Neoliberal Conceptual Framing and the “Disappearing” of Marginalized Adults from the Basic Adult Education Learning Landscape in Ontario.

by

Laura Ellen Wyper

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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2018

Abstract

This study of Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs that are funded under the provincial Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) in Ontario looks at the potential first and second order effects of MAESD LBS policy changes since 2012. This study brings to bear an anti-colonial and anti-oppressive practice lens, in order to examine the potential for, and implications of marginalization and displacement within a number of adult basic education programs in the province of Ontario. A component of this study will consider comparisons between Northern and Southern Ontario.

Twenty-two LBS administrators and practitioners across Ontario—who between them have a cumulative knowledge of approximately 50 LBS sites in the province—were interviewed. These site administrators and practitioners were invited to participate after having been selected on the basis of sampling across both Northern and Southern Ontario from the Learning Networks of Ontario by LBS streams (Francophone, Deaf, Aboriginal, and English) and sectors (College, School Board, Community-based). Northern LBS site sampling included sites in the three Northern Regional Literacy Networks. Southern LBS site sampling included sampling by stream and sector in the sixteen (in total) Eastern,
Western, and Southern Regional Literacy Networks. Interviews were semi-structured with “what would you do in this situation” vignette scenarios which could be expanded by the administrators and practitioners.

The potential displacement of adult education students that seems to be happening in Northern and rural Ontario LBS is discussed, as is the marginalization of senior learners, developmentally delayed learners, and English Second Language learners from some sites. The implications of these results are discussed in relation to issues concerning equity in education, how New Public Management and neoliberal conceptual framing can create erasure as a consequence of second order policy effects, and the relationship between practitioner response and gatekeeping. Further discussions of practitioner self-efficacy, practitioner resistance, and meaning making at work, related to sustainable place-based community development ideologies, rooted in our diversity of economic, geographic and socio-cultural needs, for more holistic, multilingual education models and decolonial praxis are all explored.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the people that believed in me:

My faculty advisor, Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule who has been a guiding wind for years and years it seems.

My doctoral committee, Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule, Dr. Ruth Childs, and Dr. Peter Sawchuk for their patience and clarity.

My family, including my daughter Enid who had to learn patience and compromise when her mother had as much homework as she had and when life needed to be juggled, my partner Brian for all the dinners he made, sheep he fed, farm chores he did for me and the quiet emotional support that was there when needed, my mother and step-father Frank for their support—both emotional and at times financial, my late father for his financial support, and my aunt April who kept her word.

My friends and colleagues, including Mike, Leslie, Bev, Janet, Doris, Ron, Mark, and many others who showed interest in my projects over the years while putting up with my staffroom theorizing.

Thank you also to the LBS practitioners who participated in this study who were willing to share their thoughts, feelings, and at times their frustration.

And thank you to all the adult learners that teach me something new every day; I am a better person from knowing you.
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### Glossary

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Basic Education</td>
<td>ABE</td>
<td>This is the term often used for adult education that is below a high school level. The exact skills levels of adults in these programs can vary from basic “life skills” to more advanced skills for college and university preparedness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Sign Language</td>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>This is the type of Sign Language predominantly found in English speaking Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Language Benchmarks</td>
<td>CLB</td>
<td>These are the language level indicators used in the Ontario provincially funded adult non-credit ESL program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culminating task</td>
<td></td>
<td>These are task-based assessments. In another educational setting they would be understood as summative tasks. They have multiple skill requirements embedded in them, and are believed by MAESD to be a good demonstration of the learner’s ability to be successful at these types of tasks, based on the student's goal path and the types of skills they would need related to their post-LBS goals (Mid North Network, 2016, p. 38).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Ontario</td>
<td>EO</td>
<td>This is the service umbrella under which Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program sits in the Ontario provincial Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) suite of service provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Ontario Information System – Case Management System</td>
<td>EOIS-CAMS</td>
<td>This is the provincial database that LBS agencies starting using in relation to the 2012 policy and framework changes. All student data from intake, to learning progress, to exit is documented in this database. This database is also used to generate statistics for LBS reporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Ontario Partners’ Gateway</td>
<td>EOPG</td>
<td>This is a website where information about EO programs can be found. It is MAESD’s “official communication method for notifying service providers of updates, forms, reporting templates, etc.” (Mid North Network, 2016, p. 11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>This is one acronym used for people who are learning English. This is the acronym that the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) uses for its adult non-credit ESL program in Ontario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Training Consultant</td>
<td>ETC</td>
<td>This is the local MAESD representative that is an LBS site's main contact with MAESD. This is the MAESD individual that reports are often sent to, or who will likely attend an in-house site-monitoring visit (audit) as required by MAESD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French as a Second Language</td>
<td>FSL</td>
<td>This is an acronym used for people who are learning French as a Second Language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Paths</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal paths are Employment, Apprenticeship, Secondary School Credit, Postsecondary, or Independence, and are related to an adult learner’s long-term goals after their LBS service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and Basic Skills</td>
<td>LBS</td>
<td>This is the name of the MAESD, provincially funded, adult basic education program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milestone</td>
<td></td>
<td>These are task-based assessments that are aligned with the student’s goal path. In other educational settings these would be understood as formative assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Public Management</td>
<td>NPM</td>
<td>This is a business model of accountability that has been applied to public service agencies across many countries globally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Association of Adult and</td>
<td>CESBA</td>
<td>This is the support organization for the school board sector LBS programs. Each sector (school board, college, or community based LBS agencies) has their corresponding support organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Education School Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is not a curriculum but a framework based on “contextualized programming” that is believed to be aligned to the learners goals, based on their goal path. “It also supports the assessment of learner progress so that learners’ goal-directed outcomes can be measured and easily understood by learners, practitioners, and other stakeholders and reported through EOIS-CaMS to the Ministry” (Mid North Network, 2016, p. 18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontario Disability Support Program</th>
<th>ODSP</th>
<th>This is a provincially funded income support program for citizens with disabilities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development</td>
<td>MAESD</td>
<td>The Ontario provincial ministry responsible for LBS programming was formerly known as the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and had its name changed to this (MAESD) in the summer of 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration</td>
<td>MCI</td>
<td>The Ontario provincial ministry responsible for ESL programming was formerly known as the Ministry of Immigration and International Trade (MCIIT) and had its name changed to this (MCI) in the summer of 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Immigration and International Trade</td>
<td>MCIIT</td>
<td>MCI’s previous name prior to the summer of 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Performance Management Frameworks</td>
<td>MTCU</td>
<td>MAESD’s previous name prior to the summer of 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitability Criteria</td>
<td>PMF</td>
<td>This is the framework used to measure LBS sites performance expectations related to their contractual obligations with MAESD.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“The ten suitability indicators are: <Grade 12, OW/ODSP recipient or, no source of income or, Crown Ward, more than 6 years out of education, more than 6 years without training, age over 45 and under 64, history of interrupted education, disabled, Indigenous, Deaf, Francophone” (MAESD, 2017e, p.14).
Chapter 1
Introduction

This research study began as a practical problem I saw while working as a practitioner and Program Coordinator at a local Literacy and Basic Skills agency (LBS). I was concerned that changes in LBS policy that happened in 2012 were beginning to change which students had access to LBS programs and which students no longer had access to service. I saw this not only happening at my local agency but at other agencies in my community.

This thesis is an attempt to take a closer look at this situation—by way of interviews with a number of Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) site administrators and practitioners—in order to examine the ways in which the 2012 policy changes are affecting those who are served at LBS sites. This thesis is also an attempt to influence and inspire other LBS managers, coordinators, and practitioners to critically analyze the access policy in place at their sites, and to consider the way in which such policy relates to the 2012 LBS policy changes. This is how I developed my research questions.

Overarching Research Questions

1. What changes in practices have administrators/practitioners at LBS sites observed and how do they believe these changes are related to changes in provincial LBS policies?

2. How have the demographics of the students served changed? Are some subgroups of students served more or less frequently than before?

3. What strategies are staffs at LBS sites using to resist and/or mitigate the changes?

Practitioner & Researcher Lens

As a practitioner and researcher that tries to see things as a whole, or “big
picture”, I was analyzing the change in access to LBS programs I was observing from a variety of levels. As a feminist practitioner I tend to have a lens that sees the intersectionality of both people and processes. As faculty in a Community Economic and Social Development department at a local university outside of what was my day employment as an LBS practitioner, I also use both an anti-oppressive practice and a sustainable development lens. The idea of sustainable development generally should favor bottom-up over top-down approaches; redistribution over trickle-down; self-reliance over dependency; a local rather than a regional, national, or international focus; and small-scale projects rather than grand-scale or mega-projects. As well, they should be designed with extensive public participation; seek to improve society and the environment as well as the economy; and result in increased equity, equality and empowerment (Brohman, as cited in Roseland, 2012, p.12).

whereas anti-oppressive practice requires an understanding of the nature of oppression, its dynamics, the social and political functions it carries out in the interests of the dominant groups, its effects on oppressed persons, and the ways that oppressed people cope with and/or resist their oppression (Mullaly, 2010, p. 16)

The understandings and lenses I use daily, as above, were a part of my analysis of what was happening in the LBS site I was working in.

**Anti-oppressive Analysis Framework**

The understandings above meshed to form an overall framework of anti-oppressive analysis that I then used to describe what I was seeing in both my own experience and observations as well as in the responses of the research participants. I saw these analytical pieces as six levels of policy interaction from individual, to community, to regional, to provincial, to national, to global. These six levels were specifically: how intersectionality can affect access to education, how we live in
pluralistic communities, how we have regional differences, how provincial standardization of policy leads to first and second order effects such as decreased access to services for some people, how government policy relates to Canada being a colonial state, and how government policy decisions relate to the globalization of neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM). The changes in LBS policy follow neoliberal and NPM ideology, which have intersectional impacts and implications at each of the six levels of analysis. Many of these policy implications and impacts are tied to the colonial perpetuation of privilege, power and oppression, as will be discussed throughout this work.

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality sees race, gender, class and other variables as combining in complex ways to compound how discrimination affects individuals based on their multiple social identities. These individual differences and discriminations directly relate to the opportunity or lack of opportunity we have in life. These differences are also largely social constructs that have been developed as markers of power and privilege or lack of power and privilege. As stated by Crenshaw (1989), if we address “…the needs and problems of those who are most disadvantaged and with restructuring and remaking the world where necessary, then others who are singularly disadvantaged would also benefit” (p167). Thus, intersectionality drives my anti-oppressive theoretical understanding and is similar to that set out in the Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO) policy statement (2015). I include the following excerpt because it best represents my approach:

IWSO’s analysis and framework is shaped by a feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppression approach, which means we understand society as being
fundamentally based on patriarchal social relations as well as by racism and multiple other forms of oppression on the basis of: class, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender identification, colour, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, political affiliation, record of offences, marital status, family status, life experiences and appearance. Our analysis also highlights… the ways these multiple forms of oppression intersect and work together, to create differential impacts and diverse needs and issues for different groups of women. (p. 2)

The IWSO’s intersectional analysis of power, privilege and oppression can also be applied to all people.

**Pluralistic communities**

In the same way that individuals are diverse, so too are our communities. Regardless whether we define community as a religious grouping, a geographic grouping or in other ways, our communities are made up of diverse individuals, and are thus also pluralistic: made up of many different ideologies, beliefs, languages, ethnic backgrounds, and individuals. Creating programming that increases “equity, equality and empowerment” (Brohman, as cited in Roseland, 2012, p.12) requires we recognize and are responsive to the pluralistic needs of our communities.

**Regional differences**

Our province is large with diverse geographic and demographic factors. We have mega-cities in southern Ontario with incredible infrastructure and fly-in communities to the north that do not have year-round roads. The spectrum of regional diversity in our province is similar to that of our communities and individuals. This diversity brings different strengths and different challenges to our communities and community programming, depending on location. This diversity requires we recognize and are responsive to regional needs.
Standardization of provincial LBS policy: first and second order effects

Our provincial government has many ministries that govern various sectors in the province and oversee programs within each sector. The Literacy and Basic Skills program is under the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD). In 2012 MAESD rolled out a new LBS policy with a standardized delivery framework for LBS service providers.

Standardization or homogenization is often critiqued from a sustainable development lens, as it is a top-down model that does not always meet local needs. On the face of it, the new LBS policy implies the advent of greater accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness; it aims to show the public that government monies are being spent responsibly and that the government has public interest at heart. Yet, according to Niyozov and Tarc (2015), in keeping with the critical discourse relevant to adult education,

terms such as efficiency and effectiveness are often rejected as being fundamentally technical and economistic, conceiving of education as neutral, commodity and deterministic, rather than as a public good to be democratically debated and enacted in pluralistic societies, as a human right, or as unpredictable existential endeavor. Notions of quality, efficiency, time and resources are not only contested, but become manifest in unequal and radically distinct contexts. (p. 3–4)

As this quote implies, and as is often the case, the conceptual framing of policy is quite different in practice, once implemented.

The effects of LBS funding changes in 2012 can be understood in terms of Ball’s (1993) “first” and “second” order effects, which he describes in the following way:

First order effects are changes in practice or structure (which are evident in particular sites and across the system as a whole); and second order effects are
the impact of these changes on patterns of social access and opportunity and social justice. (p. 16.)

The changes I was seeing related to the new LBS policy had me thinking about many different aspects of power, alluded to by Niyozov and Tarc (2015) that are not only issues within education but within societies generally, including who has power, what this has meant historically, who gets to define things, who gets access, and how access leads to more opportunity or less. The changes I was seeing also had me questioning the ways practitioners might understand these issues, how they might be combining theory with practice (praxis) in ways that might prompt them to become gatekeepers in one form or another when it came to questions of power, access, and opportunity. The concept of first-and-second-order effects, as outlined by Ball (1993) are discussed in the course of this thesis in the context of practitioner responses to the new LBS polices.

**Canada as a colonial state**

Canada is a country that was born out of colonial expansion by the British Empire at the expense of Indigenous peoples and on Indigenous lands. Although we are independent from Britain at this point in our history we are still a colonial settler state in the sense that the Canadian government, which is a settler state government, is still actively colonizing this land through immigration, top-down policy and development schemes. This occurs even as the settler government (Canadian government) is working on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples across this land. The understanding of Canada as a settler state and government is crucial for analysis of government policy within our historical frame of reference. It is also crucial for practitioners who are doing anti-colonial or decolonial work to understand this shared history as part of their analysis in order to move forward in ways that do not perpetuate colonial abuses of power,
supremacy ideology, and oppression. Anti-colonial work or decolonial work is that which strives to end the colonial legacy by deconstructing it and developing new ways forward that are based in equity (Dei, and Kempf, 2006) particularly when the critique includes issues of economic exploitation related to colonial histories (Loomba, 1998). Anticolonial work and “...thought is about discoursing on difference, power, racial and social oppressions as well as the silences” (Dei, and Kempf, 2006, p.9), all of which will be discussed within this thesis.

The Globalisation of Neoliberalism, and New Public Management

This thesis inquiry is significant because many issues of equity in education are being noted in other provinces in Canada (Lange, Chovanec, Cardinal, Kajner, and Acuna, 2015). Similarly, worldwide neoliberal trends are being examined in light of historical colonial power structures, which are seen to perpetuate inequity in education (Agnotti, 2012; Block, Chavez, Allen, and Ramirez, 2012; Carney, 2011–2012; Sage, 2014; Starkey, 2012). Such trends are often seen as part of New Program Management (NPM) push (Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, and Tinkler, 2005; Haque, n.d.; Hennessy and Sawchuk, 2003; Lapsley, 2009; Ryan, Connell, and Burgess, 2017; Siltala, 2013; van der Sluis, Reezigt, and Borghans, 2017).

Neoliberalism specifically relates to a decrease in government involvement in public services and an expansion in the private sector, with reference to global market ideology (Dunleavy et al., 2005; Haque, n.d.; Hennessy and Sawchuk, 2003; Ryan et al., 2017; Siltala, 2013). New Public Management (NPM) incorporates a neoliberal market ideology that tends towards the business management model employed by the private sector, with its outcome-based emphasis on efficiency and accountability (Dunleavy et
al., 2005; Haque, n.d.; Hennessy and Sawchuk, 2003; Lapsley, 2009; Ryan et al., 2017; Siltala, 2013; van der Sluis et al., 2017). The ways in which practitioners on the receiving end of this type of neoliberal NPM policy respond to it by resisting—individually or institutionally—affects not only the type of resistor these individuals may become but will affect the kind of access made available at their particular site: individual and organizational response to NPM policy will ultimately affect equity of access to education. Practitioner response then becomes a perpetuation of colonial power structures if it continues inequity, oppression and marginalization or it can potentially become an anti-colonial or decolonial response if it questions and deconstructs governmental policy, while attempting to increase access and equity for citizens regardless of the policy’s original intent. This thesis is an example of such decolonial work in that it attempts to deconstruct the implications of the new LBS policy from a perspective of anti-oppressive analysis, and through the lens of sustainable community development also suggests new ways forward.

The anti-oppressive analysis framework below (Figure 1) has guided my understandings of each of the six levels of interaction with the new LBS policy in terms of my own observations and research participant responses.
Contributions to the Research Discourse

This research will contribute to the academic discourse by adding to the research on New Public Management in relation to LBS programs, by outlining the first and second order policy effects that are being seen in this setting, by describing the meaning that practitioners find in the process, and recording a set of responses to mandated policy changes. This work will also add to the analysis of the current Canadian Adult Basic Education setting; it will provide information to both the Ontario MAESD and the LBS practitioners regarding the current situation at particular LSB sites, and it will consider the implications of this situation. Finally, all of this work will add to the larger global discussion as it relates decolonial praxis in the setting of teaching and learning in
pluralistic societies, while informing my own praxis in the process. These contributions can be categorized as follows:

**Neoliberal discourse and New Program Management theory**

This research will expand on existing research into the field of neoliberal New Public Management and its effects on adult basic education, which is happening globally. I examine the related literature, with particular attention to Dunleavy et al. (2005), Haque (n.d.), Hennessy and Sawchuk (2003), Lapsley (2009), Ryan et al. (2017), Siltala, (2013), and van der Sluis et al. (2017) in order to consider the insights they provide with respect to New Program Management in relation to the current LBS policy. I explore the neoliberal implications of the global use of NPM, its use of e-governance, to how it affects working environments for students and LBS staff and is a perpetuation of colonial policy related to its business model of wealth production.

**Canadian Adult Basic Education (ABE) landscape**

With respect to my goal—to contribute to the research literature regarding New Public Management and bring it to bear to LBS programs—I would like to add to the discussion regarding challenges faced by basic adult education programs in Canada generally. Some areas of Adult Basic Education (ABE) across Canada have been struggling with challenges related to funding cuts, shrinking budgets, and the drive to refocus programs around employment, while others are developing creative compliance strategies, reflected in their programming. This research adds to the discussion provided by Lange et al. (2015) with respect to the displacement of certain sectors of the population, and the creative solutions practitioners are finding in a particular provincially funded program as part of the wider Adult Basic Education landscape in Canada in light
of the NPM discourse.

**Contributions to LBS practitioner dialogue and praxis**

This PhD research will hopefully increase dialogue among and between LBS practitioners, their networks, support organizations, and the ministry (MAESD) as it concerns the consequences of the 2012 LBS policy changes. My hope is that this research will help to recognize, deconstruct, and possibly disrupt MAESD’s current policy trajectory—because, as activists well understand, “through knowledge of how the system works….with this knowledge the system can be challenged and dismantled.” (Iseke-Barnes, 2008, p. 124).

The picture that is emerging is based on the information provided by LBS practitioners and administrators regarding changes to program options, class options, as well as sites, programs, and class closures that at times directly relate to the change in MAESD and LBS policy. This research has the potential to get LBS practitioners talking amongst themselves at sites, within their networks, and at conferences. It also has the potential to prompt personal practitioner reflection and analysis, and to increase the understanding of personal practitioner praxis.

Practitioner praxis, as it relates to responding and resisting neoliberal policy—as discussed by AGI-Goldratt Institute (2001–2009), Prior and Barnes (2011), Lapsley (2009), Lombardo and Mergaert (2013), Sekou (2014), Tummers (2011), and Wallace (1998)—is further elaborated in the context of practitioner responses specific to the LBS setting, to which I add observations coming from my experiences. The effect of policy change on worker self-efficacy, their sense of meaningfulness in their work, gatekeeping, and organizational capacity issues—as discussed by Hennessy and Sawchuk (2003),
Lapsley (2009), and Siltala (2013)—are elaborated in relation to the LBS sites samples provided here. In so doing, this thesis adds to the discourse around public service work environments, along with practitioner response and resistance related to NPM. Similarly, I elaborate on Stephen Ball’s work (1993) specifically in relation to his identification of first and second order effects as consequences of policy change as they relate to changes in LBS policy and, more generally, to NPM as a global phenomenon.

This thesis furthers the deconstruction of systemic colonial power structures as discussed by Sara Carpenter and Shahrzad Mojab (2013) in relation to their inclusion of intersectionality and anti-racist, anti-colonial thought within critical feminist theory; it takes Carroll (2017), Combs (2017), Deroo, (2017), Garcia and Wei (2014), Mazak and Carroll (2016), Tian (2017), Van Gorp (2017) into account as it refers to their concepts of translanguaging, and pluralistic language usage in teaching and learning as a pedagogy of inclusiveness; and it furthers the discussion related to concepts of anti-oppressive practice, decolonialization and neoliberal global power structures, taking into account the critiques of Clarke (2012), Cupples and Glynn (2014), Czyewski (2011), Harvey (2005), Klees (2008), Marshall (2011), Mignolo (2011), Moutsios (2010), Mullaly (2010), Niyozov and Dastambuev (2012), Niyozov and Tarc (2015), Portelli and Konecny (2013), Spring (2008), Tikly and Bond (2013), and Youngman (2000) related to their concepts of inequity within these global power structures. The theories of all of these authors are furthered by this examination of how these works relate to the importance of practitioner praxis in the use and awareness of power, defining, response, and gatekeeping in LBS, as well as the potential of LBS to perpetuate colonialism or advance decolonial praxis.
Information for the MAESD

There was a positive rate of participation in the interviews, which adds to the broader picture of the LBS learning landscape in Ontario, and provides an evidence-based platform for further discussion and action within the LBS community. My hope is that the information collected, as well as the dialogue and discussion that ensues, will alert MAESD to the seriousness of “the disappearing” of students at some sites, and perhaps help to create lasting changes if should these results be taken into account. This research has the potential to contribute to the MAESD’s internal Cathexis (2016) audit findings and the research of Pinsent-Johnson and Sturm (2015) as MAESD works towards a redesign of the LBS program which was initiated with the LBS Symposium in 2017 (Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development [MAESD], 2017b) and with the LBS working groups in 2018 (MAESD, 2017d). My research adds to both these discussions: the Cathexis (2016) audit addresses the technical side of the new policy and framework, and the research of Pinsent-Johnson and Sturm (2015) looks at, among other things, the OALCF and milestones as an access issue. My research also examines some of the potential effects on student demographic displacement and practitioner response at some sites related to the LBS NPM-based policy changes.

My own personal practitioner praxis

I recognize that the LBS sites where I have worked as an instructor and as the Program Coordinator are but one microcosm of LBS programs in this province and that the situation may be very different at various sites. This research not only allows other practitioners to think about what is happening at their sites, what they are doing and how this could be different, but it also allows me to live this process. I have had realizations,
and have learned and grown in the course of this investigation, which has resulted in observations that will be incorporated in the following chapters as they relate to the data generated in this research. I understand that this process will ultimately inform my own continued praxis as well.

To this end, Chapter Two will begin with a description of the Literacy and Basic Skills program before 2012 and the changes that began in 2012. I will describe the types of service providers, how programs are structures, the new delivery framework, and the performance measures of the new policy.

In Chapter Three I examine NPM as a neoliberal global policy trend that emphasizes accountability, and I consider how the requirement to be accountable affects the practitioner. Do we begin to see ourselves differently? Do we stand in the way of social justice by being forced to act as gatekeepers, allowing or denying access to education? I look at how policy changes can cause alienation and result in feeling conflicted about one’s role; how it can result in various forms of resistance, and finally, how practitioners come to resist in different ways from each other.

Chapter Four describes the qualitative research methodology, which employs semi-structured interviews with 22 LBS site administrators and practitioners—representing approximately 50 LBS sites in Ontario. Interviewees were given four scenarios based on student demographics; they were asked what they imagined would happen should any of these scenarios to occur at their own sites.

Chapter Five describes the findings that emerged from an analysis of participant responses, and considers the absence of binary “yes” or “no” answers. It raises the question of whether marginalization and displacement may be occurring at participant
sites. The multiplicity of needs and factors identified along the spectrum of practitioner responses to all four scenarios are discussed and categorized, with more detailed analysis following in the following chapters.

In Chapter Six I identify five themes that emerged; I question what Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) education is and who gets to learn; and I highlight the implications of the five themes in relation to neoliberalism, and issues of erasure.

Chapter Seven looks at the concept of community, and raises questions about how decisions are made with respect to the educational needs of the wider community, particularly as these concern standardizing criteria for access. The point is made that differences between communities are based on geographic, economic, and demographic realities, which include variations in linguistic and socio-cultural features, all of which have implications for differences in LBS programming. The implications of placed-based needs are analyzed within an anti-colonial, and anti-oppressive practice lens, specifically as they relate to both practitioner decolonial praxis and equity in education.

Chapter Eight sets out the conclusions and the main points of the research project and thesis. I also review practitioner responses to policy change and I emphasize that there is need to reframe LBS policy based on partnership with community in order to meet community needs.

First I begin with a recent history of the Literacy and Basic Skills program in Ontario. I look at how it was historically structured and how this structure continues today. Further, I look at the implications of this historical structuring, contrasting it to the standardization of measurement within the new policy and framework.
Chapter 2
The Recent History of LBS in Ontario, Past to Present

A fifty-year-old learner with developmental delays recently came to an adult basic education centre looking for help. His mother, with whom he had lived his entire life, had recently moved to a nursing home and he was now living on his own for the first time. He needed to learn how to use his cell phone so that he could achieve greater independence, and so that he could communicate with others when he needed assistance. The practitioner at the centre felt conflicted because, once this individual had learned to use his phone, he was reluctant to leave, despite being unable to identify any other learning goals—he kept insisting he be allowed to stay and learn more. Yet, the practitioner feels pressured to refer him out of the centre because his learning goals have been attained according to the delivery mandate of the funding agency. This story was shared by Participant 13.

