning and support from the school. She explained that she would have appreciated any support from the school and complained that “you just don’t just drop them and that’s it, like a hot potato”.

Michael had an offer to assist the superintendent in his apartment building on a casual basis but had not yet started. The superintendent proposed to pay, but Michael’s mother rejected the idea. Receiving payment for services could have increased Michaels’ self-esteem but his mother seemed to

devalue his contributions by refusing to accept it. This incident also suggested that Michael had little control and self-determination over the decision.

Michael did not express any dissatisfaction with his current circumstances. He did want competitive employment in the future but was not bored at home “No, because there’s always something to do, whether its home, outdoors it doesn’t matter.” However his mother believed that the transition from school had affected him in a negative way. She said “He’s been causing me problems. He needs discipline and routine. He’s up all night and asleep all day” (Field notes, July 14, 2004). Similar to Shirley’s experience, high school had provided Michael with a sense of routine and since leaving there had been no replacement.

Michael’s mother perceived that his behavioural issues related to anger management were sufficiently controlled and that after a short break “he is going to get in the workforce”. Michael and his mother had discussed applying for competitive jobs and he explained:

She’s [mother] like “There are a lot of opportunities, a lot of little areas especially where we live”. And I like “Well, how about mom, if you see if you can get me into, after the summer, see if you can get me working over at [grocery store] for the night shift”. And she is like “Well, I have already talked to boss there about some things, so I will talk about seeing if we can get you a job there after the summer...Because if you are going to start working at [grocery store] as a night shift then we will see after, down the line, if we can get you to do something during the day too. So come home for a couple of hours and then go to your night work”

Here Michael's mother would advocate for him with an employer to gain competitive employment in the grocery store. Her expectations of Michael undertaking two jobs could be queried as being unrealistic, although his contribution to the family income would be a benefit as his mother was also in receipt of ODSP.

Michael's mother agreed that a competitive position in a grocery store or video store would be appropriate and realistic for her son. Both perceived that there were many opportunities locally for such positions and so obtaining employment for Michael would not be difficult. Their short term goal was to apply for local employment opportunities for Michael and contact friends who needed assistance in a car repair shop.

Michael's second interview was held five months later and he had not obtained competitive employment. The casual job assisting the superintendent had not worked out as the position had been given to a relative. The car mechanic job had also not progressed as his mother had begun to distrust the individuals involved and did not want Michael involved. In the period since Michael had left school his mother had become increasingly concerned about his behavioural issues. With the assistance of the local support services she had found a one day a week placement for him in a behavioural management course located in an adjoining town. She said of her decision:

The first thing, we have to get his anger management managed [short laugh]. He does have a struggle with it and he can be quite vulgar, you know. Nobody in a work area is going to take it so we have to get this under control..., because if you stop and think about it he can't get a

job without it. You know. He will never hold a job with cursing at his boss. You know. So, it was basically my idea [not medical advice] because he has to have that to have a life.

Michael's mother thought that her son would not gain or retain competitive employment unless he could control his anger. She viewed employment as a means to becoming an adult and having a 'life'. Michael agreed with his mother's advice to undertake the course. He explained:

Well, I've got to take this course. Mom is like "If you don't take this anger management course you can't get a job... If you get your anger under control you can go get a job, go get your drivers licence. You can get yourself a car and that". Well, because if I go to work and I blow up I'm gone. I've got nothing to look forward to. So I've got to take this course and after I've done this course then I can look for a job.

However, it had taken a couple of months of uncertainty when Michael was unaware whether he would be offered a position in the behavioural management course. Michael had been upset with this delay and had decided to apply for competitive jobs in the interim. He had submitted his resume to both the grocery store and video store that he had mentioned in his first interview. Neither application had been successful. The video store had offered him an interview. Michael explained that:

He [video store manager] gave me an application and that. I signed it out and came back with my resume and that, and they were like "Oh sorry, if you want to do an interview you will have to go to _____ Street and _____ Street to interview". I'm like "Why would I have to go all the way down there to do my interview?" Then they were "Oh sorry"... "Well too bad". Then I went outside of [the store] and made sure no one was looking and went [derogatory hand gesture].

He had then gone back to the store a few weeks later and been told there were no more vacancies. Michael expressed frustration that lack of transportation acted as a barrier against him gaining a job as at that time his mother did not have a car. The store did not appear willing to accommodate him by having the interview at his potential place of employment.

Michael had also taken his resume to the grocery store where he had been advised that the manager would contact him. After two or three months he attempted to visit the manager but was told he was not available. He expressed confusion concerning the reasons for not being offered competitive positions but believed it was probably due to his lack of experience. Michael's experience at the grocery store could be related to the hardships that all unskilled young adults face attempting to gain employment in the current competitive workforce.

Besides being discouraged about employment prospects, Michael was also dissatisfied with a decrease in social relationships compared to when he was at high school. After the interview he explained that he was missing not having any friends his age to "hang with" (Field notes, December 6, 2004). He believed it was due to his behavioural issues and lack of transportation. This demonstrates that the transportation barrier not only affected Michael's opportunity for employment but also contributed to his social exclusion.

Michael had every confidence that he would be able to gain competitive employment after the anger management course with the

assistance of the organisation and his mother. His ideal job had changed from being a car designer to computer animation and making his own comic book. He realised that to obtain this goal he would need knowledge of computer software. He explained he would “self teach” as he did not perceive himself as the type to attend college. The only barrier he perceived would be affording the software that could cost up to \$3,000. His mother also believed that there would be few problems obtaining competitive employment after the course, but was unsure about what type of job he could do. These assumptions can be queried as being unrealistic.

5.3 Conclusion

It was initially assumed by both the young adults and their parents that they would achieve the goal of competitive employment after leaving high school. This belief can be related to the value that competitive employment represented in the lives of the young adults and their parents, and as a marker of adulthood. However, in reality only Julian at that time had obtained competitive employment and this was a part- time position he gained previous to leaving school. Other alternatives that were perceived as part of a progression to competitive employment were undertaken by the young adults. After mainstream employment, supported employment placements were viewed by parents as a positive outcome as they were held in integrated workplaces and approximated competitive employment. However, as Vicky’s

work/life history shows, the experiences could vary widely. The issues associated with placements in the sheltered workshop also proved to be complex and conflicting depending on the perspective held. Some parents, such as Shirley's, did not view the workshop as a suitable alternative to employment. Shirley and Michael's alternatives to work comprised additional skills training. The majority of parents, and employers, presumed that the major barrier to young adults gaining competitive employment was the attitude of employers and preconceived ideas of performance.

For the most part, the young adults expressed their satisfaction with their transition from high school. For example, Lucy and Karen had increased their social relationships and gained independence and maturity in the sheltered workshop. Although the young adults had not gained competitive employment they were hopeful of future opportunities towards their ideal job. Their parents, especially mothers, were heavily involved in all transition arrangements. Although this could be considered as beneficial it could result in a lack of self-determination by their children. The majority of young adults did not think that there were any barriers to affect them gaining their ideal competitive job. However, it could be observed that transportation had a large impact on employability. Access to public transportation represented independence in addition to a means to access the workplace. A lack of transportation encouraged dependency on parents, and acted as a barrier to obtaining employment, as in Michael's work/life history. Transportation

problems also affected social relationships, such as in Michael's experience, and caused great stress to Lucy's family. Additionally it was evident that the young adults had experienced broader social, institutional and economic barriers that many people with disabilities experience in gaining competitive employment. These included employers' expectations and the vagaries of the competitive labour market.