In another part of the province, the manager of an adult basic education program receives a phone call from a seniors’ centre requesting a computer class for the centre. The manager says no, with regret: she cannot run these classes anymore because most participants are likely to be over 65 which would be problematic given the terms of the funding. The manager recalled the days when these off-site classes were run at local seniors’ centres, and how useful they were for the seniors who so needed digital literacy skills. She expresses frustration with the policy changes and the effects she is seeing (Participant 12).

In yet another part of the province the coordinator at an adult basic education centre agrees to let a recently settled newcomer—a Syrian refugee who is now starting
over in Canada—participate in a twice-weekly nutrition and life skills class. This learner came in stating he wanted to be able to shop for groceries, understand labels, and learn to decipher recipes and measurements in English so that he could eventually start a catering business as he had done in Syria. Although this newcomer is allowed to participate, the coordinator is nervous, unsure about whether she should register him officially or just let him attend “off the books” to get around the funding requirements with respect to English proficiency levels for this program. The coordinator knows there are general English-as-a-Second-Language classes in her community but she also knows that these classes will not meet the specific learning needs this learner has identified—which require concentrating on a particular subject rather than a number of general topics typical of an ESL class (Participant 17).

The examples described above are characteristic of the service delivery changes that administrators and practitioners of the government-funded Literacy and Basic Skills program have been seeing in recent years. These changes are related to a significant shift in policy and practices initiated by the Ontario government in 2012. This policy change can be viewed as an outcome of a shift towards neoliberalism in the administration of public services—also known as New Public Management (NPM). This trend appears to be affecting the administration of Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, particularly with respect to the capacity of those staffing ABE programs to resist policy changes when issues of social justice are at stake.

Of particular concern are those vulnerable sectors of society being refused adult basic education services, or those who no longer have ABE service options, with the result that individuals are now falling through the cracks.
Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programming in Ontario has been funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) since 1997 (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities [MTCU], 2013). In 2016, MTCU had a ministerial name change, becoming the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skill Development (MAESD), although the LBS program retained the same name at the time of writing this thesis. However, prior to 2012, there were changes within MTCU that affected LBS programs when it was moved under the Employment Ontario (EO) umbrella. For practitioners like myself, the move to Employment Ontario service delivery seemed to happen overnight: Employment Ontario signs suddenly appeared in LBS organizations, put up by administrators instructed to do so by MAESD. It happened so quickly that practitioners asked: what’s this? These sign changes signaled the beginning of many changes affecting LBS policy, indicated in the scenarios set out above and discussed below.

A number of related changes occurred in 2012, including policy changes in the provincial LBS program, the establishment of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF), and a move to provincial standardization and performance management, detailed in the LBS Service Provider Guidelines and LBS Support Organization Guidelines (MTCU, 2013). These new policies and guidelines fall under the MAESD’s Employment Ontario Service Provider umbrella (MTCU, 2013).

Employment Ontario (EO) has seven main principles for service delivery across its programs, which are also included in the new LBS policy mandate: accessibility, client-centred, quality of service, integration of services, cost-effectiveness, accountability, and community-based (MTCU, 2013). Of these, the language of
“effectiveness, efficiency, and service delivery” appears to be used globally to justify policy, particularly in the context of standardization in education for economic purposes (Clarke, 2012; Moutsios, 2010). The same language applies to public service agencies, particularly with respect to NPM policy (Dunleavy et al., 2005; Haque, n.d.; Hennessy & Sawchuk, 2003; Lapsley, 2009; Ryan et al., 2017; Siltala, 2013; van der Sluis et al., 2017).

These LBS changes are now tracked in a provincially standardized database known as the Employment Ontario Information System – Case Management System (EOIS-CAMS) (MAESD, 2107c). As with many other NPM models, “digital-era governance” forms part of a process wherein the relationships between government agencies and civil society are monitored and measured through these pervasive digital systems (Dunleavy et al., 2005, p. 478).

The purpose of the changes to LBS programming is stated on the website of the Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Boards Administrators of Ontario (CESBA) as follows:

With the new Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF), LBS agencies across the province are moving to a more task-based approach to literacy programming. The change is intended to help adult learners achieve their personal goals more quickly by providing training that links directly to tasks adults can expect to encounter in the context of employment, apprenticeship training, postsecondary school training, adult credit or at home and in the community. (Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Boards Administrators of Ontario [CESBA], 2014)

With the 2012 changes came standardized intake documents (known as MAESD registration forms), standardized milestones (a type of formative assessment task), and standardized culminating tasks (a type of summative assessment), which are used as a
statistical measure of student progress during the quarterly and year-end reports. These milestones and culminating tasks are organized into the five goal pathways (employment, apprenticeships, secondary, postsecondary or independence). Further changes included suitability indicators, which were also used as part of each agency’s quarterly and year-end reporting scores. These suitability indicators are discussed at greater length in the following chapters, but it is worth noting here that they had cross-over effects. For example, the progress of an adult learner was now measured in terms of their ability to pass certain milestones and culminating tasks, while at the same time, their eligibility for a program might well be based on their “suitability” or “demographic” fit. Progress and suitability—when combined with the number of referrals an agency will make to an alternative agency, and with the scores that students gave each agency on customer service surveys—all factored into the overall LBS agency score, as measured by the ministry. This scoring and the tracking of agency performance is known as a performance management framework (PMF); this PMF would determine each agency’s standing with the government in order to assess whether an agency was measuring up to the MAESD standards; if not, the agency would be flagged as needing improvement. This new demand for performance measures is intended to help guide the decision-making process at LBS sites and leaves agencies attempting to measure up to these new standards.

The latest iteration of LBS policy in Ontario originally appeared in 1997 (MTCU, 2013), and the 1997 policy was an extension of prior provisions in Ontario for building literacy and basic skills. Adult basic literacy education has a long history in Ontario under the auspices of a variety of provincial ministries, including the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, the Ministry of Skills Development, followed for many
years prior to 1997 by the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board (Essential Skills: Literacy Timeline, n.d.). Yet, the 2012 LBS policy changes have come up against intense criticism from MAESD’s own external auditors in 2016, particularly with respect to the LBS performance management and accountability goals. For example, Cathexis Consulting (2016) pointed out in their report for MAESD that the PMF has not yet succeeded in **driving quality service** [emphasis in the original] because standards are sometimes misaligned with program niches and the data is not yet meaningful and accessible enough to be used for continuous improvement…. Instead of these intended effects, the main impacts of the PMF roll-out have been time and effort diverted away from serving learners, anxiety and goal displacement among providers, and decreased openness and cooperation between the field and the Ministry. (p. 145)

The Cathexis (2016) analysis of the 2012 policy change is relevant to LBS centres which have seen a huge shift in practice for some, given that LBS programs have historically been funded by the MAESD, and given that all programs across the province had individualized their program-based information databases, intake, assessment, programming, and evaluation processes prior to this change. These LBS sites also were structured historically according to stream and sector, a structure, which continued following the policy change. For example, there are four streams (Anglophone, Francophone, First Nations, and the Deaf and Deaf-Blind), and three sectors—community-based agencies, colleges (Academic & Career Entrance, or ACE), and school boards—often deemed adult non-credit programs. This historic model has been carried forward since 2012 and continues to be delivered by the same four streams and three sectors. This has historically led to the variety and differentiation of programming
options between LBS agencies; these are described in the chapters that follow, in the context of the responses given by participants to the interview questions.

As stated starting in 2012, I was a practitioner in an LBS classroom where I began to see sometimes subtle and sometimes dramatic effects related to these changes.

I undertook this research on the basis of my experience with LBS programs. I examine my findings through a theoretical lens that is grounded in sustainable community development, anti-oppressive practice to discover whether the MAESD policy changes of 2012 are leading to the marginalization and displacement of some students based on demographics, particularly with respect to Northern and rural Ontario LBS centres.

Meeting community needs is not only related to the types of policy changes that might be considered, or to the first and second order effects this study identifies but, as a process, it is intimately tied to how we work as practitioners. How we see and understand our world—our knowledge of history, our praxis—has a lot to do with how we respond when change happens. This means we all have the ability to perpetuate our colonial shared histories: histories that marginalize, abuse power and disenfranchise. Conversely, we can be more responsive, equitable and anti-oppressive by moving beyond our shared colonial histories into anti-colonial and decolonial work that critiques questionable government policies and the status quo, while finding answers to potential inequity.
Chapter 3

Policy, Practitioner Praxis, and Resistance

In the previous chapter, I provided a historical introduction to this study and indicated the concepts or lens through which the implications will be examined. In order to understand what I was observing in my own community and my LBS site, I undertook a review of the literature relating to responses to policy changes by practitioners affected by these changes. In this chapter, I discuss my review of this literature and look at the ways in which practitioner responses fit into the larger theories relating to global policy trends and response to policy change.

New Public Management

Many of the changes I have been witnessing in LBS since 2012 can be framed within an outcome of neoliberal approaches to running public service organizations favoured by governments in recent years, also known as “new public management” (NPM) initiatives, which are essentially exercises in reimagining public services as businesses. The business model that underlies NPM has been applied to the public sector on a global scale for some time, bringing with it a focus on outcomes, increased efficiency, and accountability (Dunleavy et al., 2005; Haque, n.d.; Hennessy and Sawchuk, 2003; Lapsley, 2009; Ryan et al., 2017; Siltala, 2013; van der Sluis et al., 2017). I propose that recent policy changes affecting the running of LBS programs have a lot in common with the NPM model.

Historical Resistance

In the course of my LBS management experience and my academic studies, I have come to realize that, not only does educational policy framed in terms of neoliberal
or market-based ideology lead to marginalization, but it also uses strategies of legitimization, deligitimization and silencing to reach these ends. This can be seen in various types of resistance by practitioners, as related to Lapsley’s idea of street level bureaucrats (2009), and is discussed throughout this chapter, as seeing different types of resistance personally was my starting point for this research study.

The discourse around policy implementation provides a number of definitions of resistance. For example, Fineman (2003) defines resistance as “an expression of opposition by members of an organization to official or unofficial forms of control” (as cited in James and Jones 2007, p. 5). Lombardo and Mergaert (2013), on the other hand, see resistance as a phenomenon that emerges during processes of change…aimed at maintaining the status quo and opposing change. This interpretation of the concept is different from the meaning of resistance that refers to the questioning of a particular dominant social order, which is the most common understanding (p. 299).

Although these definitions differ somewhat, both “opposition to…forms of control,” and “opposing change” can be seen at work behind various forms of resistance to policy change.

Many reasons for resistance to policy change and implementation of new policies have been documented in the relevant literature—ranging from issues to do with equity, social justice, and power, to a sense of alienation from the new policy directives and role conflict. Lewchuk (2002), for example, notes that there can be high levels of stress for workers when rewards decrease, particularly when workloads increase while control over the work and support for workers also decrease.
**Equity, social justice, and power**

Sometimes resistance is directly related to opposition to neoliberal educational initiatives and reforms. It has been noted that neoliberalism leads to inequity through punitive and paternalistic policy consequences that negatively affect marginalized groups (Aguirre, Eick, and Reese, 2006). How policy plays out in group dynamics, if organizational players feel empowered or disempowered by the policy, and if they are going to challenge policy change or not will in part determine if the response becomes some form of resistance (Peszynski and Lenarcic, 2007). If resistance comes from a place of challenging inequitable policy, it can be examined through a social justice lens; resistance to the power structures can become transformative if it brings about equitable change (Wallace, 1998, p. 198).

**Policy alienation and role conflict**

Individuals who experience policy implementation as disempowering or inequitable will likely develop a sense of role conflict or feel alienated by the policy. Role conflict can occur, in this context, when professionals are instructed to implement policy where they encounter a direct tension between what is required of them in accordance with the policy and what is required of them by a client (Tummers, Vermeern, Steijn, and Bekkers, 2012). When work environments become less-human and more impersonal and move to more depersonalized forms of top-down management causing loss of meaning (Hennessy and Sawchuk, 2003; Siltala, 2013), conflict can exist at the policy-professional, policy-client or organizational-professional levels (Tummers et. al., 2012). Examples of role conflict related to these workplace conditions will be discussed below in relation to types of resistors. When professionals are working with
social justice in mind, competing demands to conform to policy at the same time as responding to client needs will likely prompt a resistance to policy implementation—which can also be seen as a “creative response” (Hennessy and Sawchuk, 2003, p. 31).

As well as role-conflict, professionals required to implement policy changes also develop policy alienation in its various dimensions which, according to Tummers (2011), can take the form of “strategic powerlessness, tactical powerlessness, operational powerlessness, societal meaninglessness, and client meaninglessness” (p. 555), particularly when policy changes affect self-efficacy at work (Siltala, 2013, p. 468). Tummers (2011) notes that alienation or disconnect can occur if an individual feels powerless to control what is happening around them, and also experience a sense of meaninglessness when contribution to the larger goal is not seen (p. 561). He also notes that a sense of strategic powerlessness will arise when individuals feel unable to influence policy, and a sense of operational powerlessness when there appears to be no avenue to contribute to decision-making process involved in policy change (p. 562). Tummers points out that meaninglessness can be “tactical” when it comes to the individual’s perceived role in influencing decisions about policy implementation, “societal” when it comes to individuals’ perception of added value to social goals, and “client-based” when it comes to added value for their own clients (p. 562). He emphasizes that, if professionals involved in policy implementation do not see the meaning behind policy or feel they have little choice in decision making with respect to the policy at hand, then these characteristic forms of policy alienation can ensue—which may also be seen as various forms of resistance or lack of willingness (p. 559).

Although there can be any number of other reasons for resistance, those
mentioned above related directly to the forms of resistance and the kinds of resistors I observed at my LBS agency—and which were, in the course of my research, discussed by the interview participants in my study.

**Types of Resistance**

The literature documents differences in the forms that resistance can take with respect to policy change depending in part on the policy itself. These can include individual, institutional, societal, and passive forms of resistance, according to Lapsley (2009, p. 5), and implicit, explicit, and that “more generally related to processes of change” (Lombardo and Mergaert, 2013, p. 302). Resistance of this nature can also include more complex forms of resistance that are not explicitly confrontational (Lapsley, 2009, p. 5) but instead resort to counter resistance, networking, and work through deliberative discourse in policy negotiations.

**Individual resistance**

Individuals are guided by internal values and patterns of behavior, which are based on social norms, which work to direct the choices they make when it comes to resisting or not resisting policy implementation. Belief systems, emotional responses to situations we find ourselves in, and the ability to adapt to change are only some of the factors that affect our choices when it comes to resisting or not resisting new policy directives. Internal processes such as these will influence our external actions, our lack of action, our little action. Siltala (2013) notes that when people feel forced to follow “goals that they cannot integrate into their autonomy, they grow tense, anxious, vulnerable, and depressive” (p.482). At the same time, our responses, in as much as they relate to our sense of autonomy and our feelings, can be made explicit in our direct (and sometimes
counter-resistant) actions against the policy being implemented (Lombardo and Mergaert, 2013, p. 301). This can be tied directly to the issues of role-conflict and policy alienation as they speak to the individual’s feelings regarding personal choice and a belief system.

I will identify specific “types of resistors” further on to demonstrate their relation to more complex and positive resistance ideologies, as the idea of choosing to comply or resist is a far too simplistic binary explanation.

**Institutional resistance**

Institutions, somewhat like individuals, can be seen to have an institutional culture, with norms and beliefs that at times will effect policy implementation. Resistance to implementation could be due to a misalignment between the institutional culture and the new policy, which will surface as explicit resistance resulting in management decisions that oppose the policy directives being presented (Lombardo and Mergaert, 2013, p. 301). Conversely, Lapsley (2009) talks about a “tick box” mentality and refers to an “audit society” (p. 11) where practitioners focus on ticking off all the goals and expectations set out in policy expectations and comply to being measured, scored, and monitored, potentially to the detriment of client service. He also points out that the pressures of measurement and audit can create both “legitimating behaviour” (p. 12) and “perverse and dysfunctional behavior induced by the ‘tick box’ mentality” (p. 13). These behavioural responses were seen numerous times in interviewee responses—demonstrating both acquiescence and resistance to policy—and will be discussed in the course of this thesis.

Institutional resistance can also be implicit and possibly due to lack of capacity, limited resources, or the inability of the administration to recognize this deficit.
(Lombardo and Mergaert, 2013, p. 301) or support the pieces needed for the implementation puzzle.

Again, this struggle by practitioners to make sense of what is happening can be seen as a by-product of NPM frameworks which, according to Siltala (2013), preclude individual intelligence:

Organizational intelligence precludes the individual intelligence of its employees….Professionals are treated as clerks, repeating the same tricks without any considerations of context, meaning, or questions of justice inherent in the cases dealt with. (p. 472)

**Processes or layers of resistance to change**

Sometimes the very process of change itself causes the resistance to policy implementation. The management consulting firm, AGI-Goldratt Institute, advises policy makers to look at several layers of resistance to change in order to circumvent it (AGI-Goldratt Institute 2001–2009). It sets out the following considerations: whether the right problem has been identified, whether the solution is leading in the right direction, whether the solution will “really” solve the problem; it also asks that organizations consider what might go wrong with the solution, whether there are negative side-effects, whether the solution is “implementable,” and suggests that organizations ask “are we really up to this?” (AGI-Goldratt Institute 2001–2009, p. 10). Critical analysis of this list shows that both individual and institutional levels of resistance could come into play in relation to either of Ball’s (1993) first or second order effects. When decisions are being made in the process of change with reference to “what is right,” we relate directly to our personal beliefs, our institutional culture, our norms of behaviour, and our emotions. These personal beliefs can cause role-conflict and alienation, or, as Lombardo and Mergaert (2013) point out, can also prompt “reactance” which they define as the
“perceived attempt to steer the actor in a certain direction” (p. 301). An individual may simply oppose policy change if they feel they do not have choice, and thus their resistance is simply a response to a perceived lack of choice.

There are many types of resistance beyond those mentioned here, and they often do not fall into binary opposites of resistance or compliance; there are also many types of resistors that can be conceptually differentiated and framed—depending on who is doing the framing—which will be discussed below in relation to the LBS policy changes that have been taking place provincially.

**Types of resistors**

Just as various forms of resistance to policy exist, so do types of resistors. Some types of the resistors identified by the literature fall into a category of “shirkers” (Prior and Barnes, 2011) but this is a term which can be critiqued as delegitimizing and paternalistic; other types of resistors can be seen in the categories of “change recipients” and “change agents” (McDermott, Fitzgerald, and Buchanan, 2013, p. 594).

**Shirkers and laggards**

Prior and Barnes (2011) identify a type of resistor who will “shirk” or absolutely refuse to engage with policy implementation (p. 270). This shirking was noted above in relation to Lombardo and Mergaert (2013) as an individual’s implicit or explicit resistance. This particular type of resistor is problematic when policy is directly related to outcomes and funding, given that the lack of participation or deliberate sabotage by such individuals can have consequences for themselves and others, including “exposure to sanctions or other risks to their well-being” (Prior and Barnes, 2011, p. 270). Shirkers or laggards shrug off or avoid responsibility for policy implementation; although there may
be many good reasons to resist a new policy, their refusal to engage at any level can cause stress in the organization and leave increased workloads for others who are attempting to be responsive to a new policy.

Shirkers risk being framed conceptually—by those implementing policy—as the individuals who cannot cope with change, who prefer the status quo, or who are slower to accept the change. While I agree that individuals who shirk responsibility exhibit a poor response to change and are clearly not managing change well—unlike “change recipients” and “change agents”—I also think terms like “shirkers” can be used to delegitimize very real concerns which are often based on second order effects related to equitable access. From the perspective of an NPM lens, this blaming and delegitimizing is also tied to the decentralization of services, so that when projects fail these failures are not seen as the fault of government, rather, blame is shifted to local levels (Siltala, 2013, p. 471) and “shirkers”.

Unfortunately, implicit actions, such as ignoring directives and not doing anything, combined with explicit opposition, ignores the fact that change is happening at all and simultaneously transfers the responsibility to others. The difficulty here is that responsibility will fall to others; that, or everyone accepts the consequences of inaction and opposition. Given that policy is often tied to funding, I see this is a non-answer, even if it is based on ideas about equity.

**Change recipients**

A second type of resistor has been identified as a “change recipient,” for example by McDermott et al. (2013); such an individual is responsible for managing both the first and second order effects as described by Ball (1993). The change recipient is responsible
for the first order effects related to structural changes that ensue from policy directives, as well as the second order effects that result from the impacts of the changes. The change recipient can see the need for local adjustment to the original policy in order to make the policy work (based on local needs), and will therefore minimize the second order negative effects in the adjustment process. That is to say, these change recipients often will adjust the first order effect so that a second order effect of negative consequence will not occur (McDermott et al., 2013, p. 594). Barnes and Prior (2011) also identify individuals who resist the expected practices related to policy implementation by changing the practices to reflect local needs (p. 270). They note that, while these individuals do not follow policy implementation entirely, they nonetheless end up with “official policy” as the end result, albeit with different impacts than originally intended (p. 270). Wallace (1998) identifies this behaviour in terms of a counter-policy, as where there is room at the local level for reinterpretation or adjustment of the original policy (p. 213).

**Change agents**

According to McDermott et al. (2013), change agents, essentially individuals who skirt resistance, do not generally resist engaging with policy change, nor do they restrict themselves to making local adjustments. Rather, according to their study, change agents tend to take change further by extending the mandated changes beyond the original intentions of the policy. These individuals do not only see the need for local adjustment to a policy that is being implemented in order to make it work at the local level, but in fact add to the policy in response to local needs they believe should be met (p. S94). The authors identify these change agents as “extrapreneurs” noting that they add extra
dimensions to the mandated changes (p. S94).

The focus of the literature pertaining to resistance related to policy implementation has changed over the years. When looking at the literature on resistance to policy implementation, the focus historically was on managing types of resistance so that resistance doesn’t happen or, at least, happens less. More recent literature on resistance to policy implementation suggests that we should not attempt to limit resistance but instead recognize that it can spring from specific reasoning, belief systems, and relationships. This literature also suggests that resistance can be potentially healthy, bringing about a process of meeting local needs in which change recipients and change agents are active. According to Sekou (2014), such individuals “operate from a social justice framework that insists community organizing can radicalize public institutions and make them more accountable to marginalized groups” (p. 182). As such, their resistance should not be viewed in a negative context but as the change that can move an agency towards more equitable service provision.

Similar to Sekou’s belief that resistance can be positive when it operates from a desire for social justice resistance can be viewed positively when it is based on resistance to neoliberal ideologies and NPM. A critical analysis of neoliberal ideologies inherent in the NPM model suggests that NPM is ultimately a perpetuation of colonial power structures, which worked to control power and generate wealth at the expense of the many for the benefit of the few. Thus, resistance to neoliberalism and NPM can be seen as a positive choice that supports social justice rather than perpetuating historical abuses of power.

With respect to the situation in which I found myself related to the new LBS
policy, I wanted to know how other sites in the province were coping, how practitioners were reacting and if there was resistance happening in some sites. From this particular historic and personal point of understanding I began my PhD study.
Chapter 4

Methodology

My research was prompted by my observations at the LBS site where I worked. I questioned whether the observations I made in the course of implementing policy change at this one site and in this one community would relate to other LBS sites and LBS communities across Ontario.

In this process of giving voice to those interviewed at selected sites, I hope this research eventually provides information for LBS practitioners in a way that can help inform our practice. When I started this research, my hope was that would prompt widespread discussion, reflection, critical analysis, and possibly change for some LBS sites. Naming a potential problem can lead to change, much along the lines described by Lederach (2006) with respect to conflict transformation—as a process that involves the ability to respond to conflict and to see it as an opportunity to open a space and initiate a process that allows communication to come about (p. 27). Lederach proposes that naming and describing challenges can increase our understanding and ability to change (p. 26).

As both an LBS practitioner and Program Coordinator over a period of ten years, I have the lived experience to ground myself in this research, an approach common in feminist research. Carpenter and Mojab (2013) note that “feminist critiques of social organization and their visions of resistance to subordination and domination emerged concurrently with anti-colonial and anti-capitalist work, particularly the ongoing critique of the social relations of reproduction” (p. 164). Other writers echo this position, and emphasize that this work be taken on from centred spaces, as both insiders and outsiders, where these relations can then be analyzed and critiqued, at both personal and political
levels, has also been discussed by many authors (Doucet and Mauthner, 2006; Hesse-Biber, 2012).

This research began after my analysis of observations at the site where I have worked as an LBS practitioner and as a Program Coordinator. These site observations combined my theoretical understandings, of decolonial work, anti-oppressive practice, sustainable community development and feminist intersectionality, with a deliberation about the impact of all this on praxis in the field. This was my starting point but, given my proximity to my work, I needed to have these themes framed by responses from my research participants to not only gain the advantage of other perspectives but also to add richness to my description of the impact of the policy changes to LBS in Ontario. In other words, I wanted to examine the LBS policy changes in relation to first and second order effects to see whether other LBS practitioners and program coordinators were experiencing similar effects. I wanted to find out how other sites were managing the policy changes, how these changes were affecting their student demographics, and the extent to which they were similar or different from the way we experienced these changes at our site. My hope was my research findings would be significant in ways that might help LBS programs cope with the changes—or perhaps even challenge the changes—if they were experiencing similar outcomes, such as displacement and the marginalization of student demographics that had been served in the past.

Research Methodology

This study incorporated a qualitative research methodology that used semi-structured interviews in order to present a case study of LBS practices in the province of Ontario.
The study group incorporated both LBS practitioners and LBS administrators in a way that, it was hoped, “mobilizes the living knowledge of people connected to each other and their environment and weaves a collective understanding of ways to act for the common good” (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013, p. 3). As LBS managers and practitioners across the province we are connected to each other through our work even if we do not know each other personally. The participation of the LBS staff in this study will allow other LBS practitioners across the province to benefit from the findings generated by the interviews and thereby increase our collective understanding of the processes happening in this province with respect to LBS policy change in the past few years.

The research used semi-structured interviews using “what if” scenarios or vignettes, based on four specific student demographics. Three of the four vignettes were developed to examine student demographics which may be experiencing marginalization or displacement. The fourth scenario that I developed was prompted by my concern that higher risk students might be “pre-screened” and denied services if we became preoccupied by measures such as progress and outcomes, and focused on customer service follow-up surveys in the statistical quarterly reports.

The use of these scenarios or vignettes allowed for exploration of what could be sensitive topics, while also having the potential for a wide variety of practitioner responses. The idea was to talk about the scenario, beginning with an “icebreaker” perspective to allow the interviewees to move naturally through a process of explaining what happens at their sites to reveal their general attitudes and beliefs (Barter and Renold, 1999). A vignette approach, rather than yes and no answer approach, allowed for a discussion not only of what was happening but why by interviewees. For example, after
interviewees described what they anticipated would happen to a student in a particular scenario, i.e., where the potential student arrived in need of an LBS service, I was able, on the basis of their response, to follow up with open-ended questions to clarify with them what they meant. In cases where the interviewee indicated that they “did not serve” the type of student described in the scenario I offered, I was able to ask further questions that would allow me to better understand their community context, such as “Are there other agencies that you are aware of which might provide service for these individuals?” If the answer was “yes,” I could follow up by asking for more detail, such as “Are students likely to encounter wait lists for services at the other agency that you are aware?” I saw my research subjects as holders of knowledge that expanded my experience and informed my theoretical perspective. This allowed me to incorporate my experiences as a practitioner and an administrator into an evidence-based sample of the picture of LBS organizations and programs in Ontario. The generation of data by way of interviews means that there is also room in the future to use this data beyond this research project in action planning and further research related to LBS agencies provincially.

The four scenarios developed for this research are set out as follows:

**Scenario One**

An English as a Second Language (ESL) student seeks out an LBS service at your site for an employment-based class you are running. The student is presently receiving ESL lessons in an ESL program funded by the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration, and International Trade (MCIIT), and was assessed in this student’s ESL program as a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 4. What would you do?

**Scenario Two**

An adult comes in—accompanied by a worker from a community-based agency that supports developmentally delayed adults to live independently—to seek out an LBS service at your site to learn to read and make change. On assessment you find this
individual cannot write his (or her) name or recognize numbers from one to twenty. What would you do?

**Scenario Three**

A 67-year-old senior from the community seeks out an LBS service at your site for computer upgrading. He just wants to learn how to turn a computer on, use a mouse, surf the Internet a bit, and learn how to use his iPad to connect with grandchildren across the country. What would you do?

**Scenario Four**

An adult comes in—accompanied by a worker, from a community-based agency that supports adults transitioning from incarceration to living independently again—and seeks out an LBS service at your site so she can upgrade her skills before going on for her OSSD [Ontario Secondary School Diploma]. You are familiar with this learner as she was at your agency some years ago. Her past attendance was extremely irregular; she had addiction challenges, she eventually just did not come back, and you could not reach her for a follow-up as her number had been out of service at the time. What would you do?

**Qualitative Design**

**Population sample and data collection strategies**

As noted above, LBS sites are found across four streams and three sectors in Ontario. According to the Cathexis (2016) report for the MAESD, there are approximately 274 service delivery sites serving over 37,000 learners in classroom settings. There are also over 5,500 “blended” learners, i.e., those generally present in online settings who are also potentially present at LBS centres on some days, and therefore making use of both in situ and online LBS services in Ontario (p. 8–11). Demographically, according to the report, in 2014–2015 there were 32,847 Anglophone stream learners, 2,896 Francophone learners, 1,233 Aboriginal learners, and 317 Deaf stream learners physically present at LBS sites (p. 9). The report also reported that, in
2014–2015, colleges in Ontario served 15,570 learners, community agencies served 11,439 learners, and school boards served 10,043 learners (p. 10).

I propose that these numbers do not necessarily form a true picture, as they may not count students who were served historically, up until 2012, who found themselves outside the mandate or in the process of being displaced from centres for various reasons given the terms of the new policy. The number and characteristics of these learners are at the very heart of the layered research question: who is really being served? who was being served and is no longer eligible, and which learners are still being served but in smaller numbers. This data is largely hidden. The “lost” learners are not easily counted in this kind of quantitative approach, and so I must rely on the recollections and the accumulated knowledge of practitioners in the field. Although we may never know what the total numbers of displaced persons are, the use of qualitative methods in this way allows insight into which groups are experiencing displacement at some sites, even if the method cannot track actual numbers lost. I also argue that it is not “about numbers” in any case—everyone who faces displacement and needs help with literacy is important and needs to be provided with this kind of service.

This largely unseen phenomenon of displacement is one of the most important reasons motivating this research study while also giving voice to practitioners, their recent experiences, frustrations, concerns, and strategies as they relate to the LBS funding changes, even as sites attempt to balance their statistical measures and their community’s needs in their bid to secure their site’s future funding within this new mandate.

Related to the phenomenon of displacement, it also happens that, some LBS staff do not have the pre- and post-comparative analysis available to them due to being
relatively new instructors—post 2012 LBS policy change— but some nonetheless saw shifts that have been happening during the last five years. The possible re-focusing of programming since the OALCF means that the demographic shifts, when they are happening in the learning landscape, are not being well documented from a quantitative perspective. For example, I can identify many of the students that are no longer being served in my community based on my ten years of experience within this LBS community and my participation in the local literacy partnerships and networks. I expect that this situation would be similar in other communities, i.e., that the numbers of possible “lost learners” may not be well documented quantitatively, in terms of hard numbers, but are largely known through the historical experiences of the practitioners interviewed, when they had this historical background.

Further to the historical knowledge practitioners may carry, some sites may have as few as one staff person running an entire LBS program. In this is the case, individuals may be taking on administrative tasks as well as instructing in the classroom. In larger sites, an LBS manager may be in place to undertake all the administrative tasks while also working with LBS classroom instructors. Because programming happens across various sectors, these administrative and instructional roles will look different than their counterparts within the more hierarchical structure of college and school board service providers—which are usually accountable to the institutional chain of command; staff at these larger institutions may do some reporting, though usually not financial reporting depending on the size of the institution. Similarly, those working at the community level, depending on the stream, may be accountable to Boards of Directors or perhaps even Band Offices. However, administrators and instructors at the community level may or
may not have other forms of infrastructure support for such things as financing audits or technology glitches—one person may combine the roles of administrator, financial manager, accountant, and I.T. person; they may be a one-person show or work as part of a much larger team, in ways similar to college and school board programs. In all cases LBS programs may be running as an isolated and fragment cell within a larger structure, or as a stand-alone independent agency.

Given the range of possible organizational structure, the main focus of the research was to conduct interviews with 22 site administrators and/or practitioners, with the understanding that such blurring of roles is likely. These 22 individuals represented the 24 sites I had wanted to sample; between them, they oversaw approximately 50 sites across the province given the way that individuals often have more than one responsibility.

The interviews were semi-structured, and referred to the student demographic “What if” scenarios set out above (Appendix A). The scenarios were provided verbally (or on paper if requested) to guide the interview process in the hope that this would open up space for dialogue about “creative solutions” that are possibly happening across the province. This structure not only provided a safe space given the hypothetical nature of the scenarios, but also allowed many practitioners to speak about other site-specific issues, such as local demographics, as well as other concerns. When I was not sure whether the specific information given was tied to the new policy, this structure gave me the space to ask for clarification that usually led to further discussion. The interview scenarios also seem to have been a moment of dissonance or incongruity for some of the practitioners interviewed. Sometimes the interviewees were perplexed by the questions,
when clarification was requested by me regarding their responses, and needed time to visualize and think about what was being proposed.

I chose these site administrators and practitioners from both Northern and Southern Ontario on the basis of sampling across the Learning Networks of Ontario (see Figure 1 below), according to LBS streams (Francophone, Deaf, Aboriginal, and English), and sectors (College, School Board, Community-based). Northern LBS site sampling included sites based in the three Northern Regional Literacy Networks. Southern LBS site sampling included sampling by stream and sector based in the sixteen (in total) Eastern, Western, and Southern Regional Literacy Networks.

Figure 2. Regional Literacy Networks in Ontario.

Note: Retrieved from Learning Networks of Ontario webpage:

http://www.learningnetworks.ca/
I conducted a total of 22 interviews—which accounted for the 24 sites based on northern-southern, stream, and sector sampling as shown in Figure 2 below. Given that administrators can oversee a number of site contracts and/or multiple LBS geographically distinct sites, the 22 interviewees represented the collective knowledge of approximately 50 LBS sites across the province.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>College</th>
<th>School Boards</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Nations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francophone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf &amp; Deaf-blind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglophone</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. LBS Stream and Sector sampling.

Some streams are not represented in all sectors, and were therefore given an equivalency of voice and representation within the sectors of which they are part. For example, there are rarely if ever First Nations LBS sites within the College or School Board sectors, unless they are co-located or share a space. To compensate for these factors, i.e., to ensure that there is similar representation by that stream, I sampled from six Community-based First Nations LBS agencies (see Table 2). Table 2 represents the final interview samples used for both Northern sites and Southern sites. I wanted to ensure that voices in both areas of the province (north and south) were accounted for. Alternate sites of similar stream and sector were found if sites did not want to participate when contacted.

I developed my research questions (set again out below) by drawing on my own concerns as a long-time practitioner-administrator. These research questions also drove
the development of the four student demographic scenarios I used in the interviews because I expected that this type of open-ended conversation would allow for greater sharing. I structured the scenarios to prompt interviewees to talk about who was and who was not being served at their respective LBS sites, and to allow for more wide-ranging responses regarding service provision at these sites, and how they had been affected by the 2012 policy changes.

**Overarching research questions**

1. *What changes in practices have administrators/practitioners at LBS sites observed and how do they believe these changes are related to changes in provincial LBS policies?*

2. *How have the demographics of the students served changed? Are some subgroups of students served more or less frequently than before?*

3. *What strategies are staff at LBS sites using to resist and/or mitigate the changes?*

**Events**

LBS sites have direct agency links with contact emails that could be accessed through the Regional Literacy Networks. I used this information to contact the LBS sites for the interviews. I emailed a letter of invitation to participate (Appendix B) and a letter of consent (Appendix C) to LBS site administrators (generally the contacts on LBS agency websites), and invited them to take part in an interview; I provided my University of Toronto email as a way of contacting me to set up an interview time. As this work was taking place outside of my role as an LBS Program Coordinator, and in my role as a University of Toronto PhD student, proposed interview times were for evenings and weekends and were to be conducted at my home office.
Ethical considerations

Given that all LBS agencies and practitioners are funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skill Development (MAESD), either directly as service providers or indirectly as employees of these agencies, the research needed to ensure confidentiality in order to avoid any negative or retributive consequences for either the agencies or the individual practitioners participating in this study. This causes a thread of “secrecy” to run throughout this document, and became a sensitive issue when reporting findings, as the presentation of LBS sites by sector and/or stream means that some sites could at times be easily identified. In some instances sites have thus needed to be incorporated into the larger thematic findings rather than specifically highlighted individually to ensure confidentiality, even when a specific analysis could have added richness to this document. In other instances the type of agency, or who or how they partnered with others in their community, or specific programming has been hidden to add a layer of confidentiality for sites. For this same reason of confidentiality practitioners’ gender, race or social location generally have not been included as this could compromise their confidentiality. Social location may at times explain practitioner praxis but this is not always the case due to cycles of socialization (Harro, 2010a), cycles of liberation (Harro, 2010b), internalized oppressions and other intergenerational issues linked to colonialism, power, privilege, and oppression; therefore, as the correlation between social location and practitioner praxis was not a focus of the study, I leave it to a future study to ask these questions specifically.

As the researcher, I was at some risk because I could not conduct the research anonymously, but it was essential to ensure confidentiality for my participants. I took
care to conduct this research outside the hours of paid work, as an academic researcher and PhD student outside the boundaries of my employment. My position would theoretically have allowed me access, by way of my government username and password, to materials that would not normally be accessible to a researcher given confidentiality restrictions on government data. However, I understand clearly that any use of non-public materials for the purposes of this research would be both a breach of my terms of employment and my confidentiality commitment to the District School Board and the MAESD. This means that I only used data that can be gleaned from publically accessible websites, from interviewee responses, and from documents that anyone registering for an LBS class would be able to see.

Further issues of ethics considered, related to my anti-oppressive practice lens, are the use of terms like shirkers, as noted in Chapter Three. I use the term “shirkers” in this document to highlight how conceptual framing delegitimizes processes, practices, and potentially practitioners at times. This term is not a term I would ever use personally or believe in, as its use in delegitimizing others connotes a type of use of power (power over) that I also do not believe in, but “shirkers” is used in the literature as well as in my own experience and thus have been discussed and critiqued from this frame of reference.

The information obtained in the course of conducting the interviews has been kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location on an encrypted remote desktop computer. All interview information was coded and reported in such a way that individual persons, sites, and communities could not be identified. All raw data (e.g., transcripts, consent forms) were kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office at home and will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.
Interviewees had the option to refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the interview process. None did. They were able to request that any information, whether in written form or audiotape, be eliminated from the project, but no one did. Finally, interviewees were free to ask any questions about the research and their involvement with it, and they were able to request a summary of the findings of the study.

Data collection

Due to the geographic expanse of this province, telephone calls with audio recording were used for interviews. I transcribed all phone interviews. I provided a paper-based copy of the scenarios as needed given my inclusion of Indigenous, Francophone, and Deaf and Deaf-blind stream interviewees. This paper copy also increased access to the study for some participants because they could choose to provide their responses on paper rather than by telephone, or they could choose to use the written summary to focus their verbal responses during telephone interviews. I would follow up paper-based responses by asking for clarification, which I would send by email to these participants; their answers would be cut-and-pasted, including the time and email data, to their original responses to ensure that I had elicited the same degree of clarity as I achieved with telephone interviewees.

A copy of the transcript was sent by email to phone interviewees for their review. This allowed interviewees to add any further information or correct any misinterpretation that resulted during transcription. If I had not received the transcript back from the interviewee after one month, I attempted to email the participant one last time to request its return. If transcripts were still not returned within six weeks of originally being sent I was able to assume that participants chose not to add to or correct the content, in keeping
with the provisions on the original consent forms. From here, I proceeded with my data analysis.

Variables

A comparative analysis of the data from Northern Ontario LBS sites and the Southern Ontario LBS sites was done to see if there were any notable discrepancies or significant variations between these two geographically distinct areas (discussed in the following chapters).

Data analysis

I manually categorized and coded all collected data using thematic tables along the lines proposed by Creswell (1994) and McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn (2013). As I was the only one analyzing the data, the possibility of inconsistencies in coding was minimized (although this could be viewed as a limitation due to the inability to assess inter-coder reliability). I began coding by first examining the direct responses—for each scenario—to the primary question of whether students were being served, not served, or referred elsewhere. I then coded each site according to other key words, and I identified overriding themes—themes that showed up repeatedly across a third or more of the interview responses. These code words or key words were interpreted, through descriptions and explanations by participants, and then used to identified chapter themes—to do with capacity, student demographics, community need, the idea of literacy learners, and gatekeeping.

Reporting the findings

The timeline for this research was just over two years, beginning with a thesis proposal in early 2016, which was subject to an ethics reviews. I began the interview
process around the middle of 2016 and data collection was completed by February 2017. I plan to bring attention to this research at conferences and to disseminate the research results to LBS agencies and practitioners through the networks available to me.

Many of the interviewees talked about how they were going to raise issues that arose in the course of the interview within their LBS agencies, networks, and support organizations. Simply participating in the interview process seemed to prompt some participants to think about taking action, although it would be difficult to assess whether and to what extent this has come about. In any case, following graduation, I intend to distribute the completed dissertation in its entirety to study participants, literacy networks, and support organizations and my intention is to develop smaller chapter-based articles. I hope both the research and the information I expect to share will prompt action through dialogue with various levels of administration and government in the days to come.

My years of experience as an instructor and Program Coordinator could influence or bias my investigation. I worked to counteract this effect by allowing the responses given by interviewees guide my interpretation, asking for clarification in interviews, to ensure that I was not reading my own bias into their results. For example, I always took care to clarify whether agencies were serving students under the umbrella of MAESD funding, or whether they were providing services in other ways, and if so, to determine whether this kind of service provision began after the 2012 changes.

I was able to sample 9 of 12 northern sites along with 13 southern sites. This ensured that I was able to sample 6 out of 6 sites for the First Nations stream, 4 out of 6 sites for the Deaf and Deaf-blind streams, 4 out of 6 sites for the Francophone streams,
and 8 Anglophone sites. While I aimed for even numbers by stream, I sometimes had more participation from one stream than another. I also determined that giving voice to a wider area of the province was more important than focusing on a smaller sample size based on sampling north and south evenly, particularly because learners do not necessarily approach sites on the basis of appropriate stream but simply by location or proximity to home, and the choices available in cases were there is only one LBS site in their community.

I note here that both positive and negative bias may be a factor in this study given the nature of self-selection when it came to agreeing to participate—a common risk when taking samples from volunteers. However, I think it is a reasonable approach, given the intention to show the variety of voices—this being a qualitative study with a straightforward sampling of experiences. Even if participants self-selected for their own reasons, this does not negate their lived experience or what is happening at the sites they represent.

This chapter has described the research lens, the methodology, the selection of research participants from northern and southern Ontario, the interview structure and the scenarios I used. Following in Chapter Four is a discussion of my general findings with respect to service provision.
Chapter 5
General Findings

In this chapter I will discuss my general findings as they relate to providing services in the LBS setting; I will examine the other patterns and themes observed, and I will explain my process for categorizing them.

As noted above, Adult Basic Education in Ontario is funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD), but there are other funding sources at provincial and federal levels that offer alternate programs with the result of making similar programming available. The LBS program went through changes in the 1980s and 1990s through a gradual process of transformation from a popular education model into a more formal model of adult education in the late 1990s under the auspices of the MAESD (MTCU in a prior incarnation). The round of changes seen in the 1990s affected service provision at some sites and for specific demographics—such as English Language Learners who had been served within some LBS centers. This shrinking of roles within LBS in the 1990s would play out a second time during the 2012 policy changes with implications for the number of learners served, funding, and institutional culture.

A few years after the new policy in 2012 came the verbal directive given to many northern sites to decrease their independence goal path percentages to 20% or lower. As stated earlier, MAESD has five goal paths within LBS: Secondary, Apprenticeship, Postsecondary, Employment, and Independence, related to why students are accessing LBS service and the learner’s end goals. Given that some northern sites already struggle with aging populations, out-migration and economic factors related to the boom and bust
industries, I was interested to see how these sites responded to this directive, especially regarding its effect on service provision.

When I tallied the responses of the participants to each of the four scenarios given I came up with five possible answers. These formed the five columns for Figure 4 below, where each of the twenty-two participants answered in one of three ways:

1. No we do not serve this demographic.
2. Yes we would serve this demographic within the LBS MAESD funding.
3. Yes we would serve this demographic but not within MAESD funding anymore.

The first three columns of Figure 4 show everyone counted in. However, given the nuances in the responses to these scenarios, many participants provided an additional answer, which meant that answers were counted again in columns four and five:

4. We may serve some (or not) but we will refer to others and,
5. We may serve some (or not) but this demographic is also displaced now at our site(s).

Columns four and five represent a significant part of the picture showing what is really happening at some LBS sites. For example, Figure 4 indicates that most sites serve most demographics, but many participants gave more nuanced responses, saying first, “yes we would serve this senior learner,” but then going on to say that only half as many students are actually being served from the demographic in question when compared to the numbers these sites once served, adding that there was no alternative service available for the skills these students were acquiring at the particular LBS site. Other participants would begin by saying they would not serve the demographic in question but refer the
prospective learner to another service provider, or that they would in some cases provide a service for some but more often refer the prospective student on. And yet when asked where they would refer the student, it turned out that some had no idea where to send the prospective student, or they would make a referral knowing that the alternative site had a year long waiting list, or that the needed service would be provided by community agency located hours away—none of which can be considered feasible alternatives. In all of these cases I had to ensure that these “yes-but-really–no” and “sort of” answers were captured because, in all such cases, an unreliable referral, or serving some but not many, represents a form of displacement of sorts. These further responses will be discussed in the following chapters.

Figure 4. General overview of scenario results

Each scenario generated the three primary columns: sites were either “not serving” the population described in the scenario at all (column one), or were currently
“serving the demographic within MAESD funding” (column two), or were “continuing to serve the population described but no longer carrying them within MAESD funding” (column three).

Column two also includes interview participants who stated that they were serving certain learners within MAESD funding, but who described situations of creative compliance, non-compliance, and resistance. In these cases, in order to make MAESD funding available to some adult learners without affecting site statistics, interview participants were forging milestones, registration consents, and suitability criteria, or they were only applying specific milestones that everyone could achieve no matter their pathway or level.

Similarly column three includes responses that indicate both creative compliance and resistance; this column also takes into account one of two types of displacement seen in the study: where participants kept client files out of the database but still provided services; or where they used volunteers, partnered with other agencies to deliver programming, or found alternative sources of funding in order to continue to provide services to particular groups. Column three includes sites that were continuing to serve certain populations, often citing community need as the reason—but they were clearly NOT going to count these individuals within MAESD funding anymore. This decision had to do with the potential for negative consequences when it came to compiling statistics related to progress and outcomes given the new MAESD funding guidelines.

Sites that were not serving certain populations (column one) were generally also referring these individuals on (column four) because they did not fall into the category of “literacy learners”—discussed in Chapters Five and Six. The second type of
displacement noted in the fifth column includes “some” members of this population for whom services were being provided (but in far smaller numbers), OR who were referred to other service providers but who, for a variety of reasons, were unsuccessful in their search for a service. This “lack of service” was counted as the second form of displacement; it refers to individuals that would no longer be served within MAESD funding guidelines, and/or not having other program alternatives due inappropriate or non-existent referrals.

It appears that seniors and incarcerated individuals represented in Figure 3 are largely served within MAESD guidelines, but the only group who would be fully served are those described in the scenario where learners had a history of incarceration. Seniors were often counted initially as a group served but, on further questioning, I found that seniors were largely not being provided with services because they were, in reality, being served in far fewer numbers than had been the case prior to 2102—under 10% of the total learners served at sites within the MAESD exception clause for some sites—or they were being provided with only token services and were soon referred on. Although many of the sites represented in the interview data did serve seniors, those which did almost always noted that this particular demographic had decreased significantly due to the various statistical issues (being in the independence goal path, and not looking for employment largely) that would then become a risk to the sites reporting measures.

Of two of the demographics represented (in two scenarios) that seem less-well served—those adults with English as a Second Language (ESL), and those adults categorized as developmentally delayed adult—it appears that the developmentally delayed adult demographic is most affected by changes to the MAESD policy in the sites
sampled. According to the interview data, some sites had never provided services for these adults, even prior to 2012, but for those sites that had provided services, interviewees noted negative effects to do with decreasing their numbers and displacement. When these adults were referred, they found that services were either not available, had waiting periods, or were actually respite daycare services (which are generally segregated and of a very different character than that of an LBS service provider). This scenario prompted the expression of a great deal of anger and frustration as some interviewees gave voice to issues of discrimination and human rights; they felt strongly that government has a responsibility to serve what they considered to be one of the most vulnerable and already marginalized groups, and that this group was being marginalized further.

As for the ESL learners, many larger centres appear to offer services appropriate for this group, including employment services, but many rural and northern areas do not have ESL programs in place, or they have programs in place that are not specific to helping this demographic find employment. In areas of the province, which do not provide ESL programs, many sites were nonetheless offering services in creative ways in order to meet community needs. Again concern was voiced around issues of access and what is seen to be discriminatory language benchmarks levels that restrict access.

The participants’ responses in Figure 4 are broken down individually according to scenario and provided in more detail in Table 1 below on the basis of the five columns in Figure 4. Responses are also coded according to other themes that arose during the interviews. These themes are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.
Scenario One: Services for ESL adult learners

In scenario one participants were asked the following hypothetical question:

An English as a Second Language (ESL) student seeks out an LBS service at your site for an employment-based class you are running. This student is presently receiving ESL lessons in an ESL program funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI). She was assessed in her ESL program as a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 4. What would you do?

Responses to this question ranged from exclusion to inclusion, for example, some said, “I would have to refer the student back. In order to be eligible for our programs prospective students have to be Canadian Language Benchmark Six” while others said, “We are going to serve our community.” Table 1 below shows the range of responses to ESL scenario.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites that would not serve this student, with reasons provided</th>
<th>Sites that would serve this student within MAESD funding, with reasons provided</th>
<th>Sites that would serve this student creatively, outside of MAESD funding, with reasons provided</th>
<th>Sites that would refer this student to another agency, with reasons provided</th>
<th>Sites that would serve or refer this student BUT also found displacement was simultaneously happening, with reasons provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents noted that other ESL or equivalent services were available, or they believed the student had to be CLB 6 (or CLB 7 in one case) to be eligible for LBS programs.

3 of 10 respondents said yes, with creative adjustments to ensure a fit with MAESD.

1 said yes, given the absence of employment-specific ESL services.

One respondent noted that this student would be “carried.”

These respondents are the same as those in column 1, i.e., 10 sites that would not provide services to this student.

Respondents noted that displacement would occur because referral sites were hours away, had long waiting periods, or were in distant urban centres.

Table 1. Results for the scenario presenting an ESL learner.
How services are provided for ESL students

As noted, many larger sites offered ESL services and some even included specific ESL employment-based classes, thus LBS employment-related classes could be seen as a duplication of service. A few LBS agencies that felt they could not provide services had to refer the prospective student elsewhere, to sites that were hours away in another community, or to larger centres with waiting lists for ESL programs. Many of the study participants whose organizations did provide programs and services for ESL learners emphasized that ESL individuals should have access to service if they chose, if for no other reason than needing better access to education. Related themes are discussed in the following chapters.