The common experience of parents during the transition period from high school was confusion and uncertainty. This was especially apparent immediately after leaving high school when few or no arrangements had been made for their child and many parents experienced constant worry. Although the majority of young adults expressed their contentment, their parents had a variety of concerns. These were mainly related to the indecision in their son/daughter's futures that was perceived as being caused by a lack of information and knowledge of where to gain support during the transition period. The families had attempted to deal with these concerns in a number of ways. They had utilised service organisations to provide additional skills training such as in the sheltered workshop, supported employment programme or vocational training centre. Other efforts included Karen's mother using social networking to gain information on employment placements and programme opportunities for her daughter, and Shirley's parents advocating for interim alternatives to work. This involvement in their sons/daughters' transition would not only have impacts on the family in terms of stress

associated with uncertainty, but would also involve heavy commitments in terms of both time and money.

Employers suggested that young adults with intellectual disabilities should be given the opportunity of becoming competitively employed. Barriers to employment were perceived as employer attitudes to lack of productivity and expectation of a certain embodied performance. Speed of performance has been an issue since the advent of capitalism and industrialisation. It is at this time that people with disabilities had to conform to the industrial and mechanical work processes designed for non-disabled people (Gleeson, 1999a). This conflict has escalated with the present competitiveness of the economy and the new organisation of work (Wilton, 2004). Although the employers had attempted to provide accommodation for lack of performance in their own workplaces, only one grocery manager had offered a regular position to an individual on the supported employment programme. Besides lack of progression, another issue related to placements is remuneration for services provided. In many cases, wages were below minimum pay per hour in sheltered and supported employment. This could represent exploitation of the young adults as cheap labour by employers or a well intentioned sensitivity to the effects on ODSP. Whatever the reason, a small remuneration could undervalue the productivity of the individual and take away the self-esteem provided by gaining a sufficient wage.

Overall the work/life histories showed a lack of progression to the young adults' employment goals although they had varying transitional experiences.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter it is useful to revisit the five key aims of the study listed in the introduction, and address how these objectives have been met. The aims were to gain an understanding of the importance of competitive employment for young adults with intellectual disabilities and their parents; examine changes in the young adults' daily geographies; identify strategies to gain employment; recommend potential policy changes and contribute to geographical literature.

To assess whether these have been met this chapter has been divided into five sections. First, a summary of the analysis is provided. A more detailed discussion follows on the conceptual implications of the young adults' experiences in transitioning from high school. Potential policy implications are then proposed before considering the limitations of the current research and suggestions for future research.

6.2 Summary

A key aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the importance of competitive employment to the young adults and their parents, and this is discussed in Chapter Four. The importance was ascertained by examining the

perceived benefits and disadvantages to competitive employment. The majority of young adults thought that employment was important as it provided a means for increased social relationships. Only one person envisaged any disadvantages to employment and these included anxiety over accepting work responsibilities, and concerns over physical accessibility of the workplace and potential safety issues.

Parents perceived that other benefits of competitive employment were more important to their children than social relationships. There was parental anticipation that their children would follow the socially expected role of competitive employment as a means to achieve the social status of adulthood. They assumed this would additionally lead to social independence and a means to be accepted within society. Employment as providing a daily purpose to life in order to avoid boredom was additionally considered important.

Parents thought the potential benefits to competitive employment would outweigh any negative effects. The sole disadvantage discussed was the potential effects on ODSP of employment income. A majority of parents viewed that the social benefits gained by competitive employment were more advantageous than any loss in ODSP.

The educator's view was similar to the parents, in that she perceived that competitive employment was a means to provide a meaningful day and also as a means to increase independence for young adults with intellectual

disability. Although she stressed the importance of competitive employment, this provision could also be met by alternatives means, such as pursuing leisure activities.

It was interesting to note the lack of importance placed on three issues. First material benefits were considered as insignificant relative to the social benefits of employment. Second, although not specifically asked only one respondent, a young adult, commented on the potential affects of his impairment on seeking and maintaining competitive employment. Third, nobody mentioned the threat of discrimination towards people with disabilities in the workplace as a possible disadvantage to employment.

Preparations for competitive employment by the young adults are covered in the second part of Chapter Four. These comprised school based transition planning/guidance and curriculum, as well as employment training provided by co-op placements and the vocational training centre. In general the young adults perceived that they had been involved sufficiently in transition planning and had received adequate training which made them suitably prepared for competitive employment after leaving high school. The perspective of parents differed significantly as to their children's state of readiness for employment. It was thought that improvements could be made to the transition programme and comments were specifically made on limitations of the school based transition plan and the curriculum content/structure. Parents had differing views on the efficiency of the transition guidance and

planning that was mandated as part of each individual's I.E.P. Concerns were mostly expressed at the perceived lack of communication with schools. This had led to insufficient support being given to the parents and inadequate involvement in and preparation of transition plans. The parents were split on their views of the appropriateness of schools' transitional curriculum. Half considered it appropriate and the others expressed concerns on its coordination, including quality of teaching staff, in addition to the actual subjects taught. The educator agreed that transition planning and preparation could be improved within schools but its operation had been affected by staff turnover. She also emphasised that parental involvement was essential in increasing the efficiency of the transition process.

Both young adults and parents agreed that vocational training provided many benefits in preparation for competitive employment. Co-op placements were enjoyed by the young adults as they provided an opportunity for increased social relationships and encouraged independence. Parents viewed the co-ops as teaching both basic work skills in addition to life skills such as responsibility. There were a few problems associated with these placements related to a lack of choice, appropriateness of placements, need for increased communication with schools and questions over their similarity to 'real' work. The lack of choice of placements could be related to availability as well as schools' varying abilities to create relationships with local businesses (Crysdale et al, 1999). Similar problems have been experienced in studies on

supported employment placements within the larger context of the changing labour market (Sandys, 2003). The educator argued that the operation of co-ops placements were complex as there had to be a balance between type of placement, ability of student and parents wishes.

Similar to co-op placements, the vocational training centre was considered by both young adults and their parents as providing suitable training in both practical work skills and life skills. Parents suggested a few improvements, such as introduction of more practical work skills and increased feedback and assessment.

A major benefit of vocational training was viewed as bus training as a means for young adults to achieve social independence. Transportation accessibility is predominantly viewed in scholarly literature as a barrier confronted by people with physical disabilities and those with intellectual disabilities have been largely ignored (e.g. Imrie and Kumar, 1998).

In general, parents thought that there should be an increase in parental involvement with the high school in order to plan their child's transition. This was supported by the educator who viewed the parents as a key element in the transition process. Although there was agreement that parents should be more involved, there was indecision and uncertainty in terms of who should be responsible for initiating this involvement.

Chapter Five followed the experiences of the young adults in the form of work/life histories as they attempted to enter the workforce from high

school. This highlights two further objectives of this study; to examine changes in the young adults' daily geographies and to identify strategies used by the young adults and their parents to gain competitive employment.