In the course of the interviews, I also found that there was what seems to be a general misunderstanding regarding ESL learners in LBS programs. The respondents seemed to believe that Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 6 is required when in fact it is only a recommendation—according to a workshop conducted by The Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA) (Kayed and Senior, 2016), and to the LBS Service Provider Guidelines (MAESD, 2016, Section 2.5.1). The school-board-based LBS support organization, CESBA, conducted a webinar workshop in the fall of 2016 to educate providers about this very issue (Kayed and Senior, 2016). It is quite possible that this workshop was an attempt to dispel this misunderstanding.

Scenario Two: Services for developmentally delayed adult learners

Scenario two was developed to present participants with a developmentally delayed adult in search of a program suited to his needs:
An adult comes in (with their worker, from a community-based agency that supports developmentally delayed adults to live independently) and seeks out an LBS service at your site to learn to read and make change. On assessment you find this individual cannot write his name or recognize numbers from one to twenty. What would you do?

Responses ranged from “We are not a respite service” to “I would not say it created a gap; I would say it created a chasm.” Table 2 below groups the responses of the participant respondents across the range services they would or would not provide at their respective sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites that would not serve this student, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would serve this student within MAESD funding, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would serve this student creatively, outside of MAESD funding, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would refer this student to another agency, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would either serve or refer this student, while also noting DISPLACEMENT EFFECT, with reasons given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 (*8)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents indicated that they had never provided services for this demographic, and believed that service providers were available.</td>
<td>Four of seven respondents said “depending” on how low the student’s literacy levels were (remembering that the low level was already indicated in the scenario).</td>
<td>The *extra count here is a site that “officially” does not serve these learners BUT unofficially does when off-site. Four of eight use alternate funding and/or fundraising and three of eight are “carried” off the MAESD records.</td>
<td>The eight not served are included in this category. Three of the six served are often referred on instead due to their low literacy levels; and five of eight served creatively are also often referred on after goals are met.</td>
<td>Many students are still displaced given that referrals are not “real” referrals if there is nowhere to refer to, or if wait times are a year or longer. Also, even those who are still serving these students are serving less of them, leaving the others displaced from LBS services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Results for the scenario presenting a developmentally delayed learner.
How services are provided for students with developmental delays

The implications of the changes in policy seem to be affecting developmentally delayed adults in LBS programming in a variety of ways, and more so than the other three scenarios developed for this research project. In order to continue to serve this population within communities, and outside of LBS programming, some LBS sites are referring these students to enrichment programs and other programming tailored for this demographic.

In some instances this referral process was taking place long before the 2012 changes. Other LBS sites are continuing to provide services for this demographic outside of MAESD funding as a result of the 2012 policy changes; this has meant finding alternative sources of funding or developing a pool of volunteers willing to teach. Yet other sites are providing services by carrying these learners off the books—by keeping their files separate, storing them elsewhere, and not entering these records into the MAESD database. Some organizations informed their funding source believing that change would only come about by talking about this issue, while some organizations chose to carrying these individuals as “secret learners.”

Some LBS organizations provided services for these secret learners by holding classes at satellite sites away from their primary location, keeping both funding sources AND administrators in the dark. Other agencies carried secret learners in the guise of “volunteers.” In all of these cases developmentally delayed students are represented in this study as being provided with services (column two and three) AND as being displaced (column five)—given that while they are now being served “creatively” outside MAESD funding (column three), they had largely been served at these same sites within
LBS programs prior to the 2012 changes.

This finding highlights the fact that both sites and learners are vulnerable when “carrying” becomes a strategy. When sites use “extraprenurial” options—attempting to work as change agents with the goal of continued access for these learners—ultimately these attempts are not likely to be a sustainable long term solution given ongoing capacity issues that many of these same sites are subject to. An additional complexity related to carrying secret learners has to do with the potential for practitioners to act as gatekeepers. Both capacity-related issues and gatekeeping are discussed in Chapter Six.

Gaps in the provision of service, and displacement from service seem to more common to rural and northern areas; this is to do, in part, with not having alternative programs available, but some southern sites also have waiting lists for alternative services that are sometimes long. The outcome is an absence of services. Issues related to community need and demographic diversity are discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

Another finding that emerged from the interview data was that some LBS sites continued to cater to this demographic specifically, where other providers felt that they did not fit the new model nor could they show the progress required for statistical purposes related to outcome expectations that funding sources were likely to hold them to. Other service providers, it turned out, had never served the developmentally disabled population because they did not see these learners as potential “literacy students.” Issues related to the question of who is (and who is not) eligible for literacy programs (and why) are discussed in Chapter Six, along with related issues of allowing or denying access (gatekeeping).
Scenario Three: Services for senior adult learners

The third scenario looked at the way in which services are provided for seniors in keeping with their expressed interests and needs:

A senior (aged 67) from the community seeks out an LBS service at your site for computer upgrading. He just wants to learn how to turn a computer on, use a mouse, surf the Internet a bit, and learn how to use his iPad to connect with grandchildren across the country. What would you do?

Responses ranged from “I would refer them to the public library system which offers Computer Basics for Seniors programs,” to “It’s a big gap because it used to be that we were allowed to go out and do these things but now, because age-related suitability is really important, providers are saying ‘we can’t, unless you can guarantee us that the majority of them will be under 65’.” Table 3 below shows the range of responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites that would not serve this student, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would serve this student within MAESD funding, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would serve this student creatively outside of MAESD funding, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would refer this student to another agency, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would serve or refer this student BUT also found displacement was happening as a result, with reasons given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents noted that they had never served this demographic.</td>
<td>Respondents noted they are now serving seniors but often in smaller numbers and for shorter periods of time (less training given).</td>
<td>Respondents found other funding sources or chose to fundraise.</td>
<td>Three of the 16 providers noted that they would refer a senior as well, probably or after initial goals were met.</td>
<td>Respondents noted they could only provide services to a small number of seniors, thus displacing many.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Results for the scenario presenting a senior learner.
**How senior students are served**

In much the same way as the developmentally delayed adults are being referred and displaced, described in the second scenario, seniors previously served by LBS programs are also being referred to other community programs in some places rather than being served within LBS sites. Seniors appear to be one of the most affected populations in this study; many of the sites sampled are still serving seniors but doing so in smaller numbers, which in some cases is directly related to the 2012 MAESD policy changes as they affected LBS funding.

Providers at other sites are also finding and using alternative funding sources to aid this demographic by continuing to give seniors access to the adult learning centre programs, by mobilizing the community in order to find partners to co-deliver programming, or by building capacity with prospective partners for future programming. Partnership arrangements of this nature would include holding offsite classes in alternative premises and initiating “train-the-trainer” programs, in this way simultaneously increasing community capacity while planning for handing programs off to the other agencies in the long term (see description by Participant 2 in chapter five below). It also appears that gaps and displacements seem to occur more often in rural and northern communities that have no alternative programs available, or that have only a few. This issue will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

In cases where LBS service providers did not serve this population, a number of respondents noted that they did not see the acquisition of computer skills an appropriate program for an LBS site to offer (see statement by Participant 1 below). More commonly, practitioners interviewed thought that public libraries and seniors’ centres in their
communities deliver comprehensive services in aid of acquiring computer skills (see observations recorded for Participants 12). The same question—who is and who is not eligible for literacy programming—emerged when considering services for seniors and for the developmentally delayed. This ideation or practitioner philosophy actually came up in the course of discussing the three scenarios set out so far, where practitioners fall largely into “either-or” categories that vary by practitioner and scenario, which prompted me to identify this theme as an overarching issue related to access and gatekeeping (discussed in Chapter Six).

**Scenario Four: Services for adult learners with a history of incarceration**

The fourth scenario explored the way in which service providers were prepared to work with adults who have been incarcerated and are transitioning back into the community:

*An adult comes in with her worker from a community-based agency that supports adults transitioning from incarceration to living independently again, and seeks out an LBS service at your site to upgrade before going on to complete her OSSD [Ontario Secondary School Diploma]. You are familiar with this learner because she was served at your agency years ago. Her past attendance was extremely irregular; she had addictions challenges and she eventually just did not come back, and you could not reach her for follow-up as her number had been out of service at the time. What would you do?*

Unlike the other scenarios described above, there was near unanimity in practitioner response, along the lines of “She would be welcomed back into the program.” Only one practitioner, representing one site, did not have a similar response, in part because this practitioner did not have the experience of providing services for a previously incarcerated individual who was transitioning back into the community as a learner (see, Table 4 below). Almost every participant responded to this scenario by
noting that not only are learners being served, but they are being served in what I would term a “community-based wrap around model” where LBS practitioners are working closely with transitional workers, addictions counsellors, mental health workers, and other support services in the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites that would not serve this student, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would serve this student within MAESD funding, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would serve this student creatively outside of MAESD funding, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would refer this student to another agency, with reasons given</th>
<th>Sites that would serve or refer this student BUT also found displacement was simultaneously happening, with reasons given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One respondent (1 site) indicated n/a, not having encountered this scenario over 17 years,</td>
<td>Twenty-one respondents noted that they would provide services in a multi-agency collaboration to allow for other needs being met.</td>
<td>One of the twenty-one respondents noted that they would “wait and see” progress before deciding.</td>
<td>No one indicated they would refer this student to another agency.</td>
<td>No one indicated that this student would be at risk of displacement (by being referred elsewhere).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Results for the scenario presenting a learner with a history of incarceration.

**How services are provided for previously incarcerated students**

Only one practitioner, representing one LBS site, noted the possibility that this prospective learner might be carried outside of MAESD funding; this practitioner was inclined to “wait and see” how the student progressed before making a decision—if the learner was to show no progress, or was unsuccessful maintaining new routines, a possible consideration was to carry the individual outside MAESD funding rather than having the result of poor progress or lack of follow-up show up in the LBS statistics and reports.

Along with the four scenarios developed at the outset of this research, a fifth
scenario presented when in 5 out of the total of 22 interviews participants alerted me to the issue of young learners who, despite having an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), had under-developed basic literacy skills. This tended to come up either tangentially—as participants were speaking about “problems with the system”—or at the end of an interview, when I always asked, “Is there anything you would like to add, or are there other groups of students you feel you are seeing more of, or less of, in the past few years?”

Given that this was not a scenario I developed initially, I did not pursue it with other interviewees. Had I put a scenario along these lines to all participants, I expect the number of responses to this topic this may have been larger. Nonetheless, this phenomenon is worth mentioning because it came up spontaneously in five independent interviews. These young adults have apparently been arriving at LBS centres over the last few years and thereby changing the demographics of those being provided services by these sites. These younger adult learners are arriving with an OSSD in hand but it seemed to these respondents that these students may well have been “pushed through” their high school courses. For example, Participant 11 said, “Somehow they have an OSSD but they cannot write a sentence or do simple math.” These respondents saw this as a recent development, thinking it to be related to other educational policies. Participant 12 put it this way:

I have to say that the numbers so that more than 50% of the learners in all of our programs are under the age of 30 and I don’t think that’s a trend that the government created I think that is a trend that our school system has created….I’m not blaming the teachers, I just think that our system of not failing anybody and trying to prove that we have more high school graduates is creating a big gap.

This phenomenon, a fifth scenario, may point to a new trend for services provided
by LBS sites; it may or may not be related to other government initiatives, as Participant 12 observed, and a study would be required to determine whether this is a province-wide trend and, if so, consider the implications.

At this point in time, considering the results set out in column 5 for each of the tables and scenarios, there seem to be gaps in services provided by LBS centres and programs, and more displacement for developmentally delayed adult students, with ESL students and seniors close behind. Rural and northern sites also appear to be serving ESL learners more than southern sites, simply due to the fact that there are often no other services available. Other general findings indicate that developmentally delayed adults seem to be displaced either as a result of the “independence” directive or the performance management measures where service sites are now required to show student progress in ways many practitioners felt could not be met. The scenario describing a situation where individuals are transitioning out of incarceration and back into communities seems to be the only instance in this study where prospective adult learners are provided with services in almost every case. As shown in this chapter, the implications and questions that have emerged in the general analysis of the data are many; they have been as grouped into broader themes in here, and further discussion and analysis will follow in Chapters Six and Seven.
Chapter 6
What is Literacy and Basic Skills Education, and Who Gets to Learn?

In looking at the interview data generated by each of the scenarios set out above, there are issues of access related to service provision mandates, service availability, and a diversity of student and community needs. Determining who is a learner (and who is not) affected access, as did geographic factors when it came to access to services in northern or rural areas. Urban settings with lengthy waiting lists also affected access, as did community diversity, individual need, and the limitations encountered where English is not a first language. Each of these factors influenced whether and how the student demographic profiled in the scenarios is being served. Related to the factors just described, I have identified five themes:

1. Standardization in pluralistic societies
2. Second order effects: North, South, Urban, and Rural.
3. Types of resistance and gatekeeping: Practitioner praxis and practice
4. Access to and definitions of literacy needs in multimodal, multi-literacies world: who is a literacy learner and what is literacy learning?
5. Balancing acts: Community and MAESD; needs and expectations
In this chapter I will discuss themes: 2. Standardization in pluralistic societies; 3. Types of resistance and gatekeeping: Practitioner praxis and practice; and, 4. Access to and definitions of literacy needs in multimodal, multi-literacies world: who is a literacy learner and what is literacy learning. These three themes are most salient in light of the need to provide services for ESL learners, developmentally delayed learners, and senior learners. These themes will be looked at in terms of both the data at hand and the large global phenomenon of NPM ideology as it concerns economic trends that drive accountability, and which have, in turn, driven adult education sites to be selective in identifying eligible learners. The participant responses in my study vary in when it comes to considering these pressures. Some practitioners try to serve their learners secretly; others appear to care little if they go beyond the capacity of their funding and of their programs to accommodate those in need of services; still others are choosing to turn prospective students, who would once have been eligible, away or refer them elsewhere lest such students affect carrying capacity or funding requirements. In this next section, I discuss the ways in which participant responses vary and note that all are constrained by or in response to pressures arising from a neoliberal context.

One of the themes relating to such pressures—that I heard expressed throughout many, but not all, of the interviews—was the idea that sites are not providing services (because they are not equipped) to the very learners they know to be legitimate “literacy” learners. A number of participants noted that ESL learners should be allowed to access LBS programs; similarly, others noted that developmentally delayed adults and seniors should be served by LBS programming. Nonetheless, in the three scenarios that characterized these demographics, practitioners anticipated that carrying these learners
within current reporting schemes would compromise statistical outcomes that the new policy is designed to measure. Given this sense of risk, and as discussed according to each scenario above, some practitioners are not serving individuals in these demographics at all, are serving them outside their MAESD funding allotment, or are referring them to other agencies (which also means that those referred as also at risk displacement from services).

**Theme: Access to and definitions of literacy needs in multimodal, multi-literacies world: who is a literacy learner and what is literacy learning?**

Many respondents articulated a number of clear concerns with respect to the first three demographic groups described in scenarios 1, 2, and 3: ESL learners, those with developmental disability, and senior learners. In the section following, I provide representative selections from the interview data to illustrate these concerns.

For example, Participant 12 addresses issues related to English as a Second Language learners, noting that ESL learners were often served by LBS sites historically—where they were seen as literacy learners because they were not literate in their own (first) language. Currently, and particularly in northern and rural areas, the ESL learners have specific needs that are not addressed within generalized ESL classes when ESL employment-related classes are not available, especially given Canada’s current immigration initiative.

**Participant 12 (P12):** So, I will be talking about all of the programs in X. We have an agreement in place so that they have to be a minimum of CLB [Canadian Language Benchmark] six and the colleges have had to raise that to CLB 7, so they would not be able to come into our programs.

**Interviewer (I):** And are you aware of any other employment-based classes for English as a second language students that are below the six?
P12: No...I look at the three points that you had put out in terms of the purpose of your study, and this was one of the areas that I think was a very big concern. When I first started in the field we were allowed to teach ESL because there were no ESL programs....And then somewhere along the lines somebody decided that it wasn’t literacy anymore. And the literacy programs would not be funded to deal with ESL anymore. So basically we had to drop it or we would be told that we weren’t meeting our number of learners and our contact hours if we had too many people that were, or showed up as potentially being ESL; when I was in the community-based programs that’s what they did at that time...This was the early 90s.

We have a lot of the ESL folks coming into all of our programs asking if they can be a part of that cash register training or the retail training program that our programs are doing for literacy clients and it’s hard because we have to turn them away if this is being funded under Ministry dollars...If it is funded under other dollars like United Way or program is being paid for out there somewhere like from an employer then it doesn’t matter.

Yeah, the ministry has really made it so that you can’t have ESL people in your program, and I understand why because there are other programs that they’re being paid for but they’re run very much like how I think credit programming is run... it is not one-to-one and it is a curriculum that must be followed. And that’s what the ESL students are saying, they’re saying we know that we need to get to our goals as fast as possible not just get generalized information.

P12: We are not trying to look at supporting immigrants in dealing with citizenship, so why are they doing education? I do ask these questions sometimes because I think that is the bigger question.

I: There are two other questions I have around this because I know that because of within the MCI ESL funding as of last year they are now funding special projects that are employment based.

P12: Well doesn’t it create another silo....We’re separating them out from English speakers and they’re saying, ‘no no put us in with English speakers, people who are born speaking English’, so it doesn’t make sense.

It is also interesting, I have to say, that working in a Laubach program when I started and they had an actual program that we would train tutors on, for English speakers of
other languages, so it could be one-to-one or to be taught in small groups and talk all about how to deal with ESL components and the literacy component at the same time.

It is an excellent program and now because of the refugees I’m actually telling organizations that aren’t funded but if they’ve got teachers they can pick up these materials and start again.

It’s like we’re going with it once again, we’re going to pull in retired teachers that have an OCT and know how to deal with pedagogy and andragogy and all of them are going help these refugees that are out in the counties because a lot of them have ended up out in the countryside, and that’s a big deal because first off they can’t get to the schools that they are being recommended to because there is no ESL out in the counties and they can’t afford to come in -so what do we do with those folks? ....They can’t come into our programs and there’s no program for them.

Participant 12 saw the change in LBS policies—as early as the 1990s—raising issues of access for ESL learners; given her many years of experience she was able to recollect how literacy programs used to work with ESL literacy and ESL learners. She saw this change as “political” and was seeing a need for ESL in rural areas that was similar to what I was seeing in the north: ESL learners had nowhere to go in some areas—because there were either no ESL programs available options or access to LBS programs was precluded given the way in which practitioners interpreted MAESD policy. As noted above, I also encountered reasoning on the basis of prospective learners having “insufficient” language skills according to Canadian language benchmarks—where respondents gave the rationale that “they are not CLB 6.” Nonetheless, some programs are serving ESL learners within their LBS organization because, as Participant 12 emphasized, there is nowhere for some of these learners to go.

As an example of a work-around, I developed an “unofficial pilot project” with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) to meet the needs of new refugee
families living in a northern community, a community which did not have an ESL program but did have an adult education centre that provides services to LBS students. Because the centre is a multi-use site (providing LBS and for-credit courses for adult students), and on the basis of the advocacy work I do for our sites with MCI, these adults are now receiving one-to-one support by way of an LBS practitioner with years of experience in emergent literacy.

A number of similar work-arounds—comprising a second category of practitioner responses where a need was seen and met with a plan—is represented in the observations provided by Participant 6:

**Participant 6**: We don't have ESL in our community….I have served immigrants with first languages and I do serve Native…which is also first language. So serving a learner with ESL is pretty normal here. We just don't have the primary ESL workers for engagement and multiple plan content.

Assessment first…both foundations and academic, based on these results Registration and Learner Plan…Employment Goal Path could have multiple levels of planning and content and curriculum and milestones and possible culminating task. This would depend on the Employment Goal—entry level, mid-level, experience etc. During service referrals to either EO Employment or Aboriginal Employment, again, I would need to know the learner’s goal for what type of employment to complete this scenario, but definitely an LBS learner and most of the time a successful one.

This second type of practitioner response was echoed by many respondents representing a number of sites, given their concerns around access to programming options. Discussion pertaining to first language issues for First Nations learners, and a discussion of language as it relates to culture for each stream, will follow in Chapter Seven.

Following are selected comments made by Participant 9, revealing a common
posture with respect to accommodating adult learners who are developmentally delayed—much along the same lines at those relating responses concerned with access for the ESL learners:

**Participant 9**: Some of the other staff don’t have an understanding of the learning needs of people with that developmental disabilities have. That they want to learn, that they can learn, that it’s not, they’re not stupid, whereas other people are appalled like me....

Yeah I mean it’s something that’s been going on and pushed off to the side slowly. I mean services for people that really struggle with basic reading and writing needs have been...eroded over the past five years because policymakers feel, I don’t know what policymakers feel but the impression I get is those people are not valued, they don’t deserve the kind of classroom, or they’re not recognized for their ability to learn, progress, you know, even if they want to get a job.

**Interviewer (I)**: I did have another thought around this one. Does your site in any way—and I do want to remind you that this is completely anonymous before I ask you—does your site ever, you know, without maybe putting them in CAMS [Employment Ontario, Case Management System] or maybe without doing regular intakes, do you ever “carry,” we call it carrying in some places, you know, serve them without people knowing? Are they still sitting in your classrooms?

**P9**: No.

**I**: They’re absolutely not? Okay.

**P9**: Yeah with the XXX, there’re two scenarios or two answers with this. I am teaching in a class in the XXX in the school, so there are other adult literacy classes happening on-site. There is nobody there that isn’t on a register. There are no secret learners.

**I**: Okay, right.

**P9**: But when I was delivering the same class not on the school site, but where we partner with XXX, I did let secret learners in.

**I**: And you were still a part of XXX just off-site?

**P9**: Yes, and that was just me. I don’t know about other instructors.
I: Okay.

P9: I think some may do it but I think most probably do not.

I: So it’s not like a collective unspoken policy that you just do?

P9: Right...nobody speaks about this at all because it’s a big huge no-no.

I: Okay, right, okay. Is there anything else for scenario two that you would like to say before we move on our questions?

P9: I think that’s enough for now (laughing).

Some respondents, much like Practitioner 9, knew they were risking funding for their sites—or risking their position as LBS practitioners—by carrying “secret” learners, knowing this practice to be a “big huge no-no,” but they were nonetheless providing services when possible, and under the radar at times, with some saying they were “appalled” that developmentally delayed learners were excluded from LBS programs. Other practitioners interviewed, who did provide services, noted that they were seeing a reduction in numbers due to the performance standards they are expected to meet, made visible in the statistical measures imposed by MAESD. Practitioner 13 sets out the criteria by which access can be gained.

Practitioner 13: This is our type of client. We would take them as long as certain circumstances or criteria are met. If the person was independent in their personal care, if their behaviour is not a distraction to their learning or learning environment, we would take them. Another criteria we would have is the desire to learn the skill on their own; if it was that a worker that wanted to them to learn it, but they took no interest, then we wouldn’t take them, but if they show genuine interest we would definitely accept them....

In our program we run XXX, which specifically teaches them counting change and getting back change. It is something that all of our students participated at all different levels.
I: Okay, and in terms of XXX, is this something you have, a hallway or in a room, and people come and buy snacks, and the students are running it?

P13: Yes, exactly.

I: Perfect.

I: Nice, and are the students being inputted into the EOIS CAMS system?

P13: They are. On those CAMS and I love OALCF [Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework].

I: So how do you follow them in terms of learning activities and milestones and showing progress?

P13: So…we do have trouble with the numeracy, managing money competency, because the milestone for that is set really, really high….

So we teach them the money skills [and] counting skills, but we also teach them communication skills so that they are communicating and providing customer service. They are also giving instructions and following directions, so we will teach them the math skills alongside the communication skills but develop their learner plans more along the line of communication skills, and then they get the milestone, I believe it’s number 14. We also have them do a lot of reading so that we can incorporate milestone number 1 as well as milestone number 8 for WHIMSS [Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System]...It has been wonderful. I know a lot of people struggle with OALCF, especially in our field, but we really made it work.

I: The other thing is, how long do students usually stay in your program?

P13: No longer than three years.

I: Alright, so we are giving maybe one milestone per year for some?

P13: Yes...It is our practice that we set up their learner plans in September. To do a milestone between September and February and then have them continue the same learner plan until June, and give them another milestone between April and June....In case they exit unexpectedly or if they’re ready to work already.
**I:** Okay, and is your program tailored to only developmentally challenged or delayed adults, or do you have other students adults there as well?

**P13:** Yes we do. We are primarily working with adults with developmental delays. I would say 80% are developmentally delayed; the other percentages are broken down into adults from the Caribbean whose English is [their] first language but their literacy is so low, because of poor education, that they’re too low for the X agency so we take them.... We also have a small group of adults with diagnosed learning disabilities, and then my site in particular, because I have a second site I deal with adults who are homeless or at risk of being homeless....Who are on ODSP [Ontario Disability Support Program] I mean they may not have a recognizable disability but they are disabled.

At this point in the interview we went on to consider the other three scenarios; it was not until the end of this interview, when I tend to ask any other outstanding questions, that Participant 13 acknowledged that between the 2012 policy changes and the effects of OALCF, there was indeed a displacement of these learners who no longer had access to LBS services, despite having said earlier that she liked the OALCF. This was surprising to me as she had not mentioned displacement effects in the course of the interview up to that point.

**I:** Right and so the other question I have then is with the developmentally delayed adult population since...OALCF has come into being because it sounds like you definitely have been around through a few cycles....Are your numbers pretty steady? Have they increased? Have they decreased?

**P13:** They have decreased....We have had to tighten our criteria for who comes in.

**I:** So did your number change as well or are you sort of moving out of your historical demographic?

**P13:** We are not moving out of our historical demographic, we are, what’s the word? not compliant, but beyond expectations for all of our ministry expectations except for how many learners we serve.
**I:** So you are serving less because of all of the other rulers we are measured by? Is that what’s happened?

**P13:** We are serving less because we cannot accept as many people, because they would not be successful at getting milestones.

**I:** So it is directly related to this new system?

**P13:** Yes.

**I:** Okay that’s sort of the bottom line I’m trying to get at with the scenarios...if numbers are increasing, are they decreasing, who is being displaced in that process? So, if you are not accepting certain people that maybe you did before because you said you’re tightening your criteria...where do, if they are still coming your door, what happens to them if they don’t stay?

**P13:** Oh it’s not easy, our partners are getting more aware of our criteria so they are screening who they bring to us, so that we don’t have to put somebody to the reading assessment and intake assessment, because it is discouraging for them as well....And we always say, if you become employed and you have something that you need to learn at work, call us and we’ll bring you back....It is a difficult situation.

We get many very upset people. I had a student recently, it was an older student in, whose mother got put into a home and he now has had to move out on his own for the first time in his late 50s....And he himself doesn’t need to learn to read and write but he did need to learn how to use his cell phone and was very angry with me when I said, okay, now what do you want to learn? We know that you have to use your cell phone, because he wanted to stay in classes but had to leave....Because I could not keep him if he was not working towards anything.

The observations made by this participant demonstrate how there is not always a clear response, either “yes, we are able to provide services” or “no, we do not provide these services.” In this case, when it came to coding, this participant’s response was counted as a “yes” (column 2, tables above) to indicate that her LBS centre is still providing services for this population within the MAESD funding source—but they were
“creatively” serving students, with co-op students present in a teaching capacity as volunteers. This response was also counted in column five indicating that the developmentally disabled adults represented may also be effectively “displaced” by a process of pre-screening, which would result in admitting less potential learners from this population.

This agency represented by Participant 13 (above) is experiencing a decrease in numbers, again due to progress measures imposed by MAESD (given that the current clients cannot necessarily perform pre-defined MAESD and OALCF tasks). This agency is working with other agencies to “educate” them about LBS limitations so that clients are pre-screened “out of service” by the referral agency before they ever arrive at the LBS site in order to prevent learners being turned away at the door. This agency also has co-op students working as volunteers to teach some of the learners—a creative solution in itself. It is also moving students out of service who cannot come up with additional learning goals once their initial learning goals are met. Restated here are the conditions (outlined above by Participant 13) under which an adult learner with developmental disabilities would be accepted or be allowed to continue participating in a program services:

*If the person was independent in their personal care, if their behavior is not a distraction to their learning or learning environment, we would take them. Another criteria we would have is the desire to learn the skill on their own; if it was that worker that wanted to them to learn it but they took no interest then we wouldn’t take them, but if they show genuine interest we would definitely accept them [emphasis added].*

These criteria for accepting developmentally delayed students into an LBS are similar to those articulated by other participants interviewed for this scenario; yet, developmental delays could limit the ability of many of these adults to articulate goals.
Additionally, skills associated with maintaining one’s personal hygiene and managing one’s behaviour, which many developmentally delayed adults must learn, are commonly taught as part of other LBS programs (such as the nutrition and life skills program run by Participant 17). I only mention this here to bring attention to differences between practitioners (rather than judging this kind of response), and to point out how this can affect access to services and programs, a point that will be addressed in my discussion of “gatekeepers.”

Following are selections from interviews that address concerns regarding the provision of services for seniors, to do with perceptions of need and access to programs.

Participant 11: And if they don’t become computer literate they’re going to be lost because everything is computers. So there is my argument. In fact, I run programs specifically for seniors (P11).

Participant 2: I would, if they are willing, register them for the Basic Computer Course and fill out all the associated paperwork and have them attend the class for 4 days. It helps my numbers, and gives them a social outing. If I sense that they aren't interested in this, then I would suggest they attend the upcoming Technology Collaboration Drop-In. I am partnering with the library to offer a couple of sessions of bring-your-technology, bring-your-questions. It's not specifically marketed to seniors but we anticipate that's who we will see. I did something similar last year and that time we partnered with the XXX through our XXX and I hosted the event at XXX. After things were in full swing, the ETC [Education Training Consultants] made it clear to the director that I was not to be giving my time to instruction at these events, just hosting it.

Unfortunately, ETCs (by position, not by personality) don’t always allow truthfulness either. ETCs want us to partner and collaborate, but not use any MAESD dollars (in the form of instructor time). I haven't figured out the balance, but I'm thinking a cloning device would be a good investment. When our weeks of sessions were done, the seniors continued to come to my office with their questions (because I, like most instructors, am nice and helpful by nature) and that really sucked up a lot of my
time. This year, I approached the library to host the event. My hope is that the follow-up questions will go to the librarian!

**Participant 21:** They are welcome. This is one of our programs that we offer to our learners. 65% of our participants are in this category including upgrading French language. We teach them how to browse on the Internet, email address, Internet Security, etcetera.

**Participant 4:** We actually have had learners in our program that were senior citizens. We would accept this learner and register them in the Independence Goal Path. The rationale would be that in order for this individual to participate in the general community they require the basic need of computer literacy (P4).

These four participants see a need for computer literacy for seniors. Participant 2 is inclined to find creative solutions to provide appropriate services for these individuals in her community, but even when she partners with other agencies she is being pressured to reduce time spent on these activities.

Of the respondents who indicated they would provide programs for seniors, many observed that these programs were meaningful to seniors, apart from the computer skills they would acquire, and saw this as an opportunity for community partnerships (Participant 2 and 21), and as a route by which seniors could gain access to other LBS programs. The idea was that, after gaining initial comfort with computers, seniors could then move into other programs or become role models for others in aid of larger literacy goals. Participant 14, for example, identifies literacy as a positive cycle in some families, and emphasizes the socio-cultural importance of this service.

**P14:** This learner is all mine! (laughing)....Oh yeah I love these guys! We have a really close, close, close relationship with X, and they have a lot of things I offer that are both sort of credit and noncredit certification and, given the relationship we have with them, so once a month every month someone from X comes out and sits in my class all
day....And they just sit there and help answer people’s questions and find online learning opportunities that best fit the student’s goals.

...And I can be and sometimes very much...I’m a part of that process because in the process of developing a learning plan I may specify certain things that I think a learner needs in order to get where they’re going....And at that point I will be making the suggestions to X that this might be the best fit.

...But sometimes we will let the learners pick, and we have a lot of learners too who suffer from focus fatigue, so they need to be in multiple forms of study if they’re going to...keep themselves motivated because whenever they get math burn-out....They need to switch to something else....And so a lot of times if they have a course that is their fun course they can stay motivated to stick with us....And X helps tremendously. The other thing is that seniors would feel very, very at home in our program because of the amount of respect that is typically given to elders in the Indigenous community....I have been fortunate enough to be able to teach inter-generationally.

...And I think it’s an experience that every educator should have, because you haven’t really taught until you’ve taught a grandmother, her daughter, and her grandchild in the same classroom, all with the same subject material....And then you get to watch grandma being mom’s tutor and mom being granddaughter’s tutor; it is absolutely mind blowing when it works, and seniors would feel very at home here.

As can be seen from the tables in Chapter Five, and the representative samples of practitioner responses above, many LBS sites are working to continue to provide services to learners, often attempting to provide services for learners which practitioners at other sites would exclude—as being no longer “within our mandate,” if they ever were. This difference in philosophy seems to be at the heart of this set of questions: what is literacy, what comprises a “basic skills” education, and who gets to learn?—questions which brings us to the second theme of this chapter.
Theme: Types of resistance and gatekeeping: Practitioner praxis and practice

In my attempt at looking for patterns in participant responses and grouping them accordingly by codes I had developed, it seemed to me that the statements of the participating practitioner correlated to whether a service was being provided to the student demographics being investigated—i.e., whether prospective learners were being served or not. It seemed to me that practitioners may be acting as gatekeepers, making decisions about facilitating access to programs. This pattern seems similar to the patterns I discussed with respect to practitioner responses to policy changes (discussed in Chapter Three), where the nature of responses given by practitioners to policy changes can affect service provision. I distinguished some “open-door” gatekeepers if they continued facilitating access to programs, and “closed-door” gatekeepers if access was denied or decreased for the demographics in each of the four scenarios I proposed.

Individual and institutional responses to policy can be seen in the resistance of Participant 9, who resists at the personal level by teaching secret learners off-site, and similarly by Participant 11 and Participant 2, who resist at the institutional level by continuing to run computer programs for the sake of providing needed digital literacy in an increasingly technological environment. I consider these explicit resistors as “open door” gatekeepers.

I would also include Participant 12 as an explicit resistor, despite being partly responsible for decreased access to programs at her site. This practitioner sees the limiting effects of new mandate on site capacity and resources. In her formal role, she acts a “closed-door gatekeeper,” while informally acts an “open-door” gatekeeper as she tries to find other ways to ensure that ESL students in more remote areas continue to have
access to learning, even if this did not happen in a formal program. Participant 12 represents an excellent example of the complexities that administrators and practitioners face in light of the 2012 policy changes.

I see Participant 1, Participant 13, and Participant 6 as change recipients: they each have ways of making the new policy work in their situations, including adjusting policy to local needs. Participant 1 made sure that her sites definitions fit the new policy language; Participant 13 identified specific milestones that would allow all her learners to fit the policy expectations and continue their studies; and Participant 6 expanded the definition of ESL learners to include First Nations elders, noting that her practice was “pretty normal here.” In each instance, the decisions and actions of these practitioners can be characterized as open-door gatekeeping. Participant 1 carried certain beliefs to do with providing programs that would not allow to seniors learn computer skills at the LBS centre which made her seem a closed-door gatekeeper. These examples highlight how closely tied practitioner philosophy can be to gatekeeping.

Participant 2 not only runs computer classes for seniors but, like Participant 17 is also working as a change agent by finding community partners to ensure the continuation of such programming. Participant 14 also has developed diverse programming options, and can also be seen as a change agent; all three are open-door gatekeepers.

Implicit resistance is also occurring at some LBS sites. For example, Participant 14, acting a change agent as a provider of extrepreneurial programming, is over-capacity, which negatively effects the ability of her centre to meet MAESD expectations. This site is not purposely engaging in explicit resistance, but the consequence of operating over capacity has increased the workload involved in developing the new database—more
time and bodies are needed to complete this work. This overload is, in turn, prompting implicit resistance evident in the work not progressing. Participant 14 represents an agency where open-door gatekeeping is practiced, which can be considered explicit resistance given that this is a conscious decision: staff at this site choose to serve students before paperwork, even when this choice may cause negative consequences when it comes to funding.

All of these examples highlight the intricacies of decision-making that happens daily at each of the sites represented in the interviews, and how those decisions ultimately affect gatekeeping in very different ways. Note that this study did not look at this correlation specifically within the research questions, as I did not ask questions specifically about gatekeeping. Yet, as I was looking at the data with respect to the creative solutions practitioners are using to mitigate displacement, it seemed that there was a correlation between practitioner philosophy and gatekeeping. Other factors could well have an influence on the kind of gatekeeping that ensues: the organizational culture of the LBS site itself, directives from the regional support organization, or direction from the Employment Training Consultant (ETC), to name a few; yet, one thing is clear: there does seem to be some kind of relationship between practitioner philosophy and the type of gatekeeping that ensues.

In cases where programs are not in place to serve potential learners, common threads are apparent in the reasoning. For example, Participant 1, along with a number of other participants, viewed both seniors and developmentally delayed learners as not fitting the profile of an LBS student. In other cases, reasons for exclusion were based on a misunderstanding of MAESD requirements for having achieved language proficiency
levels. Participant 12 reflected the views of a number other practitioners interviewed with respect to the ESL scenario—that most whose agencies did not serve this demographic had ESL resources within their communities or believed that CLB 6 was needed to do so: “I would have to refer them back; in order to eligible for our programs they have to be Canadian Language Benchmark 6.” Other reasons for exclusion were voiced by Participant 18, who stressed that developmentally delayed learners “have to be capable of independent learning.” Participant 20 explained that she would respond by saying that “the curriculum we deliver at our site would not be appropriate or useful to this prospective client.”

These positions voiced by the above practitioners are in direct opposition to participants like Participant 9 who advocated for all these students’ ability to learn. The contrast between these practitioners reveals a spectrum of beliefs that, at one end, showed conviction that developmentally delayed learners are LBS learners who can learn and show progress, and at the other end that the same students described in the scenario did not fit the profile for eligible LBS students nor were they likely to show the kind of progress needed to meet MAESD expectations. This posture is echoed in the following selection from the interview with Participant 1, who similarly did not think providing computer courses for seniors fit the LBS model.

**Participant 1:** Well I wouldn’t take them just for computers. We do have computers and we do not do that kind of stuff but we do this with our learners with all of the other essential skills. That could be an essential skills, A, B, or C. You basically have access to that—you know, the essential skills. That’s what they basically need in other words. LBS changes, the changes that we’ve had in the guidelines haven’t truly affected us. We always worked objectively, and we always worked hand-in-hand with other agencies. Senior citizens are not really…they’re more the kind of clientele you would have seen in
the old popular literacy, the kind of things that literacy agencies used to do—before Bob Rae [laughing]

...In the OTAB days...everything got changed. You could do that, you could grab a 67-year-old and just do computers but now you’re going to get dinged for it...it better not be more than 10% and you got a 10% exception rate. But if it’s more than 10% or 50%, or it’s 100%, you are going to suffer. You will suffer and you’re going to have to explain it, you’re probably going to have to find a way to stop doing that, you’re going to have to basically be very careful or your agencies survival will be in question.

Interviewer (I): So...is this something that, if they came in at that age bracket and were looking for other [than] computer skills, would you take them then?

P1: Absolutely.

I: Okay.

P1: Yes, the ministry would rather if it was somebody under 60, but as long as somebody is really looking for the essential skills...I have no problem. Whereas, if it’s somebody that’s headed for autonomy...I don’t have many, maybe 5% in the year, but I have no problem with that as long as there’s a need, as long as it doesn’t take years then, yeah, there is no issue. I don’t want the agency to be a drop-in. It is not a drop-in. I mean people can be in and can be very, very comfortable and be very satisfied, but it is not a place to come in for five years. You got to get some kind of objective at some point.

I: And...are there are other places in the community...that seniors...[who] are Francophone first language...could learn computers...in their first language?

P1: Well, why not I’m not exactly sure. It hasn’t really been a necessity....We haven’t had many seniors in our agency since, probably I would say, the early 90s.

Participant 1 added to this at the end of the interview when asked if there was anything else she wanted to say:

P1: So if you are a small place, and basically all you’re dealing with [are] senior citizens being dropped off from a bus every day, and you’re not actually doing anything with essential skills, or anything at all that is LBS, you’re going to have to have a serious look at your agency’s program and clientele to see whether or not you’re doing what you
should be doing, or better yet... I don’t think they’re going to keep agencies open that are just wasting everybody’s time because of the end of the day it’s a betrayal of the client.

This participant clearly felt that programs providing computer skills for seniors was a waste of time, that programs like this did not convey any essential skills. In most cases, if the respondent felt a program for a prospective student (demographic) was “not LBS,” or not within the current MAESD mandate, their position was that such students should not be provided with services, and in fact were generally not being served by these agencies.

The issues affecting who is and who is not served seem to be tied in part to practitioner ideas and statements; for example, when it comes to gatekeeping styles, some practitioners representing particular sites were struggling with issues of capacity but nonetheless stated they felt strongly that all of the prospective learners proposed by the four scenarios should have access to appropriate programs service.

In cases where practitioners described concerns about their sites attempting to operate over-capacity, it seems these agencies were also attempting to meet the MAESD mandate—with respect to the number of learners per year that they promised to serve—as well as attempting to provide services to prospective learners from the ESL, Seniors, and Developmentally Delayed demographics described in the scenarios. Even sites that were not necessarily trying to serve these demographics, but that were trying to meet other demands based on their local communities needs, were finding themselves over-capacity.

Although the theme of balancing acts: Community and MAESD; needs and expectations, is discussed in the next chapter, the phenomenon of working over-capacity as it relates to practitioner statements and practice is discussed here. In the following example, Participant 1 elaborates on the issue of capacity:
P1: So we just keep admitting people, we are about 50 clients above right now and that’s just because we have a community that expects it, partners expect it… Community expects it and if we say no and stop doing it then they are going to be referred into the English stream and they will be completely out of French….And that’s a Catch-22 because on one hand I have to keep serving people and I’m in the other hand I see no increase in funding - there has been no increase in funding.

This observation is echoed by Participant 11 who describes a situation of over-serving in order to meet community need, even where students were not being counted in the MAESD funding allotment:

P11: If I have nowhere else to send them, and I know they will not be successful at other programs then I might take them anyhow…. I just won’t put them on the books. And you can write that out because I’ve already told my consultants in the ministry and whatever that I’m not refusing people… just because.

...Yes that’s what you have to do with the government if you give them what they consider to be their standard for them, they kind of just disappear or leave you alone. So I do all that, and my numbers have been triple for the last few years compared to what they expect of me, and I’m probably one of the top X in Ontario. The [MAESD] people leave me alone because they know if they don’t leave me alone they’re going to have a problem.

As noted, Participant 12 emphasized, “I do think there’s a gap. There’s talk about how we’re not raising the bar of the literacy rates; I think that we’re also not meeting the needs of the most vulnerable.”

To reiterate, this research shows that a variety of second order effects, resistance and gatekeeping are happening related to access issues that are being seen, particularly as they related to northern and rural sites, but also for some southern rural sites when compared to practitioner observations from southern urban centres. Many of these southern centres were not providing services for prospective ESL students, developmentally delayed adults, or seniors, given that the urban setting is more likely to
have other specialized centres and agencies to which LBS practitioners could refer learners to. By contrasts, northern and rural sites were more often than not continuing to serve these adult learners, often “off the books,” or by resorting to alternate funding sources, utilizing volunteers, or even by falsifying documents to better “fit” the student to the program parameters in order to continue to serve their communities, regardless of the new policy. Participant 2 put it this way:

I love my job. I love my learners. I am an honest person. CAMS has taught me (forced me to learn?) more about falsifying documents than I ever wanted to know. Lying to a computer is the only way to serve my learners and get all my tickies ticked. The whole thing has always felt like a big video game. I wish that weren't the case. I'm not a gamer. I'm a teacher.

Beyond community needs and not wanting to turn people away, for whatever reason, sites interviewed stated that capacity was also affected by inadequate funding, no funding increases in light of new policies which increased administrative duties, poor pay, staff turnover rates, and a lack of support from the ministry.

Chapter themes related to MAESD audit

The themes discussed above—Second order effects: North, South, Urban, and Rural; Types of resistance and gatekeeping: Practitioner praxis and practice, and; Access to and definitions of literacy needs in multimodal, multi-literacies world: who is a literacy learner and what is literacy learning? —and how they are affecting service at various sites, are echoed in the Cathexis (2016) audit report for MAESD’s audit in the following way:

It was notable that perceived enablers were external to the Ministry, while the perceived barriers were internal to the Ministry. This raises the troubling possibility that, with the important exception of providing the funding that makes LBS possible, the Ministry may currently be doing more to
decrease the efficiency and effectiveness of the LBS program than to increase it [emphasis in the original]. Burdensome data entry and reporting requirements are the most commonly cited cause of inefficiency in the LBS system. (p. 125)

MAESD is currently attempting to remedy some of these structural and funding-related issues with funding increases over the next four years, announced in the spring of 2017 (MAESD, 2017a) and through their LBS Symposium (MAESD, 2107b) and working groups call out (MAESD, 2017d) for program redesign that happened in October and November of 2017 respectively.

**Adult education as a perpetuation of colonialism**

From a theoretical perspective, as I consider adult education through a critical lens, the three themes outlined in this chapter can be problematic as they relate to, and are echoed in larger educational issues that are both historical and current. Adult Education, in its various forms over the past many hundreds of years, embodies a mixed spectrum from enlightened ideology to further entrenchment in imperial, colonial, and neoliberal patronage. Even today, according to Willinsky (1998), “education [is] a way of bundling together the hopes and fears of its sponsors and recipients, with the question An education for whom? never far from the surface” (p. 101)

Adult education can be seen an extension of imperial and colonial conquest through the justifications of Modernization theory in which “development” and “human capital” have been the driving forces (Youngman, 2000). Marshall (2011), for example, speaks to the different agendas or instrumental goals of education for global citizenship and how it is often aligned with neoliberal and Western ideologies. Marshall’s proposal that education systems are pressured to produce individuals “for global competition” (p. 412) is not a new idea. Certainly, LBS policy has aligned with this ideology in recent
years. Outcomes now seem to be measured at some sites and are considered successful if students move on to postsecondary institutions or find employment. The LBS student—who can now make change and consequently achieve some measure of independence by, for example, shopping for groceries—is discounted as making “progress” or showing “success” and is clearly being displaced from service in many of the sites sampled. As one Comparative, International and Development Education student suggested to me, an observation echoed in the literature, “Educational reform is largely articulated in economic terms and linked to economic aims, and it is almost exclusively geared toward the perceived demands of knowledge economies and the competitive edge of nations competing on global markets” (personal communication, 2015). See also Harvey, 2005; Marshall, 2011; Niyozov and Dastambuev, 2012; Portelli and Konecny, 2013; Tikly and Bond, 2013.

**Neoliberalism**

This gradual move over time from imperialism and colonialism to post-colonial notions of freedom are largely overshadowed by the reality of increasing globalization, the autonomy of multinational corporations, and a “new imperialism” (Harvey 2005; Tikly 2004; Tikly and Bond, 2013) that includes the Western hegemonic indoctrination of all things: political, economic, military, and cultural (Tikly and Bond, 2013).

From such historical hegemony springs neoliberal ideology, similar to human capital theorists beliefs, that the human condition can be advanced through the developments of our achievements, entrepreneurial thinking, and skills (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism does so from a laissez-faire economic framework that includes the belief that to so advance individuals must have strong property rights, free market capitalism,

From an educational perspective, this has led to the push for learner-centred education, along with educational pedagogies delivered with aid packages (Marginson and Mollis, 2001; Samoff, 2008; Tabulawa, 2003;). Neoliberal framing in education has also meant best-practices, standardization, and policy transfers in the name of efficiency and accountability (Samoff, 2008; Silova, 2014), to ensure students will be equipped to compete in global markets (Marshall, 2011) in light of our “fast capitalist” forces of hypercompetition combined with massive technological changes, and demands of über sophisticated consumers (Gee, Hull, and Lankshear, 1996). Neoliberalism’s advance in education has been critiqued for the issues of inequity, homogenization, competition and other more negative aspects it often hides (Niyozov and Dastambuev, 2012) as the socially constructed exclusions that happen are based on neoliberal ideologies of “selection of the fittest” (Siltala, 2013, p. 474).

These NPM market-driven educational goals can be seen in the Education for All movement, and other International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) initiatives (Samoff, 2008; Silova, 2014) that embed NPM frameworks into the structural adjustment processes to which countries are forced to agree as conditions for loan agreements (Haque, n.d.). Neoliberalism in education can be seen globally with policy and pedagogical transfer, such as the learner-centred pedagogy from East to West to East
(Niyozov & Dastambuev, 2012) noted above, in the buying and selling of educational programs, and in the flourishing of educational businesses that no longer only sell curriculum resources but entire management and tracking software systems for education, similar to the EOSI-CAMS database the MAESD in Ontario implemented as a part the 2012 policy changes.

Further, neoliberalism’s efficiency and accountability factors can be seen in Ontario, where the provincial government is overhauling many other sectors than just the Adult Basic Education component of LBS programs, for example Employment Ontario’s employment service sector, and the Ontario Social Services sector (Ontario Works). Each sector has installed a new database tracking system and there has been talk at provincial conferences, with various provincial ministries in attendance, about how all of these database systems will eventually talk to each other by way of common portals. For example, the government portal “OneKey” is presently being used for MAESD LBS programming as the entry portal for its EOIS-CAMS database. As for the Employment Ontario (EO) employment sector, the EOIS-CAMS is currently operating as a shared database with LBS. Additionally, some reporting aspects of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI)—the adult non-credit ESL programs that also use Grants Ontario—are also accessible though the OneKey portal.

In other Canadian provinces, such as Alberta, neoliberalism has also meant that downturns in the economy negatively affect the education sector. Lange et al., (2015) point out “there was a substantial reduction in the funding of adult education, especially programs that increased access for minority groups, including English as a second language, adult basic education, women’s centres, and adult literacy programs” (p. 85).
Again, such gaps and reductions in funding are often rationalized as efficiency and accountability measures.

In relation to the critiques levied above on neoliberalism and its effects on education globally, the 2012 LBS policy changes also seem to have created changes for some sites across the province that have had negative consequences for students, particularly those that do not fit the neoliberal model, or LBS goal path, of being employment bound. These structural changes in access and programming are also in direct contrast to the adult education model that many practitioners subscribe to—that adults should be able to determine their own learning goals and needs. To better understand the nature of these changes, it is important to deconstruct issues of power, “isms,” and how marginalization and erasure happen.

**How this applies to LBS programs today**

When one looks at the language of the MAESD policy as it relates to Literacy and Basic Skills, and examines it through an anti-oppressive lens—and when one takes a deconstructivist and decolonial approach as an intersectional feminist practitioner in an LBS organization—it is possible to see the parallels between neoliberal conceptual framing and the erasure or “disappearing” of individuals (and demographics) now happening in the Adult Basic Education landscape in Ontario as a process which further marginalizes already marginalized adults. Young (2010) notes that marginalization occurs when a person or a “whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life” (p. 38), and that an individual can often be stigmatized due to intersectional identities that can be socio-political, or economic (Olufunke & Ademalo, 2012). In terms of sites sampled those marginalized seem to be the senior, developmentally delayed and
ESL learners.

To return to Stephen Ball’s (1993) proposition that changes in public policy can have first and second order effects—which I see as relevant to MAESD policy changes—Ball differentiates between first order effects, which are “changes in practice or structure (which are evident in particular sites and across the system as a whole),” and second order effects which are “the impact of these changes on patterns of social access and opportunity and social justice” (p. 16).