While both the disability movement and government policy have emphasised the importance of competitive employment for people with disability, the reality for young adults with intellectual disability as shown in the work/life histories is more complex. The young adults and their parents faced tensions between internalising the importance of competitive employment as a normative adult goal and the next logical step from high school, and the confusion of how to achieve it. This was compounded by insufficient transitional guidance. The result was that none of the young adults realised the privileged position of full-time competitive employment during the period of the study. Families used alternative strategies to obtain opportunities and progress towards some form of competitive work. This included assistance from service organisation in the form of placements in the sheltered workshop and supported employment programme, and increased skills training and behavioural management in training centres. These different transitional spaces led to different experiences being negotiated by each young adult and their family.

Two of the young adults had found full-time placements in the sheltered workshop. Although they had some initial concerns both young adults were enjoying increased social relationships. While both parents had

been concerned by the presumed segregation of the workshop from mainstream workplaces, they came in varying degrees to accept the situation. They also assumed that their daughters would remain in the workshop in the interim and then would progress to competitive employment. It was thought this would probably be through the supported employment programme, although the method and the timing of this move were unknown. One mother, Karen's, was especially concerned by lack of information and support and this led to increased anxiety over her daughter's future. Their overall experiences in the workshop were further explained by the manager's perspective, and could be associated with the dual roles of the workshop and the complexities of inclusion and exclusion (See section 6.3 for more conceptual discussion).

A further two young adults, who had left school previous to the year of the study, had been involved in numerous supported employment placements. The experiences had varied from being extremely negative in the case of Vicky to other more positive ones. Both individuals presumed they would gain competitive employment eventually. Julian's mother was optimistic that her son would gain a competitive position however, Vicky's father had doubts that his daughter was capable of securing employment. The supported employers' perspective can be used to help explain their experiences especially in terms of societal expectations of certain types of worker and their embodied performance.

The last two young adults remained in vocational and skills training. Shirley's parents were uncertain of her future and felt unsure of how to best proceed with any plans. Conversely, Michael and his mother assumed that competitive employment was a realistic goal after he had completed an anger management course.

Throughout the work/life histories it was apparent that the young adults' families were affected by the transition from high school. This was especially true of the mothers who tended to take prime responsibility for their children during this period. The effects mainly comprised stress and uncertainty about numerous issues associated with the transition such as current experiences related to transportation, social segregation, employment progression and lack of information and support.

6.3 Conceptual implications

The experiences of the young adults highlighted in the work/life histories raise two important questions about their daily geographies. First, are the spaces they occupy transitional and will they progress to competitive employment? Second, are these spaces of societal inclusion or exclusion, or both?

6.3.1. 'Stuck in transition'

Once the young adults had left high school it was assumed that they would enter competitive employment. As shown, this was not the outcome as they left high school to enter spaces of transition incorporating the sheltered workshop, supported employment placements and the training centres. These spaces were considered as interim alternatives and it was assumed that the young adults would progress ultimately to competitive employment. The nature of each of these spaces in terms of progression is discussed in turn.

In the study only one to two individuals each year from the sheltered workshop progressed to an integrated workplace but, also others returned due to job loss. The lack of progression to either supported or competitive employment can be related to the conflicting roles of the workshop and its operation within the broader environment. Specifically lack of progression can be considered as being created by two dynamics; factors external to the space of the workshop and those internal to the workshop.

External factors have been created by the wider context of changing global markets, neoliberal social policy (such as ODSP) and societal attitude. In order to remain competitive within the present economic climate, the workshop in its role as a business has increased the performance expectations of its workers (Hyde, 1998). The most able and productive workers are also those that are more likely to be offered and succeed in integrated employment settings. However, due to the impact on workshop efficiency there is tension

in allowing these individuals to progress. In addition, the business role of the workshop may lead to a diminished priority being given to improve personal skills. This results in a lack of individual improvement that could enable progression. The effects of ODSP payments also act as a barrier to development from the workshop. This is related to the 'benefits trap' and the deterrent to gain competitive employment due to negative effects on employment income (Sandys, 2003). Other disincentives to progress include the perceptions and experiences of the workers of discrimination in integrated workplaces and fears over job security (Gosling and Cotteril, 2000).

These external factors operate in conjunction with internal factors present within the workshop. These factors develop more from the workshop's welfare role for each individual. A major incentive is created by the workshop being recognised as a place of increased social relationships and security for individuals with intellectual disabilities (e.g. Hyde, 1998; Lemon and Lemon, 2003; Sandys, 2003). The workshop as a place of 'safety' is considered in more detail in the next section. The role of the supported employment programme is to maintain individuals in an integrated workplace setting whilst simultaneously teaching new skills in order to gain competitive employment. However, this study indicates that progression from supported employment is limited as there are factors acting against an individual moving to full-time work. These relate to the wider economic environment and individual experiences and perceptions. A prevailing assumption in society is that

individuals with intellectual disabilities will demonstrate less productivity than a non-disabled worker, and so, employers are less likely to employ them in full-time paid positions in times of increased economic competition and high unemployment. As the grocery managers implied, the supported employment programme provides a cheap source of labour, but there are financial constraints on increasing staffing budgets for a full time position. In addition due to financial restrictions businesses may eliminate supported employment placements and individuals may have no choice but to return to the workshop. The effect of competitive employment income on ODSP could, similarly to those in a sheltered workshop, reduce the motivation of an individual to seek competitive work.

Individual experiences and assumptions may act as a disincentive for an individual to want to progress to competitive employment. Some individuals, such as Vicky, experience unrealistic expectations concerning their work performance and discrimination in supported employment placements and as a result do not want to 'progress' to competitive employment.

The role of vocational training centres, specifically the one involved in the study, is to provide additional work skills training and an increase in social skills as an opportunity to advance toward the ultimate goal of competitive employment. Although specific numbers are unknown, the majority of individuals attending the vocational training centre did not immediately obtain

competitive employment when completing their placement. Alternatives included day programmes, supported employment or further sessions in the training centre. The overall contribution of the training centre to the future employment prospects of the attendees was unknown due to the short period it had been in operation. Existing studies have reported inadequate progression from training centres as the employable skills being taught are inappropriate for the current labour market (e.g. Riddell et al, 2001). Whilst the vocational training centre undertook training in currently suitable work skills for the service labour market, such as grocery stocking, other skills were less appropriate. These involved skill training in sorting and collating items which were more suited to work duties in the sheltered workshop and day programmes rather than in an integrated workplace (Field notes, April 28, 2005). Whilst other training centres have been criticised for focusing too much on social skills training and ignoring the vocational training that would be needed to obtain semi-skilled jobs, the balance of social skills training in the vocational training centre to employable skills did appear to be equitable (Tomlinson et al, 1995).

The impact of ODSP employment supports on the character of these transitional spaces needs to be considered. This financial support allows for individuals to be funded in the vocational training programme for work assessments and improving employable skills in addition to subsidizing supported employment placements. While in some senses this is positive and

provides opportunities, the opposite may occur. This is because there appears to be no apparent limit to individualised funding and it will continue unless the individual refuses to co-operate with the programme (Meeting held with ODSP representative, field notes, February 11, 2005). This could result in individuals continually moving from assessment to additional skills training and different supported employment placements without the motivation to gain that competitive position.

It would appear that there are many barriers for the young adults and others with intellectual disability to overcome before progression to competitive employment. Major obstructions were represented by the forces external to the service organisation in terms of the economy and negative social attitudes. In their quest for competitive employment the young adults appear to be 'stuck' in the transitioning spaces of the service organisation that are represented by the sheltered workshop, supported employment and vocational training centre. Their daily geographies had altered from attending the space of school everyday to attending the transitional spaces of the service organisation. Their future geographies were unclear and could be limited to movement within the transitional spaces and maybe never obtaining that "elusive real job" (Sandys, 2003, p. 621).

6.3.2 Spaces of inclusion and exclusion

The effects of inclusion and exclusion within the transitional spaces of the young adults' daily geographies can be discussed. A main aim of disability organisations is the socio-spatial inclusion of people with disabilities. Competitive employment is considered a principal means of providing this inclusion. The young adults and their parents concurred with this view and recognised the importance of competitive employment in increasing social relationships and as a means to be included in society. Within the spaces the young adults used to gain opportunities to employment they experienced varying and conflicting degrees of inclusion and exclusion. Their experiences in the sheltered workshop, supported employment and the vocational training centre are discussed in order to identify the dynamics of societal inclusion/exclusion.

For many, the sheltered workshop is a segregated workplace that is excluded from the mainstream. The workshop in the study predominantly had workers with intellectual disabilities and was spatially separate from fully integrated businesses. Parents had negative perceptions of the workshop and, especially initially, did not view it as a suitable alternative to competitive employment. The reason for this was given as the need to provide more integration of their children into society. The generation of young adults being studied is one of the first to be 'normalised' into society rather than being institutionalised. They have been included in public schools, although not

necessarily in integrated classrooms, and the parental expectation was that they should continue being assimilated into their local community on leaving high school. In the past, places where people with intellectual disability were segregated became stigmatised by society (Metzel and Walker, 2001). These institutions and asylums were feared by society as people with intellectual disabilities were considered the 'ultimate other' (Hall, 2004). The contemporary sheltered workshop can be considered to some extent as taking over this representation.

On the surface it would appear that the workshop represents social exclusion, however this view is more complex. The young adults found increased social relationships and contentment in the workshop placement. These relationships extended outside the space of the workshop to dances and other events held by the service organisation. This experience was compared to integrated workplaces where it was perceived workers could be discriminated against, and never gain full social acceptance. The workshop can be considered as providing what Hall refers to as social inclusion in a safe space of refuge and social networks, whilst still creating a purposeful day for the young adults in a non competitive space (2004, 2005). The workshop is a safe space where workers can experience a sense of community. This provision of safety was primarily undertaken by institutions but since the care in the community initiative, other spaces that superficially

appear segregated have taken on the role of refuge and inclusion (Hall, 2004). This can be seen to include the workshop.

The reality of their adult children's experiences in the workshop causes tension for parents. The parents had concerns over segregation and associated seclusion, however, the subjective experiences of the young adults were social acceptance and fulfilment. This caused a dilemma for their children's future as attainment of the assumed privileged position of competitive employment could represent isolation, compared to the segregated workshop that represented a safe community to the young adults.

Contrary to the sheltered workshop, supported employment was considered by parents as a more advantaged position as placements took place within integrated work spaces. However, similar to the workshop the embodied experiences of the young adults help to make this view more complex. Although many of the placements appeared to be positive for the young adults, the complexities can be demonstrated by Vicky's negative experiences in the coffee shop. Vicky was placed in a work space that was normally occupied by non-disabled workers and her performance was judged by the standards of competitive employment. Her embodied performance could not match the expectations of her employer and this resulted in her being 'out of place' (Kitchin, 1998). She experienced great stress and left her placement. This self-exclusion was to her home that was considered by Vicky as a safe space where she could be valued by her family. Vicky was spatially

included in the integrated workspace but experienced social exclusion in what can be considered the hostile environment of the coffee shop.

Like the workshop, the vocational training centre was also populated principally by individuals with intellectually disabilities. The centre's location in the complex of the small residential institution reflects its social and spatial exclusion from mainstream society. Parents strengthened this segregation to a certain extent, as they asked that the programme locate additional training activities on-site rather than in local integrated workplaces. This included undertaking car mechanics at the centre rather than a mainstream garage. Priestly (2003) argues that this spatial arrangement reinforces dominant discourses about the segregation of people with intellectual disability. Similar to the workshop the actual daily lived experiences of the young adults do not necessarily identify social-spatial exclusion as being totally negative. Given that the young adults who attended the centre expressed contentment, it could be seen as a space of inclusion.

This discussion suggests that the issue of social inclusion is complex. This is because within specific sites such as integrated/segregated workplaces there are varying daily subjective experiences which may be inclusionary or exclusionary. Hall (2005) refers to this as an 'entangled geographies of exclusion/inclusion'. Competitive employment in an integrated workspace might not necessarily be the best outcome if individuals experience being 'out of place'. They may prefer to be in safe spaces in 'small action spaces',

on the fringes of mainstream society, such as the workshop, rather than have feelings of anxiety (Laws and Radford, 1998). This poses a dilemma for social policy and disability activists. Should the emphasis be on full integration of individuals with an intellectual disability into society via competitive employment, or is it more important for them to have spaces of non-competitive employment and inclusion where they feel secure? It has been proposed that the way forward is to challenge societal oppression that creates the negative experiences and leads individuals with intellectual disability to 'feel out of place' in mainstream society (e.g. Cummins and Lau, 2003; Hall, 2004, 2005). By encouraging social policy based on social equality and justice rather than emphasising independence through competitive employment, these individuals would be valued wherever they decided to work and live. There would be accessibility to, and acceptance in competitive employment, but other markers of social status and alternatives to competitive employment would additionally be available.

6.4 Potential Policy Implications

The fourth aim of the study was to recommend potential policy implications. I focus here on possible changes to three areas of policy. First, education policy for transition training and planning, second, governmental social policy and lastly, service organisation policy.

It is apparent that education policy that includes the mandate for transition training and planning within individual I.E.Ps is unsatisfactory and there is a need for alterations. Policies need to change to reflect the need for increased communication with parents and local community organisations. The method by which this communication is initiated needs to be clearly defined. The content of transition training needs to be reviewed and should be changed to mandate bus training for all individuals with an I.E.P, unless severe impairments cause problems with accessibility. There should be definite vocational arrangements in place for all students as they leave high school. The creation of a system where one support person is responsible for assisting an individual through the entire transition process from early in high school until obtaining competitive employment should be considered. This would reduce parent uncertainty and lack of support. This person could be a representative of the school, municipality or local service organisation. Ultimately there is a necessity for stricter enforcement of transition policy. At a wider level the introduction of vocational programmes at local colleges could be investigated. These could be established with the assistance of local employers.