I heard from interviewees how the first order effects are causing second order effects in some LBS programs since the new policy and guidelines have come into effect. LBS agencies are subject to new processes as a result of new mandates, such as the use of a standardized database, intake and assessment procedures, and evaluation protocols. The outcome of implementing new (and different) procedures represents first-order effects along the lines set out by Ball (1993)—a change in practice or structure. The first order effects resulted in inhibiting access to LBS services for many students. This lack of access to services also represents second-order effects along the lines set out by Ball—to do with patterns of access and opportunity, and ultimately social justice as it relates to ableism and ageism in our student demographics.

I note here the irony in a statement published by the MAESD Employment Ontario Partners’ Gateway (EOPG), which refers to the importance of “dignity and worth for every person”:

The Human Rights Code recognizes the dignity and worth of every person and provides for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination. Every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities, without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital
status, family status or disability (Employment Ontario Partners’ Gateway (EOPG), 2015).

The right of every individual to equal treatment is not met when one examines the many barriers to access that arose with the MAESD 2012 policy changes imposed on the LBS programs. The funding model, for example, “scores” or gives unequal weight to learners by discriminating on the basis of “suitability indicators” which identifies prospective students as eligible or ineligible on the basis of the following characteristics: “<Grade 12, OW/ODSP recipient or, no source of income or, Crown Ward, more than 6 years out of education, more than 6 years without training, age over 45 and under 64, history of interrupted education, disabled, Indigenous, Deaf, Francophone” (MAESD, 2017e, p.14). Many of these suitability indicators are part of the multi-barriered adult learner demographic, and are framed in terms of “deficits.” Due to the overlapping of “suitability indicators,” many of these adults could, for example, be considered for an independence stream if they were developmentally delayed and not looking for employment, while others may be in their 60s and retired.

**Theme: Second order effects: North, South, Urban, and Rural**

Despite the way in which the provincial government and the MAESD conceptually frame the principals of the human rights code in policy as it relates LBS programming, there are nonetheless inadvertent second order effects. Performance expectations, coupled with the MAESD’s *unwritten* policies, such as those embedded in expected goal path percentages in the “independence” goal path have implications, for example, for Northern Ontario LBS agencies and rural agencies. Interviewees from some northern sites that had “high independence numbers” spoke of being told (verbally, not in writing) that they were expected to get their independence goal path percentages down to
20% in order to align with the rest of Northern Ontario. When Participant 17 asked the local MAESD representative for a copy of this new policy—in writing—the ETC apparently stated that, while it had been requested, this directive had not yet been formally provided by head office. It turned out that local MAESD office was in the process of arguing against lowering the independence goal path percentages in light of the regional demographics. While the MAESD representatives at the local office seemed to have understood the concerns raised by Participant 17, the representative nonetheless advised Participant 17 to follow the unwritten policy.

Expectations such as this are received with apprehension and some sites take the posture of “if we don’t, we could lose funding” especially as LBS agencies anticipate their position in the near future, with province-wide LBS program evaluations underway. Participant 17 reported that practitioners are already aware that some LBS agencies have been put on notice to improve performance and are now subject to direct action plans. This means these LBS agencies have been alerted to possible loss of funding if they do not improve their measurable outcomes according to MAESD expectations. Knowing that the MAESD is focused on cost savings, practitioners at LBS agencies understand that we all may not be here in a few years. This conceptual framing of public service delivery for Ontario tax payers on the basis of “outcomes-based efficiency”—a neoliberal rationale—seems to be occurring in the absence of any discussion about where the displaced learners will all go should closures come about.

This kind of conceptual framework hides the truth of what is happening at local levels. For example, some LBS agencies in aging communities in Northern Ontario show independence goal path percentages between 60 to 80% presently because these
communities tend to cater to the educational needs of both seniors and individuals that are developmentally delayed. This shift to decrease independence goal path numbers to 20% for these northern and rural LBS agencies has, according to the participant interview data, resulted in closing satellite sites, programs, and specific classes that “attract” individuals that have been placed in the independence stream.

LBS policy implementation has reinforced ageism, imposing a systemic barrier by excluding older adults because the do not fit the current learner profile as set out by the MAESD mandate. This policy fails to recognize the very real computer literacy needs of this age group—skills that directly affect the ability of older adults to navigate their world, without which can result in increased isolation. When we view individuals through an intersectional lens we know that all parts of their identity can be interconnected, important and valued. When we see literacy levels as intersectional we can hopefully see that they are also interconnected, important and that there is value in learning. For example, older individuals might well have achieved a PhD earlier in their lives and be technologically illiterate in today’s multi-faceted electronic environment; they may not know how to use email or conduct internet searches, in which case their “literacy level” would be considered as standing below a “level 3” according to the MAESD Adult Literacy (OALCF) framework as it concerns digital literacy, especially in light of the multi-modal, multiple literacies in which we now find ourselves (Cope and Kalantis, 2000; Jewitt, 2008).

Interview data with respect to LBS service provision for seniors suggests that some sites are seeing displacements. Unfortunately, those sites seeing large reductions in the number of seniors making use of LBS services, are seeing reductions in both numbers
and actual classes that would be held at the community level. Northern and rural communities are subject to a gap in services given that the libraries and senior centres do not seem to have appropriate programs available, or even the capacity to provide this programming to the same extent as southern urban sites seem to have. Some LBS centres that previously held outreach classes at seniors’ centres are not able to sustain these programs due to the imposition of suitability indicators, and the need to restrict admission to adults over the age of 65. Participant 12 noted, “It’s a big gap because it used to be that we were allowed to go out and do these things, but now, because suitability numbers are really important, people are going “we can’t unless you can guarantee us that the majority of them will be under 65.”

It is interesting to note that 16 of 22 sites did, in reality, provided services for seniors over 65, and that 19 of the 22 sites were serving seniors in some way if “creative” solutions outside of LBS funding are taken into account. This kind of accommodation is interesting because it shows a significant gap between formal MAESD-LBS policy and practices on the ground in the community setting: sometimes more is said in what is not being said, in who is “not counted.” MAESD suitability indicators exclude this demographic from the LBS mandate, and MAESD registration forms do not include options related to the needs of seniors. As happens with marginalization—where the marginalized are not even included in the conversation—in this case older adults are not represented in registration considerations. For example, the Employment Ontario Participant Registration Form has multiple categories for “source of income”—employed, a dependent of OW/ODSP Employment Insurance, participating in Ontario Works, Self-employed, No income, Crown Ward, Ontario Disability Support Program—but “pension”
is not included, which may be reflecting the marginalized status of seniors. On the same registration document, the questions relating to an individual’s attachment to employment and labor force choices include employed full-time, employed part-time, unemployed, under-employed, self-employed, full-time student, and part-time student. Again, there is no category for “retired.” In order to provide services to seniors, some LBS practitioners, according to Participant 17, find themselves constantly circling “unemployed” even as they explain to a seniors that “We know you are not unemployed as you are retired, but the government has not made a “tick box” for retired so we just write it above unemployed.”

Historically, in some rural and northern communities, the LBS centre has been responsible for providing adult education for seniors, particularly in the form of computer courses. When sites are pressured to decrease independence numbers, or to manage their suitability numbers within the expectations set out by the ministry, classes and program options for seniors are sometimes those most affected. In some communities, following the 2012 policy changes, this means seniors do not have the same level of service as was previously available, or are no longer provided with services at all. This is a particularly disturbing finding given the digital literacy challenges that seniors can be facing, added to the reality that seniors are sometimes the most isolated, and quite often increasingly impoverished members of our society. Skills that foster social integration, notably digital literacies skills, are important to counteract the socio-cultural determinants of health associated with aging. We know that active participation in community keeps people healthier (Preston et al., 2016). If we also take into account the additional effect of an intersectional identity, the barriers to service access can increase. For example, we know
that “immigrant women seniors, like their male counterparts, are at an economic
disadvantage relative to men born in Canada” (Preston et al., 2016, p. 77).

We need to be looking past a simple GDP economic lens to the larger community-
level capacity building that LBS centre can provide, particularly when it comes to the
programming options that could be provided to our seniors. Seniors in many of our
communities are also involved in the social economy, particularly as volunteers. Skills
that can increase human capital, social capital, and capacity in our communities should be
considered worthy and important, in the researcher’s view. Ageism and ableism are
intricately linked to value in a neoliberal outlook, but our intersectional identities
challenge such a worldview: “We need to recognize our interconnectedness within
communities and focus on the development of strategies that acknowledge a full range of
experiences and foster effective participation for all women [and men]” (Krogh, 2016, p.
188).

Marginalization and displacement not only affect LBS senior learners, but also
developmentally challenged individuals in some communities. The MAESD-LBS
program in Ontario through its OALCF framework now addresses only three literacy
levels and is not oriented towards individuals who fall outside ministry parameters. Given
that LBS adult education sites are known for providing literacy and basic skills, these
organizations have often had developmentally challenged adults participating in life skills
and lower-level literacy classes. These students are also often included in the
independence goal path—in part due to a societal construction that delimits access to
meaningful work which does not readily accommodate the developmentally delayed in
the workplace, and in part because many of the developmentally delayed are simply not
looking for work. It may also be that the literacy level for these adults is often very low, or that they do not function independently, as described in the scenario considered by the participants in this study when asked about services for those who do not recognize their name in writing, or numbers to twenty.

In both cases—senior learners and some developmentally delayed students—this push by the MAESD to have LBS agencies decrease their independence goal path percentages of learners served has meant a sudden absence of programming. For example, one participant noted that when they refocused their LBS programming—after being told by an MAESD representative that LBS agencies were expected to decrease their independence goal path numbers—they received a number of complaints which they handled by providing those who complained with the name and contact details of the local ministry representative. This participant noted that, when a former student followed through with the complaint, the ministry responded, saying, “the MAESD in no way decides or tells LBS programs what to do, and that the decision to close these programs or classes was the decision of the LBS agency and or the principals” (Anonymous, n.d.).

This type of hidden policy, and the way it is conceptually framed, is no less atrocious in its attempt at erasure than were the sterilization policies of the past (directed at some of the groups in the past who are now being excluded in the present), or the imposition of residential schools as genocidal acts of conquest. Marginalization of already marginalized adults can result in additional negative effects on social determinants of health (Mikkonen and Raphael, 2010).

The hegemony present in our education system continues the oppression of whole populations, while other individuals within groups succeed (Ledwith, 2005); for example,
when ESL learners have no other options for acquiring language competency in some rural and northern communities after being excluded on the basis of their “language levels.” The way things stand, a first-language learner with diminished cognitive ability, functioning at a grade-two level could qualify for an LBS program, but an ESL learner with a literacy level below the CLB benchmark is excluded from this same program, particularly in northern and rural areas where they may well have no other options. Both may have an equal need, if for different reasons. This sorting on the basis of English language proficiency rather than need seems to perpetuate a direct form of systemic and institutional racism on the basis of language discrimination, ensuing from hegemonic beliefs related to dominant language use and supremacist first language policy, discussed in Chapter Seven.

The new OALCF framework, with its milestones and culminating tasks in keeping with MAESD LBS policy, is too simplistic and linear in the way it conceives of learning as an “entrance, progression, and exit” process (not to mention the way it selects who gains “entrance” to begin with). This shows up in the displacement of a number of groups or demographics, including those taking part in the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), those with developmental and learning disability challenges who would fail to show “progress” according to the 2012 LBS policy definitions, those who are not employment-bound, those ESL students in some rural and northern areas who are “not allowed” access to LBS services, and those seniors whose programs have disappeared. Many of these groups are displaced in northern and rural areas, leaving them with no options for the kind of learning they seek or need. This can be heard in the frustration expressed by practitioners who have worked with northern and rural students
over the years and are seeing these displacements along the way. Participant 11 observed, “The whole issue is that literacy is about helping the people that need help and literacy is all encompassing—it’s everything. It’s not reading, writing and math…it’s life….And unfortunately the government doesn’t get it.” Much like the multi-modal literacies that Participant 11 alludes to, adult learners are multifaceted with intersecting identities that have implications for access (for example, poverty, transportation, childcare, mandated limitations to eligibility for services), which in turn have implications for health outcomes in light of the social determinants of health (Mikkonen and Raphael, 2010).

Participant 9 expressed concerns about the limitations of a referral process that excludes LBS programs, particularly as it concerns services for developmentally delayed adults, saying, “So there are all kinds of other adults with learning disabilities out there working in sheltered workshops and other community programs that certainly would benefit and want to learn to read better, but there is no class for them because, as you know, they might not have employment goal.”

The MAESD’s LBS policy fails to address issues related to those with special needs or those who need to be accommodated (for reasons noted above), thus reflecting an ableist mentality. In an environment which ties funding dollars to outcomes, taking on such students is seen to be risky, resulting in some agencies engaging in “prescreening” these prospective student out of service or referring them elsewhere. Although this is a first order effect when it comes to community-based service provision, it is still directly tied to the LBS policy, which means it has the second order effect of further limiting access for the students involved, an effect that is often hidden because LBS site practitioners do not say directly, “no you cannot come here,” but instead use prescreening
and program changes to limit access.

**Neoliberal conceptual framing and erasure in LBS**

1. Sites are told what they must do and the fear of funding loss drives closure decisions, given that LBS sites are “scored” according to their performance statistics as they relate to goal paths and business plans, but

2. The MAESD stays at arm’s length: “they have not told LBS agencies to close programs, or classes or prescreen people out of service.”

3. The MAESD mandate makes it appear as though there is compliance to the “right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities” (EOPG, 2015) given that “no” is not formally conveyed.

4. Nothing has been given to LBS sites in writing relating to the MAESD expectation of independence goal path decrease, and

5. No one is “officially” denied access to classes—and thus not discriminated against—because individuals are not being told “no you cannot come to class”; and yet,

6. Disappearing happens in the learning landscape as the educational options for certain individuals are simply no longer available, and therefore they are no longer able to attend;

7. Through this process an oppressive, discriminating, and displacing policy—decreasing independence goal path percentages for example—is made invisible: erasure complete.

In light of these conditions, the displacements happening currently in some LBS organizations in Ontario are not new phenomena. The MAESD in Ontario has already been criticized by their own auditors (Cathexis, 2016) in ways that echo the concerns raised by some interviewees, as these relate to the new OALCF framework with its learning tasks and milestones.

Pinset-Johnson and Sturm (2015) note that
the emphasis on the compliance function of the Milestones over learners and learning has led to the development of yet another barrier for those who already experience and have experienced multiple education and learning barriers, a direct contradiction of the stated aims of the LBS program. (p. 18)

They also critique the stance taken by the ministry with respect to efficiency and accountability, arguing that the MAESD places fiscal concerns ahead of learning opportunities and the needs and goals of learners (2015). Their critique extends to question the attempt by the ministry to establish a best practice procedure, noting that “Ontario is the first and only known jurisdiction in the world to have reformulated some of the international survey testing methods for educational and pedagogical purposes, and then mandated its use within an accountability framework” (Pinset-Johnson and Sturm p. 8–9). This “best practice” approach has also been critiqued by Niyozov and Tarc (2015).

The MAESD’s LBS policies appear to be contributing to the dispossession and disappearing of some of the most marginalized adult learners in our communities. These learners simply have nowhere to turn for their basic skills and literacy needs; at the same time, the government washes its hands of decisions the LBS agencies make in their desperation to “at least remain open for some learners.” As the erasure continues so too does the gap between the haves and have-nots, those with power and those without, those seen as valuable members of society, and those deemed—by those driving global power structures—to be less valuable. In this way, education continues to be used as a destructive tool in the neoliberal arsenal and perpetuates our colonial histories of power, privilege and oppression.

Some LBS service providers have also been told by the representatives of the funding sources that students are not eligible for service provision if they do not sign the
MAESD registration and consent form. This is a three-page long form designed to document employment and education history. When the disclosure of this amount of personal information is required in order to gain access to the kind of basic education that adult literacy and basic skills provide—essentially elementary and secondary education for adults—the consent process becomes effectively nonconsensual, bordering on a human rights violation on the grounds of “accessibility,” not to mention trading personal information to gain access to basic education programs.

Hugh Starkey (2014) once gave a lecture I attended, emphasizing how everyone intrinsically has human rights, to which I had argued that this is simply not the case, either individually or collectively and provided Starkey the counter example of residents of Northern Ontario Fly-in First Nations Communities that often do not have their human rights actualized (personal communication, 2016). Starkey’s proposition may be true theoretically, in the sense that we all should have these rights, but in reality this is not an actuality for many people on the planet. In many places, people cannot actualize these rights in light of the colonial educational systems to which they are subject, even today, and sometimes in exchange for foreign aid. Individuals and whole groups can be displaced from access to schooling, required to leave their communities, edged onto marginal lands, not allowed to produce their own food, and not have the monetary means or basic skills to provide for themselves. Their right to education—as seen in some of the LBS service centres in Ontario at the present time—is not actualized in as much as it is made inaccessible for various reasons, ultimately related to global social inequity (Agnotti, 2012; Block et. al., 2012; Carney, 2011-2012; Sage, 2014; Starkey, 2012).
Chapter 7
What is Community? Who Gets to Decide?

As well as the three themes discussed in Chapter Six, the themes: 1. Standardization in pluralistic societies, and; 5. Balancing acts: Community and MAESD; needs and expectations, are two other important themes that emerged in the course of the interviews. The first has to do with the understanding that there are large differences within streams and across streams, which indicates that “standardization” is not actually standardization, for many reasons related to the pluralistic nature of our society. The second is that second order effects are becoming evident and creating a need for balancing acts between the needs of community versus the expectations of MAESD. This balancing act seems particularly noticeable in some of the northern and rural sites interviewed (including southern rural sites) which seem to be seeing student displacement more than southern urban sites. These themes can be related to how we define community, to community responsiveness and wrap-around services across agencies for learners with multiple needs (for example, stemming from a history of incarceration), to our differing geographic, economic, and demographic realities, and to our cultural and linguistic communities within LBS organizations and within larger geographic communities.

Theme: Standardization in pluralistic societies

As participants considered and discussed the scenarios presented to them, they acknowledged that the realities faced by individual communities differed, effectively making the MAESD attempts at standardization questionable. This theme of standardization in pluralistic societies occurs in the research data related to geographic,
demographic, cultural and linguistic intersectional factors, which will be discussed below.

When it came to learners with a history of incarceration this difference in community was often related to a history of colonialism and racism: First Nations LBS sites often had higher levels of students that fell within the student demographic scenario that had a history of incarceration - which is likely linked to historical and systemic racism in our justice system tied to colonialism - as an example. This difference in community then translated at times into a difference in student demographic which of course then differentiated out who worked with more of these learners at any given time.

It was interesting too, that these learners, that had a history of incarceration, were provided with LBS services at all sites but one. Further, sites were not just working with them, but working both within their LBS community and across their wider community as one of many agencies, and communicating with those other agencies as needed to ensure this learner was supported.

**Working within and across community**

For learners with a history of incarceration, community includes the “wrap-around” or multi-agency support services, which emphasize the potential for a learner to move forward in life. Participant 15 summarizes it this way:

**P 15:** I’d go through on initial assessment process, develop learner plan based on current needs. Most importantly, we need to be patient and compassionate towards these clients as they have many struggles in their day-to-day life that we cannot even begin to fathom. However, that being said, we also need to work closely together with the community-based agency that is helping him in order to make him or her accountable for his or her academic success—suggestions such as: make sure there are connections made with other counselors or agencies that could help this client in the areas of life that they are struggling in, monthly reporting to these outside agencies or case conference type
meetings with the other agencies that include the client at these meetings and ask for their input. The client needs to feel like they are supported and that their input matter. After all, it is their plan.

At times this support-system model came from a “cultural centering” process committed to supporting community coherence, summarized Participant 5 and Participant 6 in the following way:

**P 5:** Accept them into the program and work with the learner to create a supportive plan with the learner, to help them achieve their goal. We believe in wrap-around supports and have many programs from before birth to death at the centre to help clients.

**P 6:** This is the X learner—I have 60% justice learners and are at capacity with full year-round service. The key here is the primary caseworker, whether that is a lawyer, or probation officer, or mental health and addictions workers. That primary worker participates in all aspects of the learner plan and negotiation of service and curriculum content. There is shared responsibility and accountability for this learner plan because I am not going to utilize resources—human and learning materials—without it.

Participant 14 spoke about the barriers to learning that continue to exist, many of which can be related to colonial history, particularly ways in which this legacy continues to affect the higher rate of incarceration for Indigenous people. Participant 14 also referred to special programming and sharing learners across various types of communities. Participant 14 talked about the support given to these learners, while at the same time attempting to support the entire community—an example of the capacity issue noted earlier, where it seems that LBS staff often work incessantly to serve their communities. Following is a selection from my interview with Participant 14.

**P14:** A lot of times they will be Indigenous people that are participating in other literacy and basic skills programs and sometimes it’s based on location, right because they’re closer.
Sometimes it will be a friend who is a motivator and co-conspirator they want to follow, but we, as an Indigenous organization, have some funding to provide specialized materials that appeal to Indigenous communities so often we will have people come to us for an Anishinaabe language class or an Oneida language class, once a week while they’ll be engaged with other programs.  

...Or they’ll come out for a moccasin workshop while they’re still engaged with other programs....This year we have done some innovation around literacy and basic skills programming because we’re trying to build some bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities right? Our services are available to the entire population but the vast majority of our students are Indigenous and there are some people in my program that do not necessarily feel comfortable yet in the presence of settlers.

...And if we did not allow limited access for families at certain events and programs we would certainly be doing a disservice to our learners in terms of providing a holistic education

Ideas related to community—how we define community and work with communities—arose directly or tangentially in many of the interviews, and were related to most of the student demographic scenarios I presented. How community is defined, and how the work of literacy and basic skills education is conducted is related to the geographic, linguistic, cultural, and economic realities of the communities where LBS sites are situated.

For some practitioners, according to the interviews with Participant 14 and Participant 11, having culturally appropriate and differentiated programming for their client base was an important factor in defining and working with their communities.

**P11**: So, the only time that I’m actually in working as a facilitator is if I’m working a program that I do that is called the gift of self-esteem.

**I**: Right, like a boutique.
**P11:** It’s an Anishinanabe program. It’s an actual program, and if you get a chance to look at it or renew it it’s wonderful.

For other practitioners interviewed, community realities defined how their sites functioned. For example, Participant 16 acknowledged that the various communities contained within their LBS community come and go, and that these groups have different worldviews and lifestyles which affect how programming works when it comes to delivering what is LBS service but actually functions similar to an ESL service.

**P16:** What we did years ago, there was a whole group of Aboriginal elders….They had come to see us, and some of them spoke a little tiny bit of English, but there was someone at the friendship centre at the time who had approached us, and asked would we do an ESL class.

**I:** Yes, because they are.

**P16:** And we were already squeezed to the max with the number of instructors we had, but I had a volunteer that I thought would be perfect for this, so we went ahead and got start and you know, and it just grew from there….And we had to approach X, way back when, to see if they could somehow help us with a sponsorship for this, and put the “volunteer” sort of on a payroll….Because it wasn’t a volunteer job anymore….And they went for it.

...And these people, it was amazing, amazing. This woman, her husband was a trapper, she’d been in the bush on and off all her life, she can skin a beaver…so who better to sit down with a group of Aboriginal elders right? It was awesome. But those kinds of things, there is always a way, right?...If you want to do it you’ll find a sponsor, you’ll find a location, even if you don’t have the room, I find that LBS people are very resourceful.

Participant 16 also talked about the realities of program monitoring when it came to follow-up statistical measures for a demographic that has changed over the years and now is often “on the move” for socio-cultural reasons:
P16: That’s right, and it’s true, and some northern communities are better off than others…. You know, but demographics-wise, you know, they are all different—every single one—and when we started we had a huge French population in X. I would say the majority of people in X were French…. Well, you know maybe 70-65/35 kind of thing but it’s not like that anymore. It’s changed quite a bit and now we have a lot more Aboriginal learners.

...Well, and that follow-up piece is not just the guy that’s incarcerated, it can happen anywhere, I mean we have a lot of transient learners in the north…. I mean especially with Aboriginal clientele where they will come down from the coast…. Because they want to get away from it, and they come here, and they got family, but they get homesick.

I: And they go back?

P16: And sure enough the next time that they go up to goose hunt they don’t come back and yeah it affects my numbers but that’s the reality of a literacy program in the north…. And that’s why I mean the guidelines are for everybody but not one-size-fits-all.

Demographic issues that are tied to linguistic-cultural issues sometimes defined the differences between LBS sites and streams, but other times caused a “blurring” of roles in terms of what MAESD defines as a stream versus what an actual site in a specific stream was experiencing. Some participants indicated that the communities, which they served, contained a range of linguistic realities with which they had to work, including English as a Second Language (ESL), French as a Second Language (FSL), American Sign Language (ASL), and a variety of Indigenous languages. Participant 10 provides some insight below with respect to the adult immigrants coming to her LBS centre needing FSL program services because they find themselves living in a rural and predominantly French-speaking community:

P10: Well you know we are a Francophone program so the students that come to us as an initial requirement they have to have benchmark six as a second language so we don’t see any English as a second language clients at all.
I: And do you ever see FSL clients that would be similar to the ESL students in the Anglophone stream?

P10: And what was the acronym?

I: Ah, FSL, French as a Second language?

P10: Well we would for immigrants....because when people are coming from certain African countries, then of course French is their second-language. They’ll have a language in their first language in their own country....So these people will often go to the X program in French to improve in the French language skills and then they would come to us.

I: Oh okay, so is it similar too, they have to have a certain level before they come to you then?

P10: Yes, the benchmark six.

I: The same, okay.

P10: Yes.

I: So, similar just within the French stream.

P10: That’s right.

I: Oh okay, interesting I was wondering about that.

P10: [laughing] Yes, they have to be able to understand French. They don’t have to be able to read and write it as much but they have to be able to communicate.

I: Okay, and has the FSL Level 6 always been that, or is this a level that’s been put on in the last few years?

P10: I think it’s always pretty much been there. It maybe hasn’t always been respected because on the Francophone side there are very few sites where you’re able to get French as a Second language because a lot of the Francophones live in rural areas, so when immigrants come to those rural areas, so we have right now that situation with the Syrian refugees, they’re coming and some of them were in Libyan camps....So they learned French.
Participant 10 identified a linguistic-cultural issue emerging in her community, one with overtones of racism—as a new demographic emerged with refugees arriving who spoke neither French or English settling into local communities and requiring services from the local LBS centre.

**P10:** ...one thing though, sometimes it’s [a] really different difference between immigrants and the residents. Sometimes it’s really hard to satisfy needs equally....So we are finding that a challenge especially in X....Whereas in the rural areas there’s not as much immigration yet, so we are finding that people are more welcoming, whereas in X sometimes you get a feeling of, they’re going to be taking our jobs and [so on].

...Right now, a problem we’re having in X is that we have a shortness of places in schools for children....And there is a movement about how the immigrant children are taking the places that maybe they shouldn’t....It is a little worrisome.

Participant 10, however, also emphasized the importance of the LBS site’s standing in community saying, “We may not put them in CAMS but we will not refuse them because word-of-mouth is so important….And when you refuse one person you are refusing everyone that is around that person….So this is the policy that we like to follow.” She continued by saying that staff at her LBS agency feel that, while all Canadians should be served, the MAESD “recommended” policy with respect to French as a Second Language is hurting their program, given the way this need is being highlighted in the community. The administrative decision in this case has been—rather than not responding to a community need for FSL services - to develop a fee-for-service program. Participant 10 explains it this way:

**P10:** You know because they have a legal responsibility to make services available to Canadians...it’s all Canadians, it doesn’t matter what you’re going to do with it and I think it’s really sad because they will kind of look at your projections not sure what you call it in English, you know like the path [goal path].
...The needs seem to kind of change, and that really goes with the economic situation of the city....Really, really depending...or maybe depending is not the right word, we are easily affected by that....And if I know when there are a lot of jobs then that’s when referrals are lower, but it kind of comes and goes in cycles....We would really like to work with employers more.

...But the problem with us is, they’re always very welcoming, happy to see you, but what they’re looking for is French as a Second language....And then we have to kind of say I’m sorry we don’t do that....It’s kind of not a good thing because they sort of pushed us aside and say okay you cannot deliver what we are looking for, and we used to get a lot of pressure from the ministry along those lines that we should be going to the employers and stuff like that, but every time we tried, this is sort of the response we are getting....We are not in the right business [laughing].

I: Oh no? [laughing]. Yes, I’m wondering if this is one of those very specific issues to the Francophone stream....

P10: Because French is French is what they tell me, that it doesn’t matter, but it does to our ministry as you have to be self-identified Francophone, so what we’re doing more in our region right now is developing—and we are coming along with [it] quite well—is the sideline we will be offering, French as a Second language, but as a whole new business sort of thing.

I: Fee for service?

P10: Yeah.

Participant 10 describes a very different situation than that described by Participant 1, situated with an LBS program in Southern Ontario, saying that “the profile of our clients most of our client…is, well anybody whose official language is French. That means about 80% are Canadians from African, or Caribbean origins, or Haiti. Ah, obviously anybody born and raised in Canada, you know standard Francophone French-Canadian.”

In the course of responding to the developmentally delayed student scenario
(which she did not see at her LBS agency), Participant 1 also addressed the question of meeting language needs for newly arrived refugees.

*I*: So if you have people coming in and they don’t have developmental challenges, are you still seeing people that are slower, but because they just never had the opportunity to learn?

*P1*: Yes, particularly people who have come from African nations, those nations that have gone through Civil War….Or Haitians… whose was level of French is lower than their level of Creole. We will make an exception for that because there’s absolutely no level of English that they have. So, yeah, it does happen in those cases, they may spend an extra year with us.

Interview data reveals that there are significant differences between LBS centres attempting to address the need for Francophone LBS services in Southern Ontario and those in Northern Ontario. In Southern Ontario, which receives the highest numbers of immigrants and refugees in our province, Francophone LBS centres deal with student demographics that have a history of displacement and lower educational levels, that may be related to migration, war, lack of opportunity, poverty, violence, integration challenges, and so on. The Southern LBS centres that cater to Francophone needs are situated in areas where there are larger populations of immigrants and refugees arriving from French-speaking African countries. LBS centres in these parts of the province are working with services across the communities and providing programs in ways similar to ESL programs in other parts of the province for English-speaking immigrant and refugee populations. The demographic phenomenon in the south is dramatically different from the experiences of LBS organizations in rural settings in Northern Ontario Francophone communities, which are faced with an aging population, out-migration, and the economic fallout of the boom-and-bust resource extraction industries. In some northern
communities, FSL programs are necessary to finding employment, yet LBS practitioners feel citizens cannot be served within MAESD, and when they do have smaller influxes of immigrant Francophone learners they are feeling the racism related to competition for what are few jobs, and even placement in public schools it seems. In Northern Ontario the Francophone LBS students, with their needs and programming options, are often very different from some of their Southern Ontario Francophone counterparts.

According to Participant 10, adult students seeking French as a Second Language programs encounter the same policy recommendation as ESL students with respect to the CLB Level 6. This means that FSL is not offered within LBS programing in the Francophone LBS centres, as service need to be for first language users according to the ministry’s mandate. As noted, in some situations though, offering FSL is perceived to be a community need with the solution that some LBS organizations are offering FSL as a fee-for-service program that runs parallel to the LBS programs. Similarly, Indigenous language classes have also been recognized as a much-needed service, in keeping with the recognition that some Indigenous learners do not speak English as their first language (noted by P6 in Chapter 5). Fortunately, Indigenous learners are not encountering access issues related to ESL because there seems to be more program flexibility in some LBS sites that are Indigenous-stream programs.

The complexities around providing access to prospective adult students needing FSL programs brings up this question: if individuals living in northern communities need FSL in order to apply for work, and employment seems to be one of the main focuses of MAESD, why would FSL not be eligible as a legitimate course offering, particularly in communities where agencies have been approached by potential employers to provide
language-learning programs? Should we not be responsive to these differences in the needs as they emerge in our communities, especially given the significant differences in demography, geography and economic status?

**Theme: Balancing acts: Community and MAESD; needs and expectations**

There is much to be learned when it comes to tailoring LBS programming to meeting actual community needs. Both Northern and Southern Ontario LBS agencies sampled seem committed to work with the populations, or demographics present in their communities, yet also attempt to meet the expectations and policies of the ministry. It may well be easier for southern Francophone LBS agencies—which are oriented to a demographic that hits nearly all of the suitability indicators for the ministry—to comply with MAESD expectations than it may be for a northern community given the complexities of northern demographics, for example. To say that the needs of one community are more important or real than the needs of another is to deny the reality of the other.

**Racist and supremacist ideology in a pluralistic society**

The idea, that one group of people in society is racially or culturally superior to another continues to be one that education providers grapple with. Although I am looking at present day issues concerning human rights—in light of the displacement of adult populations due to LBS policy with its impact on access to literacy and basic skills in Ontario—the history of North America and elsewhere has been conceptualized in ways that justify atrocities and imbalances of power since the onset of European colonial infringement and conquest. There is a 500-year history in North American related to issues of marginalization, powerlessness, exploitation, colonialism, imperialism and
violence (Young, 1990). Sadly, according to Sanchez and Pita (2014), “racial profiling, segregation, and denial of equal rights in the United States have never been restricted solely to people living under settler colonialism in occupied territories, as is evident in the history of nineteenth-century Chinese workers, African Americans, and women” (p. 1039). Canada’s history is no less racist, when considered in light of the forced sterilizations of First Nations peoples (and developmentally delayed adults) (Savage, 2013), and the phenomenon of missing and murdered First Nations women and girls, (Sisters in Spirit [SIS], 2015), as well as the innumerable colonial processes and policies that continue to denigrate Firsts Nations communities all the while appropriating resources and lands.

Our racist history, rarely critiqued in our education system, also includes the history of mobs and race riots, the disenfranchisement of Chinese Canadians by way of head taxes as barriers to immigration, the segregation imposed by residential schools, the list of preferred and non-preferred countries embedded in the Canadian Immigration Act, the closing of Canada’s doors to Jewish refugees fleeing Europe in the WWII, the Japanese internment camps, the domestic-worker programs that exploited foreign workers, and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act which erodes rights in Canada and leaves refugees and immigrants among the most vulnerable (Hobbs and Rice, 2013, p. 162–163). We need to understand how this still plays out in relation to our ideas about social justice, given that there persists “variants of slavery and servitude within our contemporary society” (Sanchez and Pita, 2014, p. 1040).

Our economic structures, widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots, lead to the perpetuation of centuries of struggle, and the oppression of the many by an elite
few. Vandana Shiva (2014) summarizes what she calls “capitalist patriarchy” in the following way:

Most of our cultures across the world have believed in Mother Earth as a Mother….It is only in the spirit of the rise of industrialism, and capitalism, and colonialism, that the idea of the earth as a Mother was destroyed in order to turn the earth into a reservoir of resources to be exploited….The destructive system is based on what I have called capitalist patriarchy, the convergence of patriarchal power with the power of capital. (Vandana Shiva, posted by OneLoveRvR, 2014)

The education system in place in North America, and in fact globally, has been guilty for centuries of being a tool to further colonial conquest, an instrument in cultural genocide and now in neoliberal economic agendas where students have also become tools and resources for the accumulation of greater GDP wealth (Klees, 2008). We must be cognizant of these issues and processes and attempt to bring these situations to light through our work if we are to curb the potential perpetuation of them in our praxis, particularly in light of the current student displacements happening in some LBS sites.

I have had certain understandings related to global power structures for some time, but the idea of the settler colonial triad as it relates to this understanding was new to me (Wolfe, 1999). Canada has a history of slavery and has participated in a similar form of erasure, which we do not speak of, but instead prefer to remember our role in facilitating the underground railroad (Cooper, 2013). I also understand that we rarely discuss the Indigenous slavery that was a part of this erasure. By not recognizing how the genocidal acts against Indigenous peoples and the slave trade worked in tandem—in aid of accumulating wealth for settlers and European power centers—I was missing a key to understanding how this system of oppression worked historically. Which means that I was also missing the way in which this system of oppression is perpetuated on a global
level today—through similar hegemonic structures embedded in economic structures, and in global education policies as these relate to international aid and government policies, (Klees, 2008).

I propose that the MAESD’s policy “recommendation” to do with prospective students being required to demonstrate language proficiency to CLB Level 6—for both English and French as a Second Language—operates as a gatekeeping policy that can be related to the perpetuation of colonialism, power, and access to opportunity.

Some ESL teachers, along with other educators who work in multilingual classrooms, grapple with and critique the implications of the colonial legacy of English as a Lingua Franca (Carroll 2017; Combs, 2017; Deroo, 2017; Tian, 2017; Van Gorp, 2017) and look at the study of language learning, intercultural learning, and inclusive multilingual classroom pedagogy through asset based models of concept acquisition using translanguaging (Carroll 2017; Combs, 2017; Deroo, 2017; Garcia and Wei, 2014; Mazak and Carroll, 2016; Tian, 2017; Van Gorp, 2017). With the idea of translanguaging and multilingualism comes the acknowledgement that bilingual and multilingual learners have the advantage of having multiple worldviews and ways of knowing compared to monolingual learners. Scholars agree that knowing multiple languages will facilitate and enhance the conceptual building of meaning, and variously address how an understanding of this process can inform educational pedagogy as it concerns the development of knowledge (Carroll 2017; Combs, 2017; Deroo, 2017; Garcia and Wei, 2014; Mazak and Carroll, 2016; Tian, 2017; Van Gorp, 2017). As these pedagogical ideologies are discussed at higher education conferences related to proactive learning processes and practices (Carroll 2017; Combs, 2017; Deroo, 2017; Mazak and Carroll, 2016; Tian,
2017; Van Gorp, 2017) it comparatively seems like an injustice to decide who has access to adult basic education by first languages. That MAESD continues to set language “recommendations” that restrict access to services based on a person’s first language seems not only discriminatory gatekeeping based on colonial power structures premised on systemic racism, but it also shows how educational models based on neoliberal business premises, while being conceptually framed as effective, are in reality not always about teaching and learning. It is possible for educators and LBS practitioners to gain a better understanding of effective and equitable pedagogy than that provided by the business-based models of education they find themselves working within.

That practitioners do more than work within the limitations of the business model can be seen where some LBS organizations and practitioners are finding ways to provide educational services to learners regardless of ESL status or language levels, even as others are more inclined to adhere to MAESD policy. The very idea that our LBS programs identify “streams” based on language and culture is problematic given the diversity of what this means in the southern versus northern Francophone stream examples above. Streams for many of the clientele served by LBS centres, do not necessarily fall into only one “language” in terms of being designated in this way: Practitioners interviewed that are working in the Indigenous stream recognize that their learners are sometimes ESL when the first language is an Indigenous languages, especially in northern Ontario; ASL learners are also often ESL if they have grown up embedded in deaf or deaf-blind culture but are accessing an Anglophone sites services; Francophone learners can often also be designated as ESL learners when accessing an Anglophone sites services; and English users may be FSL when looking for language
upgrading for employment in some communities.

When we begin to look at language needs within both our LBS and geographical communities we need to be cognizant of the fact that culture and identity are intricately entwined with first language acquisition. The data suggests that we need to think of our LBS streams as far more than a language or a socio-cultural stream as the socio-cultural factors intertwined in each stream will also vary depending on the demographics served. Having culturally relevant LBS materials in a southern Ontario LBS francophone site that sees many immigrants and refugees from African nations is one thing; while having culturally relevant LBS materials for a northern Ontario LBS Francophone site, which might include third generation working class Francophone people, and possibly French-speaking Metis, is another.

It is worth reconsidering the idea of stream as referring only to one or two aspects of identity, and being a more intersectional, holistic community level response to literacy needs as seen in some of the Indigenous LBS stream centres in Ontario. In cases where Indigenous streams have been developed, programming can include visits by elder, Indigenous language classes, cultural materials, lessons teaching traditional crafts, and sometimes family-centred programming (addressed by Participant 6, Participant 11, and Participant 14).

To not fully recognize the social-economic-cultural-linguistic-geographical needs of individual communities and LBS sites within larger geographical communities does us all a disservice. This relates back to reflections on sustainable community development, community need and responsiveness of programming as well as concepts of decolonization that need to be recognized within LBS programming.
How the continuation of the colonial mindset fails us all

In order to construct a decolonial space, a thorough understanding of colonialism, hegemonic discourse, conceptual framing, and global political agendas is required; it must include a critique of the worldviews that demean others. This subjugation and illegitimization of others, a part of white supremacist ideology, can be seen as having been entrenched in European worldviews at this point in history. Supremacist ideology can be seen in many aspects of education, given that as hegemonic discourse is often not critiqued. Due to the pervasiveness of hegemonic discourse, and the strategic historical erasure of facts from the collective consciousness in society, it is often not even seen, understood or acknowledged.

Goura and Seltzer-Kelly (2013) refer to John Dewey’s (1934/1981) critique of western hegemony in the 1930s noting that he argued that older and long-validated artistic materials (including literary works), are infused with nationalist and imperialist overtones, conveying “superior cultural status” that undermines students’ abilities to critically engage with them on a deep and reflective level, deadening the students to real and urgent cultural and political phenomena in the surrounding world (p. 52).

Similarly, Vandana Shiva (2014) talks about the “science of false objectivity” in relation to Western concepts of science:

What is called science has been based on the subjugation of the science of all the cultures of the world, but it has also been based on subjugating the science of Europe….The new science of false objectivity, the new science of false rationality—of defining nature as dead and man as conqueror—that science was a very patriarchal science and it required women to be killed as witches: the witch hunts, the colonization, and the destruction of nature are the three colonizations that are built into that kind of science…it is a colonization of the mind because the human mind teaches us to see connections, whereas that science forces us to disconnect and at the end of it after centuries, that mind cannot see the connections, and that has become the biggest threat to our
existence on the planet: a fragmented mind. (Vandana Shiva, posted by OneLoveRvR, 2014)

Hegemonic discourse hurts us all because it lies to us, hides truths, erases them, and in this process produces whole generations of students, teachers, and citizens whose learning has been based on what seems to be a supremacist discourse that produces subjugation and erasure. This creates a false world based on injustice, which perpetuates the five faces of oppression identified by Young (1990). According to Indigenous worldviews and Ghandian philosophies of Trusteeship (Joshee, 2012), no one truly gets ahead because we are all interconnected—with each other and this earth; the destruction of the planet will bring about our eventual destruction; and the injustice of the one can hurt the many. Alternatively, it has been proposed that we shed our colonial minds, create brighter alternatives, “cease destroying our planet and begin to provide decent life opportunities to a majority of the world’s population” (Cuppes and Glynn, 2014, p. 66). This can be done in part through education—both institutionally-centred and community-based—but in order to do so, we need to name and deconstruct the neoliberal and inequitable processes that are occurring in tandem, like the displacement and marginalization happening in some LBS sites today related to the 2012 LBS policy changes.

**Collusion: Power, silencing and legitimization**

While policy change can prompt resistance, which at times is framed in ways that delegitimize real concerns that practitioners have, there is also at times a legitimization and collusion that seems to happen between government and large contractors that implement the policy changes.

An example of this kind of legitimization and collusion is the fact that MAESD
does not get involved with service provider audits, even when there is enough evidence to suggest the need for an external audit process. This can be related to policy change and the level of power the various “actors of implementation” have. For instance, in-house LBS program coordinators and instructors may be responsible for the day-to-day decision making related to planning programs and classes but their access is likely restricted to the very budgets they need in order to make appropriate decisions.

Participant 17 recalled a recent example of this kind of bifurcation when practitioners at the LBS site were given access to the budget, the discrepancies they encountered were excused away by their financing department: Participant 17 was told that money for another one of the site’s non-LBS programs was “absorbed” at year-end because it was not spent, and that practice was common to the service provider where end-of-year monies not spent were “absorbed.” While this is a common practice for school boards, colleges, and perhaps even universities, if unspent funds in an individual’s bank account were reabsorbed by the bank it would be considered stealing and constitute fraud.

Similar to the delegitimization of reluctant staff members as “shirkers” which happens in the context of neoliberal New Public Management, such legitimization of fund reallocation can also happen through conceptual framing. Processes that seem illegitimate when viewed through a lens that sees the use and abuse of power critically, can suddenly become legitimized through conceptual framing. For example, when stealing is reframed as “end of year policy,” and given an “official” process name such as “absorbed”—an act that would be viewed as criminal if it happened in another context (individuals/banks)—it is transformed as a legitimate action. This type of conceptual
framing, with its language usage and attendant discourse, is recognized as a mechanism of oppression. As Howe (1994) puts it, “Those with power can control the language of the discourse and can therefore influence how the world is to be seen and what it will mean (as cited in Mullaly, 2010, p.114).

Through the perspective of an anti-oppressive lens, this seems like yet another systemic, structural, and neoliberal power relation when a government ministry that provides hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars in funding to service providers does not seem willing to hold the multi-million-dollar service providers accountable for the way they use government funding. This is often how power works at a systemic or structural level as those in power cannot risk questioning each other or the entire system could fall apart. Looking away and not getting involved has historically been a strategy that keeps power in the hands of the few to the detriment of the many. If the MAESD does not hold the service providers accountable then the questionable “missing,” or “absorbed,” or “creatively used” funds cannot find their way down to the local sites that could well use the funding money for its intended purposes or to grow creative solutions to offset the second order effects and issues of equity that are arising for some student demographic groups since the 2012 changes that affected policy and funding. This is clearly linked to New Public Management (NPM) structures where efficiency and accountability are used as buzz words and where a closer look suggests there is more afoot. Erasaari (as cited in Siltala, 2013) explains processes at work in Finland that are similar to the way education funds are shifted around at the end of the year as described by Participant 17:

In Finland, for instance, one fourth of the budget is now paid for “transparent” market rents in the buildings, in which schools and hospitals have been run for
decades, instead of better salaries, more staff, and for some resources for the work itself. (p. 477)

In such instances, power not only stays where power lays—in the hands of those who control the dollars and access to those dollars—but how it is spent and how the process is legitimized as “efficient” and the organization seen to be “accountable” even where critical analysis can unpack this sort of budgetary usage as questionable. This is an especially important issue in light of the Ontario government having announced that millions of dollars are to be infused into LBS programs over the next four years (MAESD, 2017a).

**Anticolonialism, decolonialism, and anti-oppression**

Spring (2008) proposes that postcolonial analysis is that which addresses the dominant forms of knowing which result from economic and political power, and that the influence Western ideology has had globally is not related to it being correct but rather to the way it conceptualizes power both politically and economically (p. 336). He emphasizes that such hegemony is not only dangerous and exploitive for most populations, but equally dangerous and destructive for the planet (p. 337). On her Curated Facts page, Gonzalez (2015), proposes that anti-colonialism, can be thought of as any movement that opposes forms of colonialism or imperialism.

Anti-colonialism and postcolonialism attempt to deconstruct colonial truths and discourse. Transformative and reconstructivist pedagogies would see this as “defeating colonial power is to recognize this power, how it is structured into an integrated system, and to begin to disrupt it through knowledge of how the system works. With this knowledge the system can be challenged and dismantled.” (Iseke-Barnes, 2008, p. 124). Through this disruption of power anti-colonial and postcolonial work becomes or moves
into something a bit different: decolonizing work.

Decolonizing, once understood in the context of handing over governing and decision making to allow for self-determination and independence, is now viewed more broadly as “a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power” (Smith, 1999, p.98, as cited in Iseke-Barnes, 2008, p. 123).

According to Mignola (2011) decolonial space-making is a way of building alternatives to colonial space, mindsets, worldviews, and discourse:

Epistemic disobedience leads us to decolonial options as a set of projects that have in common the effects experienced by all the inhabitants of the globe that were at the receiving end of global designs to colonize the economy (appropriation of land and natural resources), authority (management by the Monarch, the State, or the Church), and police and military enforcement (coloniality of power), to colonize knowledges (languages, categories of thought, belief systems, etc.) and beings (subjectivity). (p. 45)

Decolonial thinking thus brings in other frames of reference that are “nonlinear, situated and non-Eurocentric” (Cuppes and Glynn, 2014, p. 59), but the question then arises: how does a Western settler academic do this work?

**Decolonizing ourselves**

As we move toward a decolonial space, and make this space a part of our praxis, the first step is to be cognizant of our positionality or social location and our own, often unexamined, colonial brainwashing or fragmented mind.

Vandana Shiva (2014) looks at this gaining of understanding not as academic work in as much as it relates to praxis as the first step, but as personal work related to reconnecting (to nature, to mothers, to the world):
The first connection is to connect to nature, and that means recognizing the power of nature’s work. The second is, I believe we have to connect to our mothers, both the mother earth as well as mothers because that connection is connection of life. To recognize and be grateful for life, and the third connection we’ve to make is ourselves in a highly connected world. We have to learn from both the social connections of community and the natural connections of the ecological support to know the reality of which we are a part, and if they are in our heads, fragmentations and separations, we have to treat them as psychological problems. We’ve become a species that has to undergo psychiatric care and only nature can offer it to us. (Vandana Shiva, posted by OneLoveRvR, 2014)

Establishing connections such as those described by Shiva is particularly important if one teaches from a sustainable placed-based or a land-based, locality development ideological standpoint. Place-based learning that does not take into account a long history of Indigenous use and occupation of the land, the cultural rootedness to the land, and our problematic yet shared colonial history across all settler/indigenous peoples, conspires to further the discourse of white settler supremacy (Bang et al., 2014; Calderon, 2014; Mauro, 2014; McCoy, 2014; Morris, 2011; Paperson, 2014; Whitehouse et al., 2014) and engage with colonial conceptual framing and the parceling of erasure.

To relate the work of decolonizing, as practitioners who work to bring literacy and basic skills to adults in need of these, we understand the importance of developing appropriate policy, having access to research, and contribute to the process of accountability in order to achieve success in our programs. Working to understand our practice is also referred to as praxis (Brown & Hannis, 2010) in as much as our awareness of what we do combines theory and practice. However, when policy framed as “best practice” is inserted into the equation within performance management systems such as the LSB guidelines put forward by the MAESD praxis becomes something altogether different. Here, global ideologies are reflected in provincial mandates as
citizen “accountability” extends beyond policy implementation, and “best practice” becomes an exercise in standardization rather than a process of taking research into account to inform policy and practice. This move to standardization reflects documented instances of globalization in which NGOs, such as the IMF or the World Bank, push forward labour market productivity as official policy goals, at the expense of equity, social justice, and democracy (Clarke, 2012; Moutsios, 2010).

This emphasis on “best practice” can be understood as “top-down” policy production, a model that is still used in Canada at many municipal, provincial, and national levels as it relates to health policy, education policy, and other sectors. These top-down models have been criticized for their lack of responsiveness to local “client-centred” needs even though they are termed “best practice” and “outcomes-based” approaches by the ministry itself (MTCU, 2013). At worst these models are part of a global move where citizen participation is eroded and local governance is weakened (Galway and Wiens, 2013). When this happens, ground floor community development workers, and in the case of LBS agencies in Ontario, adult educators can feel tuged between expectations from funders and their alignment with their community or client base.

For some groups, standardization, when couched in the guise of “best practices” and “quality of service,” becomes yet another form of imperialism in as much as it leads to decreasing local autonomy when it comes to providing programs and increasing hegemonic discourse. As the impetus toward standardization becomes the norm, the process fails to take into account such things as the uniqueness of locality, demographics, and beliefs systems in each community. This results in programs that fail to meet local
needs despite being characterized as “best practice” as can be seen currently in some of the LBS sites sampled.

**Human Rights education**

Human Rights education comes in a variety of forms including citizenship, global citizenship, and human rights education. For the purpose of this paper, human rights education is understood as any educational endeavors that aim to increase citizens’ understandings of, and their ability to, exercise their rights and responsibilities in relation to the UN document on human rights. This allows room for communities to define, describe, and determine how they will move forward, based on their own unique needs.