In relation to gaining competitive employment, there are implications for changes in the ODSP system. Governmental policy emphasis on individualism and the onus on young adults and their parents is to 'purchase' services through ODSP employment support. The lack of knowledge of the

system and its complexity has created barriers to the young adults achieving the vocational skills they need to gain competitive employment. Even after interviews with ODSP representatives, parents were uncertain of the process (Field notes, February 11, 2005). The employment support system needs to be more widely advertised and the system simplified. The effects of employment income on ODSP income support need to be more extensively known. In order to eliminate the benefits trap that maintains people with disabilities in segregated environments and low paying jobs, the earned income allowance should be raised. For those individuals who cannot work due to the severity of their impairment, or do not wish to work, suitable alternatives to work must be provided by additional government funding. This could involve the provision of adequate and meaningful day programmes that are woefully lacking in the study area.

At a broader level, social policy emphasis should not just be on providing increased accessibility for people with disabilities. Policies should encourage participation in competitive employment by ensuring social justice and elimination of negative attitudes and practices. This could include human rights education to employers and employees/ Other suggestions could entail tax incentives to businesses to allow for more flexible employment practices. This would enable individuals with intellectual disabilities to schedule work to their needs whilst also demonstrating the value of their labour. Alternatives to competitive employment, such as co-operatives, should also be financially

encouraged by the provision of more easily obtainable longer term grants. The shortage of co-op and supported employment placements could also be addressed by providing financial incentives to local businesses.

For local service organisations there is a need to increase communication with parents, schools and businesses in order to smooth the operation of the transition process and gain opportunities for employment. The vocational skills training being offered need to be assessed as realistic and appropriate for the local labour market. Overall, both service organisations and disability activists should encourage and support the self-advocacy of individuals with intellectual disability in order to increase societal justice and inclusion. Within the service organisation, this could commence with increased self-advocacy within the sheltered workshop in issues such as involvement in introducing a training plan to enable progression of workers.

In general, there are two key problems highlighted by the majority of parents in their child's transition that are affected by policy. First, a lack of information, and second, a lack of resources. Inadequate information has implications for local policy that can be enacted quite readily. Improved dissemination can be arranged by compiling leaflets specifying the roles and support in transition and employment available from local schools, municipal and provincial governments and local service organisations. Information can be made available in the form of information packages in the local community, such as in shopping malls or doctors' offices. Parents in the study also

recommended the provision of a single web site. This could contain all the relevant local information and one contact telephone number for further information.

A lack of financial resources within the schools and service organisation led to less opportunities being realised by the young adults. The potential implications for policy outlined above would require additional financial resources, however, present emphasis on neoliberal ideology places constraints on state social spending.

6.5 Limitations of research

The final aim of this thesis was to add to the geographical literature on disability and more specifically to add to the limited geographies of intellectual disability. This research also has implications for wider social science scholarship. However, there were limitations experienced when undertaking this thesis. These can be considered as limitations with methodology, scope of study and a lack of information and comparative studies.

There are a number of limitations in the methodology. First, due to ethical approval delays, the first interview with the young adults was not undertaken until just after they left school, and some had already commenced work placements. This may have affected their and their parent's perception on the importance of competitive employment and assumptions on transition

planning. It would be preferential to hold the first interview sometime in the last semester of high school. Second, the communication skills of some young adults made obtaining their views challenging. Different methodology such as using symbol representation for interview questions and answers could be used instead of spoken communication. Third, the interviewees could be more representative. Perspectives would be more balanced if all the managers of the supported employments placements in which the young adults had been involved could be interviewed. This was not possible due to time limitations and managers being unavailable to interview. The perspective of the educator from the public school board would also add to balance the views on the schools' experiences in transitional planning compared with the educator representing the separate school board.

Due to time restrictions the case study included one service organisation and six individuals with intellectual disability. Greater depths of understanding of the transition process would be obtained by having a longer period of study to ascertain actual progression to competitive employment. This would allow the young adults perception of the importance of competitive employment to be compared with their experiences or identify if they did in fact become permanently 'stuck' in transitioning spaces. The study area should be enlarged geographically to involve different service organisations and increased number of young adults. This would permit a greater variety of experiences and determine the effects of local policies. It

would also enable the differences of class, race and gender in transition of young adults, to be analysed. The majority of people involved in the study were privileged; they were white and from middle class backgrounds.

The last limitation was the lack of scholarly literature on transitions of Canadian youths with intellectual disability to employment. Existing literature on transition tends to focus on the mechanisms of transitional planning and possible improvements rather than larger conceptual questions. There was also a dearth of information from government sources on transitional services and policies specifically related to this group of youngsters. This lack of information limited analysis of the transitional experience.

6.6 Future directions for research in geography

Besides acknowledging the limitations noted above, areas for future research have been identified. These relate to future studies in respect to the transition process from school to the labour force, and that specific to competitive employment.

The transition process for all students with disability needs to be examined more closely. This entails studying the operation of transition plans at high school and the inter-relationships between high schools, parents and community organisations. The accessibility of information also needs consideration. Mixed methods could be used to more closely examine the issues of lack of progression from transitioning spaces. Quantitative

techniques could ascertain the likelihood of progression to competitive employment and qualitative techniques could add more in-depth knowledge of the underlying experiences.

There is a need to continue research on competitive employment to ascertain the specific reasons for negative attitudes from employers, co-workers and customers to young adults with intellectual disability. It is only with this understanding that barriers can be challenged and socio-spatial justice be brought about. The need to investigate alternatives to mainstream employment such as cooperatives, self-employment and social firms is apparent. Can these spaces convey the social and economic benefits, such as social relationships and inclusion, that are considered important in competitive employment and enable a more positive experience for people with intellectual disability?

This thesis also highlights the barriers and opportunities created by transportation in both the transition and employment processes. In addition, its value in increasing leisure opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities appears to be significant. There is inadequate research on this aspect and future studies are a priority in this area.

Ultimately, future research will confront questions of what role competitive employment should and could play for young adults with intellectual disabilities and the alternatives available. However, future research needs to be undertaken in conjunction with individuals with intellectual

disability, in order to enable self advocacy, and with the aim to further social justice and enable socio-spatial inclusion.

Appendix 1

Interview Guide

Listed below are the primary themes that were included in all interviews, as well as some sample questions. Questions were rephrased and asked in a way understandable to each individual.

1. Young adults leaving high school 2004 - First interview

Past Education/ Work experience/volunteer work

- Can you tell me about any work that you have done such as co-ops, volunteer work or helping in the school cafeteria?
- What did you have to do?
- What do you think you learned from doing each one?
- What did you like the most/least about each?
- Has anyone from school or elsewhere talked to you about what you want to do after school and given you help?
- At school did you have classes with other students or only in your unit?

Goals for future

- What do you want to do now you have graduated?
- Do you know if anyone can help you getting a job?
- What do you think is good about working, what is bad?
- What would be the job that you would really like to do?

Barriers/opportunities to employment goals

- What would you have to have or be to get it?
- Do you think there is anything that would stop you getting this job?
- How could you get over this?
- How long will it take you to get a job?
- What would you do if you didn't get a job?
- What do you have to be to be a good employee?

2. Young adults leaving high school 2004 – Second interview

Achievements since last interview

- Have you had any jobs since the last time I talked to you?
- Have you been on any classes or courses?

Barriers/opportunities experienced towards goals

If in employment (supported/sheltered) or unpaid employment:

- When did you get the job and where is it?
- How did you get the job?
- Did you have an interview, what happened at it?
- Is this job what you expected before you started?
- Did your job coach tell you enough about the job before you started?
- Why or why not?
- What do you have to do?
- How much do you get paid?
- What hours do you work?
- If you work part time would you like to work fulltime/part time? Why?
- What do you like/don't like about the job?
- Was the training given by your boss long enough?
- How much help do you get from your job coach? Is it enough/too much?
- Does your supervisor treat you and your co-workers the same?
- Did you have any problems when you first started? And how were these sorted out?
- Do you get on with co-workers? And supervisor?
- Do you have to deal with customers?
- What do you think about that?
- If you had a problem whom would you ask for help?
- How do you get to your job and has there been any problems getting to work?
- Can you do better jobs where you work?
- Would you like to move into supported employment? (if in sheltered workshop)- Why?
- Would you like to move into unsupported/open employment? (if in supported)-Why?

If not in employment:

- Have you had interviews, met with future employers or had opportunities for employment?
- Why don't you think you have a job?
- Is there anything you could do to help you get a job?

Independence and choice

- Do you feel like you had enough say in what job you wanted to do?

Skills

- Are there things you should have learned or known at high School or in the Vocational Training Centre that would have made it easier to get a job and help you in the job you have now?

What is your goal now?

3. Parents of young adults leaving school 2004- First interview

Past Education/ Work experience/volunteer work

- Does your son's/daughter's exceptionalities affect his/her regular daily activities? How?
- In High School did your son/daughter have any integrated classes?
- What is your opinion of this?
- Had she/he undertaken any work experiences or volunteer work?
- What skills did she/he obtain from each?
- In your opinion could each of these opportunities for obtaining pre-employment skills be improved? How?
- Did he/she have career counselling/guidance before graduation?
- Were these sufficient/timely?

Goals for future

- What goals do you have now your son/daughter has graduated?
- Are you aware of any employment programmes or opportunities that are available to your son/daughter when they graduate?
- What does he/she want to do?
- What do you think of that?
- What do you think employment means to your son/daughter? ie advantages and disadvantages
- What does it mean to you?

What would help/hinder these goals?

- What skills would he/she need to obtain to reach his/her employment goal?
- Are your goals the same as his/hers?
- Are there any barriers to him/her getting the job they want?
- What could overcome these problems?
- What other options are available if she/he didn't get a job in a reasonable time?
- Do you think the skills required for getting a job are changing and why?
- Do you think the transition from School will affect the family in any way, positive or negative?
- What are your immediate concerns?
- Does your son/daughter receive ODSP?
- In your opinion will his/her employment affect ODSP?
- Would this be an issue?

4. Parents of young adults leaving school 2004- Second interview

Summary of achievement since last interview

- What has happened in the last six months, has your son/daughter had any interviews or gained employment?
- Has your son/daughter obtained employment since our last interview?

If employed:

- What are his/her duties, full time or part time?
- Does she/he want full time or part time and why?
- What does he/she like/dislike about job?
- How has employment affected your son/daughter since our last interview? What do you think about this job? It's advantages and disadvantages?

If not in employment/unpaid employment:

- Why do you think they have not secured a job?
- What could be changed, could they do or be done in order for them to get a job?
- How has this affected your son/daughter (optimistic/pessimistic, more realistic etc)

Barriers/Opportunities experienced towards goals

- Was support efficient and co-ordinated through transition?
- Ways the transition could be improved?
- Are you aware of anything that could be changed or other skills that your son/daughter could have received at High School or at the Vocational Training Centre that would help them in employment now or in getting a job?
- Has the transition from School affected the family in any way, both positively and negatively?
- What are your immediate concerns?
- Does your son/daughter receive ODSP?
- Does employment affect the ODSP allowance?
- Is this an issue?
- What is the goal now, how does your son/daughter progress at work- the next step?
 - Any other comments on improving accessibility to employment?

5. Young adults leaving high school previous to 2004

Background

- Do you live with your parents or on your own?
- What are the good things about this and what are the bad things? (Independence)
- Are you working at the moment?
- Where do you get most of your money?

Past Education/ Work experience/volunteer work

- What year did you graduate in and how old were you?
- Did you have classes with the rest of the school or did you just stay in your unit?
- At school can you tell me about any work that you did such as co-ops, volunteer work or helping in the school cafeteria?
- What did you have to do?
- What do you think you learnt from doing each one?
- What did you like the most/least about each?
- Has anyone from School or elsewhere talked to you about what you want to do after school and given you help?
- Do you think you should have learnt more or known more before you left school?
- Why and what?
- Do you think you had enough information to make a choice on what you wanted to do when you left School?
- Was what you wanted to do realistic?
- Have you taken any other courses after High School such as the Vocational Training Centre or computer courses?
- Why did you take these courses?
- What did you learn from each one?
- Have these helped you getting a job?
- Could the Vocational Training Centre do anything differently to help you getting a job?
- Could Supported Employment do anything differently to help you getting a job?

Employment and unpaid employment history

- What do you think is good about working, what is bad?
- Did you choose which jobs you applied to?
- For each job-
 - How did you get your jobs?
 - Where have you worked and what did you do?
 - What hours/pay?
 - What do you like/dislike about the job?
 - Did you have enough people to help you?
 - What did you need to have or learn for the job?

- How long were you there and why did you leave?
- How could this be changed?

If employed currently:

- What is your current job? Where is it?
- What do you do?
- What hours do you work?
- If you work part time would you like to work fulltime? Why?
- If you work full time would you like to work part time? Why?
- Do you like your current job?
- What do you like/dislike about it?
- How do you get to your job and has there been any problems getting to work?
- Are there opportunities in your job to get a better job?
Would you like to move into supported employment? (if in sheltered workshop)- Why/why not?

Would you like to move into unsupported/open employment? (if in supported)-Why/ why not?

- Do you work with customers, what do you do and do you like it?

If supported/sheltered employment:

- Is this job what you expected before you started?
- Did your job coach tell you enough before you started?
- Was the first lot of training long enough?
- How much help do you get? Is it enough/too much/
- Does your supervisor treat you and your co-workers the same?
- Did you have any problems when you first started? And how were these sorted out?
- Do you get on with co-workers? And supervisor?
- If you had a problem whom would you ask for help?

If unemployed:

- Are you looking now or being helped to find a job?
- What is stopping you from getting a job?

Goals for future

- What would be your ideal job?

What would help/hinder these goals?

- Do you think there is anything that would stop you getting your ideal job?
- Is there anything else that you need to know or learn or be before you get this job?
- If so, what? How could you change this?
- What do you have to be to be a good employee?
- Do you get ODSP?
- Does employment affect how much money you get?

- Is this a problem?
- So based on your work experience so far what do you think is the biggest problem in finding work?

6. Parents of young adults leaving high school previous to 2004

Past Education/ Work experience/volunteer work

- Does your son's/daughter exceptionalities affect his/her regular daily activities? How?
- In High School did your son/daughter have any integrated classes?
- What is your opinion of this?
- Had she/he undertaken any work experiences or volunteer work e.g. Vocational Training Centre?
- What skills did she/he obtain from each?
- In your opinion could each of these opportunities for obtaining pre-employment skills be improved? How?
- Did he/she have career counselling/guidance before graduation?
- Were these sufficient/timely?
- How much input did you have?
- How much input did he/she have?

Barriers/Opportunities experienced towards goals

- Did you have any assistance or advice for life after high school e.g. transition planning?
- Could this be improved or was it helpful?
- Are you aware of anything that could be changed or other skills that your son/daughter could have received at High School or at the Vocational Training Centre that would help them in employment now or in getting a job?
- What do you think employment means to your son/daughter? i.e. advantages and disadvantages
- What does it mean to you?
- Did the transition from School affect the family in any way, both positively and negatively?

Present experiences

If employed:

- Where, what are his/her duties, full time or part time?
- Does she/he want full time or part time and why?
- What does he/she like/dislike about job?
- Has he/she faced any problems?
- Has employment affected your son/daughter since graduation
- What do you think about this job? Its advantages and disadvantages?

If not in employment/unpaid employment:

- Why do you think they have not secured a job?
- What could be changed, could they do or be done in order for them to get a job?
- How has this affected your son/daughter (optimistic/pessimistic, more realistic etc)

Goals for future

- What employment goals for your son/daughter?
- What does he/she want to do?
- What do you think of that? Is it realistic?
- What would help/hinder these goals?
- What skills would he/she need to obtain to reach his/her employment goal?
- Are your goals the same as his/hers?
- Are there any barriers to him/her getting the job they want?
- What could overcome these problems?
- What other options are available if she/he didn't get a job in a reasonable time?
- Do you think the skills required for getting a job are changing and why?
- Does your son/daughter receive ODSP?
- In your opinion will his/her employment affect ODSP?
- Would this be an issue?
- So what is the next step, how does your son/daughter progress in the workforce?
- Do you have any other comments about improving accessibility to employment?

7. Educator

General information

- What is your position and briefly summarise your role?
- Roughly how many students with an intellectual disability are there in the high schools for which you are responsible?

The importance of work

- In your opinion how important is paid employment to those students with an intellectual disability that are near to graduation age?
- What advantages would these students achieve from paid work?
- What disadvantages would these students achieve from paid work?
- If you view paid employment as not important, what alternatives do you envisage?

Role of high schools in vocational training

- What role/s do high schools have in preparing these students with intellectual disabilities for employment?
- Could or should these be improved? How?
- Are there any barriers to improvement?
- Do the students have formal transition counselling/guidance before graduation?
- How well does this work?
- In your opinion could these be improved?
- Who or what else besides school has or should have responsibility for preparing these students for employment and obtaining employment?
- What are the roles and are these being met?
- Do you have any involvement with the students once they have graduated?

What would help/hinder employment goals? (Barriers and opportunities)

- In your opinion, compared to other students graduating from high school, are there additional barriers to students with intellectual disabilities obtaining employment?
- What are the main barriers?
- What could overcome these?
- What current opportunities are there to assist these students in obtaining employment?
- Can they be improved? How?

8. Employers

Workplace

- Information about the firm, including what it does, number of employee part time and fulltime PT and FT, unionised environment.
- What do you see as the characteristics and skills of a good employee?
- What is your connection with [service organisation]?
- How long have these arrangement been for?
- When you were initially approached by to take part in Supported Employment what were the reasons for your firm agreeing?
- What is the reason for this arrangement? Advantages to employer/employee?
- Can you estimate the number of supported employees you have had ?
- What were their duties, average length of stay and reasons for leaving?
- Have you had to let anyone go? For what reasons?
- Have any become permanent, in what position for how long?
- Do you currently have a supported employee?
- In your opinion what advantages and disadvantages do individuals with intellectual disability gain from employment?

Employment and Accommodation

- Did you have initial concerns about hiring employees with disabilities?
- What is your view now?
- Why the difference?
- What accommodations have been made for individuals from [service organisation]? (e.g. changing schedules, slowing down the process)
- How does the role of the [service organisation] job coach affect the employee, supervisor, and co-workers?
- Do the supported employees socialise and get help from their co-workers?
- Have there been situations when you have had to treat the supported worker differently to the co-worker?
- To what extent do supported employees interact with customers?
- How do the supported employees get on with the customers?
- How do you prepare co-workers for the appointment of an employee with disability?
- How do you measure satisfactory progress for a supported employee? Is it the same as for other employees?

Future

- You have told me of the characteristics of a successful employee to what extent do the present supported employees have these skills?
- Can you think of ways in which this situation can be improved?
- Who would be responsible for undertaking these suggestions?
- Is there anything your business or any other business could do to improve this situation?
- Overall what do you see as the biggest hurdles to successful employment of an individual with intellectual disability?

- In conclusion what is your view on the employment of people with intellectual disabilities?

9. Sheltered Workshop Manager

General workplace information

- What is your role at the workshop?
- Composition of workforce
- What are the differences between the workshop and [semi-integrated business on same site]?
- How is the workshop funded?
- Are prices for contracts competitive/market price?
- How do workers get a position in the workshop, where do most individuals come from?
- Is there a waiting list from regional intake for positions in the workshop?
- Where have the most recent workers come from?
- Is there an assessment or interview to see if prospective workers are suitable?
- Do the workers have employment contracts and what is the commitment/obligations for work?
- How flexible is the workshop as far as time off?
- How is the pay structured?

Development of individuals supported

- What is the relationship with workers? Is it a client or employee relationship?
- Does the workshop have any training programmes such as development of personal skills?
- What opportunity do workers have to progress to supported or other employment?
- How measure an individual workers progress?
- How motivate staff to progress?
- How does the workshop react when one of the more productive workers progresses to supported employment/competitive employment etc?
- Roughly how many individuals have progressed out of the workshop?

The meaning of work and how the workshop fits into the community.

- Do you think the workshop workers are segregated/isolated from the rest of the workforce in the community?
- In your opinion what advantages and disadvantages do individuals with intellectual disability gain from employment here? (Is it purposeful employment?)
- Any disadvantages to supported/competitive employment?
- How do parents react to their adult children working in the workshop?

Barriers

- What barriers are there to gaining successful competitive employment?

Appendix 2

Statement of Informed Consent

The statement of informed consent will be read to the potential respondent or parent responsible for consent, and two written copies will be given to her/him. If the respondent consents to participate, one copy will be signed and returned to the student investigator. The respondent or parent of the respondent will retain the other copy.

Research Ethics Board (R.E.B) #2004 069, approval date: June 23, 2004

Research Title: Youths with Intellectual Disabilities: Experience of Opportunities and Barriers in Transitioning to Employment.

My name is Stephanie Butcher, I am a graduate student undertaking a Master's Degree in the School of Geography and Geology at McMaster University (Tel: 905-525-9140, ext: 23070). My supervisor at McMaster University is Dr R. Wilton (Tel: 905-525-9140, ext: 24536). I am conducting research on the experience that high school students with exceptionalities face as they enter the work force. The purpose of the research is to understand more about the opportunities and barriers confronted by youths with intellectual disabilities as they seek employment, as well as their experiences once they are in the workforce.

The research is based on interviews with a series of questions. The interview should last about one hour. (PARENTS/YOUNG ADULTS GRADUATING 2004)- There will be 2 interviews one now and one in November or December.

Young adults leaving school 2004: (informed consent from parents)

I asked to interview your son/daughter because I am interested in learning about the job training he/she had before he/she left high school. I am further interested in their opinions as they seek work and start a job. Questions in the first interview will ask about work experience at high school, employment goals for the future and perception of opportunities to reach these goals. The second interview will ask about finding employment since the first interview and the actual experiences of employment. Only after written consent is received from a parent for your son's/daughter's involvement in the study will I read a research letter to your son/daughter that I will give to him/her. It explains in a more concise way the contents of this consent form. He/she will be given the opportunity to ask questions and verbally assent or dissent in undertaking an interview. In the event that a parent signs a consent form and the son/daughter does not want to take part

in the interview then the youth's wishes will be respected and she/he will be considered as no longer being involved in the research.

Young adults previously graduated: (informed consent from parents)

I asked to interview your son/daughter because I am interested in learning about the job training he/she had before he/she left high school. I am also interested in the experiences he/she had finding work and what he/she thinks of the jobs that he/she has done. Questions will ask about his/her education, any job training experience, what they thought of jobs they have held, future job goals and opportunities and barriers to obtaining them. Only after written consent is received from a parent for your son's/daughter's involvement in the study will I read a research letter to your son/daughter that I will give to him/her. It explains in a more concise way the contents of this consent form. He/she will be given the opportunity to ask questions and verbally assent or dissent to undertaking an interview. In the event that a parent signs a consent form and the son/daughter does not want to take part in the interview then the youth's wishes will be respected and she/he will be considered as no longer being involved in the research.

Parents:

I asked to interview you because as part of the research project I am interested in your opinions about the job training skills your daughter/son obtained before he/she left high school. I am further interested in your view of his/her experience as he/she seeks work and starts a job. Questions in the first interview will ask about his/her work experience at high school, your future employment goals for your son/daughter and your perception of opportunities to reach these goals. The second interview will ask about your daughter's/son's achievements in finding employment since the first interview and the actual experiences of employment.

Educators:

I asked to interview you because as part of the research project I am interested in your opinions about the job training skills youths with intellectual disability obtain before they leave high school. I am further interested in your view of the barriers and opportunities they will face gaining employment. Questions will be specifically aimed at what vocational skills are learnt during the high school years, employment goals for the future and what would help/hinder these goals.

Employers (including sheltered workshop manager):

I asked to interview you because as part of the research project I am interested in learning about the employer's experience with, and opinions about youth with intellectual disability as employees. Questions will ask about the nature of your company, your relationship with [service

organisation], experience of employing employees with intellectual disabilities and vocational skills required.

With your permission, I am going to tape record the interview. However, the interview is completely confidential. Your name/daughter's/son's/firm's name will not be used in any way and will not be connected with the interview. The tape from the interview as well as the transcript will be assigned a code number. A master list linking your name to this code will be kept in a secure location in my office. Tapes and transcripts will be kept in a separate secure location. After analysis and writing related to this research is completed, data collected during the project will be destroyed.

You (or your daughter/son) has the right to withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview. If you or your daughter/son choose to do so, all tapes and transcripts of your interview will be destroyed and your name will be removed from the master list. If you wish to withdraw from the study at any point please call Dr. Wilton or myself at the telephone numbers listed above. As this research is being undertaken by McMaster University withdrawal from the research project will not affect any current relationship with the respondent and [service organisation]. You have the right to refrain from answering any question(s) in the interview. If you would like to stop at any point, please let me know. If you have any questions about the research, please don't hesitate to ask.

There are no immediate benefits to you/your firm or your son/daughter associated with participation in this research, nor is there any financial or other remuneration. Longer-term benefits to the community could involve an increase in opportunities for youths with intellectual disabilities to gain employment as specific factors hindering their employment, such as work skills, are defined. There are no known and/or reasonably anticipated risks, discomforts and/ or inconveniences involved in participating (either physical, psychological, emotional, financial and social). However, if you or your son/daughter find the interview tiring and need to take a break for a short while please tell me. Once analysis of data is complete, research findings will be available to all participants. If you wish, we will send you a copy of the project report. You may also contact myself or Dr Wilton to request research findings at the numbers listed above. [Service organisation] will be provided with a report with relevant data to assist it in improving employment-training skills offered to the people it supports. All information given to [service organisation] will be totally anonymous.

This research project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the McMaster Research Ethics Board. It has also been reviewed and approved by the Executive Director [service organisation]. If you have any concerns about your involvement in the study, you can contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat

Tel: 905-525-9140, ext: 23142

E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

Thank you for assistance

Consent

1. I have read and understood the above information on the research project
2. I understand that I/my son/daughter can ask questions at any time in the future
3. I give free consent for myself/ son/daughter to participate in this research by signing this consent form

PARENT TO SIGN ON BEHALF OF SON/DAUGHTER

I agree that my son/daughter can take part in the above-described research

Signed _____

PLEASE PRINT: _____

On behalf of _____

Date: _____

Assent given by son/daughter-: _____

(to be completed by researcher)

ALL OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Signed _____

PLEASE PRINT: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3

Research Information Form: For young adults living at home where informed consent obtained from a parent.

The Research Information Form will be read to youths/young adults after a parent has signed the informed consent form. One copy will be given to him/her and if the respondent verbally assents to participate he/she will retain it. In the event the respondent dissents then he/she is considered as withdrawing from the research even if a parent has signed an informed consent form. Young adults that are competent to sign their own informed consent form may be read this Research Information Form if they request.

Research Ethics Board (R.E.B) #2004 069, approval date: June 23, 2004

My name is Stephanie Butcher and I am a student at McMaster University in the Geography Department. If you need to get hold of me you can telephone me at 905- 525-9140 extension 23070, or you can talk to my supervisor, Dr Wilton by telephoning 905 – 525-9140 extension 24536.

I am doing research on how students with exceptionalities and intellectual issues are getting on finding a job when they leave high school. Some of the results of this research will help organisation such as [service organisation] to give better training to individuals they support so they can get better jobs.

Some of my project will be done by asking a few questions in an interview. I am interested in asking you these questions if you agree.

Young adults leaving high school 2004:

Either your mother or father has already said that you can do this, but only if you want to. There will be 2 interviews one now and one in December. In the first interview the questions will go over any job training you did at school and what job you want to do. In the second interview I will ask questions about any job that you get and how you like it or don't like it. I also have some questions if you are not in a job.

Young adults previously graduated:

In the interview I will ask you about any job training you have done or are doing. I will ask what you think of the different jobs that you have done and what job you want to do in the future.

Each interview will be about an hour long. You and I will sit down together and I will ask you questions. If you don't want to answer a question that is O.K or if you need a short break that is O.K too, just tell me. I will be using a tape recorder to help me remember everything we talked about. There is nothing bad that will happen with the research and your answers to the questions may in the future help yourself and others get jobs.

No one will know what you said in the interview as I put a different name to everything you say. All the reports after the study will have different names in it, not yours. It is really up to you if you want to answer these questions in an interview with me. If you don't want to it will not affect anything. If you decide later on you don't want to do the interviews then you can tell me or telephone my supervisor.

Thank you

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