Human rights education has been used in popular adult education programs and other sectors as a way to increase knowledge and understanding in the hopes of empowering people to make informed choices around their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Although such education has the potential to further imperial and colonial processes if provided as a top-down approach, it also has the potential at the grassroots level to reconnect people to place and each other while simultaneously opposing the injustice of neoliberal and neoconservative policies centred around biopiracy, land grabbing and consequent displacement, and other injustices as noted by various authors (Agnotti, 2012; Block et al., 2012; Carney, 2011–2012; Sage, 2014; Starkey, 2012). As people reconnect it can also level the playing fields as those that are involved in HR education around these issues can carry “more of the burden to ensure they are acting in ways that are to the benefit of those with less power” (Joshee, 2012, p. 79).

Phoenix (2014) proposed that the definition of global citizenship can be seen as “global connectedness, social justice and cosmopolitan perspectives” (slide 2). Similar to
Smith’s (2010) idea that people need to be involved from the ground up to mobilize on food sovereignty issues, Phoenix emphasizes that empathy is needed in our relationships and our networks as we expand our work throughout and beyond our communities (slide 3).

This type of human rights education, characterized by the notion of connectedness, and the processes that ensue from a grassroots approach, can be culturally grounded and more equitable as “identities and power relations are radically shifted. Community and individual identities are formed by the communities themselves, rather than imposed from without” (Schanbacher, 2013, p. 8). In these processes, communities actualize their rights as needed at the local level.

Ball (2014) elaborates his discussion of human rights education by directing our attention to where global policy is made and where relationships and networking are formed in the process of creating new forms of governance. He characterizes the networking he describes as an example of the interconnectivity of ideas, people, and politics, both globally and locally. Joshee (2014) looks at policy webs as a grassroots way of finding spaces to make change and Patria (2013) outlines three strategies for food sovereignty (research, education, and campaign) (p. 151). These three tenets can be transferred and applied to the LBS organizational context to better build interconnectivity and encourage space making (Ball, 2014; Joshee, 2014; Phoenix, 2014), processes that are important to citizenship education, and to practitioners in the field. It is in this interconnectivity of LBS organizations, and through a shared understanding of our situations that both creative resistance and policy change may happen.
Hope

Although adult education has had a troubling neoliberal history, there is also positive work that can be seen related to the more grassroots populism movement in North and South America. This adult education movement has occurred through the grassroots work of many actors including: Paulo Friere, Myles Horton, Saul Alinsky, Jimmy Tompkins, Moses Coady, Jane Addams and others (Brown and Hannis, 2010). This can also be seen in more global examples with the Green Belt movement in Kenya, under Professor and Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai (2015, WomenAid International), and in the development of the Grand Mother’s University, started in 2007 by Vandana Shiva after years of emergent grassroots documentation of traditional knowledge in the village of Pattuvam in Kerala, India (Shiva, 2015). Many of the actors in the populism movement have made crucial contributions to the social justice and community-based lens that adult education has historically used to view the world in order to change it. It’s this history of popular social change in adult education rather than the neoliberal and modernization theories that many of our practitioners subscribe to. As such, this is an important piece of the larger picture as it reminds us of what adult education can be and the grassroots we have come from.

Indigenous LBS streams are given latitude, as they should be, to make programming more culturally competent and responsive to community needs, while also supporting first language needs and the reclamation of language within Indigenous communities. Participants who work within the Indigenous stream at their LBS sites provided the examples of family-centred LBS programming, programs that enhance socio-cultural traditional knowledge (such as moccasin-making or traditional language
classes), programs that had forms of learner inclusion that went beyond any others I knew of, and programs centred around environmental sustainability that puts the planet and people first. These sites represent the only centres sampled that truly seemed to have programming in place that reflected community needs. On this basis, I would suggest that this stream be used as a model for community-based LBS programming across streams and sectors. If each site can base its programming on demographics that take into account linguistic, socio-cultural, economic and geographic aspects and employ a more holistic model of learning that includes all learning goals, not simply those oriented towards employment, we would see a level of responsiveness and fluidity in programming that has long been lost at most LBS sites (if it was ever there to begin with). Given that our programs developed historically in response to community needs—and now these needs are at very centre of things being affected by the drive towards standardization—it seems time to re-evaluate the direction in which we are heading and, rather than move towards greater standardization, instead ensure that the specific needs of our LBS communities, geographically and demographically, are being met. Is responsive, effective and accountable programming that which measures everyone by the same ruler, regardless of differences, or that which that meets the needs of community?

As we anticipate increases in MAESD funding to LBS programs as we move forward, I wonder how will this money be used? Will LBS practitioners be granted sustainable wage increases with benefits? Will staffing complements reflect the needs of these adult learners? Will LBS mandates reopen to include learners that are falling by the wayside in some communities? Or, if the ministry focus continues to be on employment and transitioning the employable from secondary-to-postsecondary institutions, will the
Ontario government and MAESD work more closely with other ministries to ensure that the learners now being displaced will find learning opportunities through avenues provided by other ministries, particularly in our rural and northern communities where restrictions to access and opportunity of many kinds continue to spur outmigration and the displacement of aging populations? Will LBS sites be recognized as more than streams, be recognized for the richness of culture, diversity, and community they represent, and be nurtured towards these ends? Will the value of sustainable place-based programming as a way to meet community needs be preferred over the current, narrow “best practice” and accountability policy currently in place? I hope the answer to these questions is yes as we move forward.
Chapter 8
Conclusions: The Road Forward

North American history is rife with examples of abuses of power and human rights violations. Sadly, such violations continue in many forms today. The current policy expectations with respect to a program originally designed to enhance the Literacy and Basic Skills of some at-risk adult populations, and an important part of the education system in Ontario, provides one example of such violations. Adults in need of LBS in this province have a right to education. As a society, we have the right to demand change. As practitioners, we can critique policy and find creative solutions. We can also work together to question, agitate, and make change happen.

This research was undertaken first and foremost because, as an LBS practitioner and administrator, I struggled with a problem I identified at my own LBS agency. As the LBS policy came into effect in 2012 I saw practitioners struggling with decision-making and capacity issues, and community needs not being met. I undertook this research as a way to explore and understand more about the problem I was seeing. I chose to examine it through an anti-oppressive practice and sustainable community development theoretical lens and situate it in a conceptual framework that analyzes anti-oppressive practice from the individual to the global level. In this process, I have come to understand that the MAESD policy changes of 2012 are leading to the marginalization and displacement of some student demographics (outside my direct experience), particularly in Northern and rural Ontario, according to my interview data.

I framed my thesis work within an anti-oppressive critical analysis of NPM and neoliberalism as it relates to the range of responses provided by the practitioners who
agreed to be part of this study. NPM is a neoliberal global policy trend based on a business model that stresses accountability and efficiency in business, a model which has been applied to the public sector for the purposes of imposing market-based structures. This model makes use of outcome measures, some of which have been applied to the LBS program delivery and evaluation process, exemplified in the Performance Measures Framework (PMF). This has caused service delivery interests within communities to vie for the same pieces of the pie, which promotes competition rather than collaboration, and it has created a fear-based appearance of efficiency in light of the potential for funding reduction. Performance measures have an impact on practitioner identity; the imposition of PMF raises the question of meaningful work and spreads doubts about self-efficacy; it challenges personal philosophies with respect to beliefs about equity, social justice, and imbalances in power—all of which affect the various response to policy changes, be they individual, institutional, or societal, implicit or explicit.

When practitioner beliefs do not line up with changes in policy and new expectations, stress occurs. Sometimes practitioner statements about policy changes seemed to be directly parallel to practitioner response, while at other times their response was a foil to a practitioner’s stated beliefs, as practitioners were discussing feeling conflict with the new LBS policy. I looked at how policy changes can induce a sense of alienation and role conflict, accounted for some of the types of resistance that can come about in the process of implementing policy changes, and identified the types of resisters that emerge.

My research methodology was a qualitative study based on sampling to arrive at a study group of 22 LBS site administrators and practitioners; semi-structured interviews...
were conducted on the basis of presenting each of the participants four scenarios or vignettes for consideration. Given that LBS sites are structured in a variety of ways across streams and sectors, the varying capacity in which these 22 participants worked meant that they represented approximately 50 LBS sites and, as such, were able to provide a broad range of observations. Interviewees were asked to consider the ways in which the centres they represented would respond to prospective students in each of the four demographics (ESL, developmentally delayed, senior, or previously incarcerated) when they arrived in the hope of being admitted to an appropriate program.

The general findings that came out of an analysis of participant responses took into account the complexity of their answers (“yes” or “no” responses were also discussed); I discussed the ways in which marginalization and displacement appear to be happening in light of participant responses to three of the four student demographic scenarios provided. The student demographics represented in the scenarios for developmentally delayed adults, English as a Second Language learners, and seniors seemed to be experiencing displacement according to some participant responses. Given that this was a qualitative study, these practitioner narratives are subjective and based on their experiences and observations over time, and must be seen as such. A quantitative examination, i.e., what the actual numbers of displaced students are, would be difficult to undertake given the nature of displacement (and disappearing in itself constitutes an erasure). The basic service provision for each of the four scenarios, as outlined by the participants for each of their sites, points to a multiplicity of needs and factors, as revealed by the spectrum of practitioner responses. Given this plurality of need and diversity the patterns and need-based themes for all four scenarios were described and
categorized in Chapters Six and Seven.

The five overarching need-based themes that came to light included the following:

1. *Standardization in pluralistic societies*
2. *Second order effects: North, South, Urban, and Rural.*
3. *Types of resistance and gatekeeping: Practitioner praxis and practice*
4. *Access to and definitions of literacy needs in multimodal, multi-literacies world: who is a literacy learner and what is literacy learning?*
5. *Balancing acts: Community and MAESD; needs and expectations*

The significance of these themes was discussed in relation to how the policy changes in 2012 are having an impact on who gets served at LBS sites on the basis of participant responses.

These results led to the question of what Literacy and Basic Skills education actually is, or is meant to be, and who gets to learn, which is related in turn to three of the five themes presented in the research. I noted the advocacy that seems to be happening, the differences in practitioner statements and how this affects styles of gatekeeping, and the issue of capacity (or over-capacity) as it relates to the gatekeeping that seems to be happening. The three themes relate specifically to how a practitioner’s ideation of who an LBS learner is has consequences for the way a site is operated. This also means that gatekeeping affects who is being served and who is not being served, which often seems to be related to whether the study participant considered someone as an LBS learner or not. In some sites, this is tied to having always served certain populations (historically); other sites that did not provide services for certain population prior to 2012 continued in the same way because, for the most part, the learners in question were not considered as
eligible for LBS programs.

The most frustrated interviewees seemed to be those who disagreed with the policy changes when it came to its negative affect on access to services for prospective learners. When practitioners saw that learners had been accommodated in the past and now were no longer eligible, or eligible in fewer numbers, they voiced frustration and tended to engage in resistance strategies that included gatekeeping and advocacy. These types of resistance and resistors were at times similar to those discussed in Chapter Three as they had similar responses to those discussed in the literature at times. In many of these cases, practitioners were employing resistance strategies to keep or “carry” learners in their agencies; the centres that tended to carry learners were also at times dealing with larger issues of capacity as they tried to meet their MAESD targets at the same time as meeting the more pressing needs of their communities.

When comparing northern and southern sites, it became apparent that northern and rural sites seemed to be facing the most stress around the potential for student displacement—while also attempting to meet community need and balance MAESD expectations. This stress is largely related to the lack of other resources for allowing students access to basic programs; practitioners felt they had to meet the needs of their community because there were few alternatives for these adult learners.

The implications of these themes when considered in light of neoliberalism, conceptual framing, and erasure are discussed and related to NPM ideologies of efficiency and accountability; first and second order effects of access and social justice issues are also considered in terms of decreasing LBS services for adult learners in communities which are also experiencing an increase in workload and a decrease in
carrying capacity. An additional outcome of these policy changes is a growing negative perception of self-efficacy and meaningfulness of work for some practitioners. The stressors related to the policy changes are also putting practitioners at risk as they choose to continue to provide services to their communities, much as they have in the past, which in some cases prompts them to resist policy changes by manipulating the tick box and audit measures imposed on the LBS agencies as performance indictors (PMF).

In the course of assessing the participant responses, I examined the question of what comprises a community and who gets to make the decisions when it comes the needs of the larger community—with reference to the push for standardization. I noted the extent to which communities vary based on geographic, economic, and demographic factors, which in reality also include linguistic and socio-cultural factors in both geographic regions (northern and southern communities), and how this relates to LBS programming considerations. The implications of these placed-based needs as they relate to anti-colonialism, decolonization, and anti-oppressive practices are analyzed, and used to reflect on practitioner praxis and equity in LBS education.

Similar to the argument in Chapter Six that NPM and PMF based neoliberal ideologies conceptually frame LBS programs in terms of becoming more responsible to tax payers through the policies stated efficiency and accountability measures, the ideation of suitability categories and streams as effective measures to respond to various communities seems to also be largely false when practitioner response is taken into account. That some communities have very real needs that they are not able to meet within the current mandate without resistance strategies that put their sites at risk demonstrates that neoliberal ideology applied to public services simply doesn’t fit and
can result in a cascade of first and second order effects. That first languages are still being used as an access barrier indicates that we perpetuate aspects of our shared colonial history, even today in Canada, by way of governmental policies that embrace neoliberal ideologies, evident in NPM models that simplifies and makes linear learning processes and community needs that are pluralistic and complex.

In conclusion, I am offering several insights about how the current LBS policy compromises equity of access. First, the policy relies on a narrow, problematic view of accountability that relies on data collected to disperse money for service. I critique this as a narrow form of accountability by showing how it can lead to denial of services to clients who are seen as a risk to a service provider’s ability to achieve data-driven outcomes. This seems to be leaving a number of people in need, without the possibility of access to services at some sites and in some regions of the province, particularly when it comes to providing programs for ESL learners in northern and rural areas, as well as senior and developmentally delayed learners who are being displaced from some centres due to our new performance measures.

Second, I offer a critique of the policy with respect to standardization of outcomes and programs that are being delivered via neoliberal NPM models. This standardization seems to narrow the scope of the type of services that can be provided to those in need of LBS, or those who some practitioners believe should still be served. Such standardization precludes the possibility of addressing local and individual needs, for example, in the inability to provide French as a Second Language classes (without moving to a fee-for-service model) despite the express desire of local employers.

Third, taking into account the interview data from service provider participants, it
appears, that some practitioners subvert the policy by way of creative compliance. Others accept and apply the policy by turning away clients, which seems to be tied to patterns of gatekeeping and issues of capacity at some sites.

Combining my own understandings with those expressed by study participants, I conclude that, in order to deliver LBS we need policies that move away from standardized performance measures and guidelines towards policies that develop respectful partnerships designed to meet the needs of communities. We need policies that avoid the incorporation of intellectual colonialism and further imperialism seen in many places today (Smith, 2005; Johnson, 2008; Wesley-Esquimaux and Calliou, 2010) given the global education agenda (Clarke, 2012; Moutsios, 2010). I propose that LBS model all streams on a more holistic delivery process now evident in some Indigenous streams at some sites (described above by interviewees working at such sites).

Ontario’s LBS policy needs revision which takes into account, and ameliorates the first and second order negative effects that are being seen. Although many of the MAESD guideline statements create the illusion of equity, on closer examination they fall short at the service provider and community level. One way to achieve a more inclusive policy is by way of making significant changes at the policy development stage to include stakeholder input. Although “traditional consultation mechanisms have been widely critiqued in Canada (and elsewhere) for many reasons, including ultimately having no or little effect on policy making” (Woodford and Preston, 2013, p. 359) policy often continues to develop through the conversations with the various actors involved in policy discourse, a process which has the ability to redistribute voice (Ball, 1993).
Additional research is also necessary to examine more closely the gatekeeping role practitioners can play when it comes to accepting or resisting policy changes.

It is my hope that, through this PhD research, and the networking that will ensue with the dissemination of these findings, we will get a better picture of the LBS situation across Ontario. Where displacement is happening in other communities, outside the scope this study, we can look to our networks, and at the human rights implications, and push the government for change. The displacement that is happening to adult learners in the setting of the very different demographics of northern and rural communities is not being taken into account in the MAESD policy drive to bring about standardization, and this needs to be challenged. My hope is that this research will help to bring these issues to light, and that other LBS practitioners and service provision agencies will continue to put forward their concerns to the MAESD. LBS policies can continue to evolve by way of “‘deep democracy’, characterized by ‘internal criticism and debate, horizontal exchange and learning, and vertical collaborations and partnerships’” (Appadurai, 2002, p. 46, cited in Bifulco, 2013, p. 183) into truly equitable policies at the ground level—the service provision level—in the coming years. Reaching this type of anti-oppressive practice goal would require MAESD to use the opportunity of voice that was given to LBS practitioners in the 2017 LBS Symposium (MAESD, 2017b) and in the 2018 LBS working groups (MAESD, 2017d) to move towards more locally sustainable and truly equitable LBS service provision.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Research interview scenarios

For the Scenarios below please assume the student fits your streams’ demographic i.e. they are francophone in the scenario if your agency is OR they are First Nations if your agency is OR English if your agency is, etc.

SCENARIO ONE

An English as a Second Language (ESL) student seeks out LBS service at your site for an employment-based class you are running. They are presently receiving ESL lessons in an ESL program funded by the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration, and International Trade (MCIIT). They were assessed in their ESL program as a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 4. What would you do?

SCENARIO TWO

An adult comes in (with their worker, from a community based agency that supports developmentally delayed adults live independently) and seeks out LBS service at your site to learn to read and make change. On assessment you find they cannot write their name or recognize numbers to twenty. What would you do?

SCENARIO THREE

A senior aged 67, from the community seeks out LBS service at your site for computer upgrading. They just want to learn how to turn a computer on, use a mouse, serf the Internet a bit, and learn how to use their Ipad to connect with grandchildren across the country. What would you do?

SCENARIO FOUR

An adult comes in (with their worker, from a community based agency that supports adults transitioning from incarceration to living independently again) and seeks out LBS service at your site to upgrade before going on for their OSSD. You are familiar with this learner as they were at your agency years ago. Their past attendance was extremely irregular, they had addictions challenges, they eventually just did not come back, and you could not reach them for follow-up as their number had been out of service at the time. What would you do?
Appendix B: Email letter of invitation to participate in the study

The following is an invitation I am sending out to LBS sites across the province in all sectors and streams, and I am hoping you, or someone from your site will want to participate:

Hello LBS Practitioners & Administrators,

You are being invited to participate in a research study on Literacy and Basic Skills in Ontario.

My name is Laura Wyper and I am a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. My career over the last decade has been in Literacy and Basic Skills here in Ontario as a practitioner who taught LBS for nine years prior to becoming a Program Coordinator that oversees two LBS contract sites.

The research I am conducting is outside of my day job as a Program Coordinator and is being undertaken distinctly as a University of Toronto PhD Candidate. The research also has no financial or funding ties to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and University (now the Ministry of Advanced Educations and Skills Development or MAESD) as it is an entirely independent study being conducted out of the Ontario Institute for Studies on Education / University of Toronto, which is where my graduate department is housed, under the supervision of Associate Professor Jean-Paul Restoule, Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education.

The reason I am undertaking a study of LBS in Ontario is because the local communities that I work with have all seen changes in our LBS sites, classes, and learner demographics since the 2012 changes in the MTCU (now MAESD) funding for LBS in Ontario. I have witnessed various demographics of students being displaced as we and
other LBS agencies try to work within the new framework and the standardized MTCU (now MAESD) funding and reporting model.

The purpose of the present study is to determine:

1. Is the MTCU’s (now MAESD) funding model and the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) changing the adult Literacy and Basic Skills learning landscape in Ontario since its inception in 2012?

2. If so, what student demographics are being displaced?

3. What creative solutions and resistance strategies are happening in LBS sites and classrooms to mitigate student displacement?

I have included a copy of the letter of consent to give you more information. If you are interested in being a part of this study or would like more information before determining if you would like to participate please email me at

laura.wyper@mail.utoronto.ca

Thank-you!
Laura Wyper, PhD Candidate
Appendix C: Letter of consent

Informed Consent Letter

September 2016

Hello LBS Practitioners & Administrators,

My name is Laura Wyper and I am a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. My career over the last decade has been in Literacy and Basic Skills here in Ontario as a practitioner who taught LBS for 9 years prior to becoming a Program Coordinator that oversees two LBS contract sites.

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The purpose of the present study is to determine:

1. Is the MTCU’s (now MAESD) funding model and the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) changing the adult Literacy and Basic Skills learning landscape in Ontario since its inception in 2012?
2. If so, what student demographics are being displaced?
3. What creative solutions and resistance strategies are happening in LBS sites and classrooms to mitigate the displacement if it is happening?

I am doing this research through individual interviews of practitioners / coordinators from various LBS sites across Ontario. Twenty-four LBS sites that have been strategically sampled to then ask one individual LBS practitioner / coordinators from each of these sites to take part in a semi-structured interview for this study. Individual sites will be selected based on a sampling of LBS sites across both Northern and Southern Ontario from the Learning Networks of Ontario by LBS streams (Francophone, Deaf, Aboriginal, and English) and sectors (College, School Board, Community-based). Northern LBS site sampling will include sites based out of the three Northern Regional Literacy Networks. Southern LBS site sampling will include an evenly distributed sampling by stream and sector based out of the sixteen (in total) Eastern, Western, and Southern Regional Literacy Networks. This allows for 12 LBS sites from Northern Ontario and 12 LBS sites from Southern Ontario to be included.

The benefits of this study are that it will provide information related to the three questions listed further above. Giving LBS sites and practitioners more information on what is happening at other sites also then means they can use this information as it relates: to help shape their practices, to advocate for their sites and students if / as needed, to work collectively across the province and push for changes if / as needed.

The data is being collected for the purposes of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. Participation in the study is voluntary.

This letter of consent is being provided initially to explain the research. If you sign and email this letter of consent back to me at laura.wyper@mail.utoronto.ca then I will contact you by email with a list of interview times and dates for you to pick a time that works for a phone based, semi-structured interview of approximately half to one hour.

During the semi-structured phone interview you will be asked to again consent to being a part of the study after the purpose of the study is reiterated to you, and if you are consenting, you will then be asked to respond to ‘what if’ student scenarios in terms of what would happen at your site in relation to each scenario.

As the interview proceeds, I may ask questions for clarification or further understanding, that are informed by your responses to the scenarios, but my part will be mainly to listen to you speak about your experiences related to each scenario given.
It is the intention that each interview will be audio recorded on an audio recording device during the phone based interviews, and later transcribed to paper; there will be no video recording – only audio.

Your transcript will be sent to you by mail to an email address that you have given me for this purpose to read in order for you to add any further information or to correct any misinterpretations that could result. If, after two weeks I have not received the transcript back from you or notes from you about it, I will attempt to email you one last time and request its return. If transcripts are still not returned within the following week, and I have not heard from you within the first three weeks of it originally being sent I would assume you are accepting them as they are and proceed with my data analysis.

Phone interviews with audio recordings will be done in a secure location and any data, transcripts, and coding charts that are developed in a hardcopy form will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researchers home office. All identifiable electronic information outside of a secure server environment will be encrypted, consistent with UT’s data security and encryption standards. Access to all data will also be limited to myself and my Faculty Advisor. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons, sites, and communities cannot be identified as it will all be anonymous before data analysis begins. All raw data (i.e. Transcripts, recordings, email notes, etc.) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office at home and destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

You may at any time refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the interview process, by simply emailing me and stating you wish to withdraw, up until December 2016 when research materials will be anonymized, analyzed, and written up for Dissertation Thesis submission. Exclusion from the research after the dissertation writing has begun would be difficult as the data will be anonymized prior to data analysis and difficult to extract at that point. Having said this, up until December 2016 you may request that any information whether in written form or audiotape, be eliminated from the project without any consequence to you.

At no time will value judgments will be placed on your responses nor will any evaluation be made of your effectiveness as a LBS practitioner or administrator. Finally, you are free to ask any questions about the research and your involvement with it and may request a summary of the findings of the study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (705) 782-9220 or at laura.wyper@mail.utoronto.ca
You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Restoule at 416-978-0806 or at

jeanpaul.restoule@utoronto.ca

Finally, you may also contact the U of T Office of Research Ethics for questions about your rights as a research participant at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Laura Wyper
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By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.
Name: _____________________________________
Phone number: ___________________________
LBS site: _____________________________
Signed: ____________________________________
Date: ______________________________

Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion: _____

Please initial that you agree to have your interview audiotaped: _____

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Appendix D: Crisis information

Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-531-2600 (free Health Services information)

Alternate Crisis Hotline:

Within Ottawa
613.722.6914

Outside Ottawa
1.866.996.0991

Website and links can be found at: http://www.crisisline.ca/
Appendix E: Sample dialogues

Sample Dialogue for the Intro to phone interview and confirmation of consent:

*Hi [name] I received your letter of consent, thank-you for being on this phone interview today. Do you have any questions about the letter of consent before we start? [wait for reply]*

*So, you are ready to participate and are still consenting to begin this phone interview? [wait for reply]*

Sample Dialogue for the review of definitions before interview scenarios begin:

*So, ____ [name] ____ I would like to just review some definitions with you before the interview begins. After I read each one to you can you confirm if my definition is similar to yours, and if it is not could you let me know what your definition for it would be?*

   *Note: If they do not agree with what I’ve stated for a definition and have stated this but not yet explained their view:*

   *‘[name], could you explain how would you define this term differently so that I can try to understand your viewpoint on it as we move through the interview scenarios?’*

   *Note: If they do not agree with what I’ve stated for a definition and have shared theirs instead:*

   *‘So you see [definition] as _____ [restate their definition as was just stated] rather than [state the one on Appendix A]…Is this what you mean? Okay, this helps me to understand your answers as we move through the interview scenarios, thank-you for clarifying.’*

Intro to Scenarios:

*Okay [name] so now that we have reviewed the definitions, I just have four scenarios that we will move through. I will read them to you one at a time and give you some time to explain to me what you would do if this student came to access Literacy and Basic Skills classes at your site. We will do this for each one, and please ask questions, or I can repeat things as you need.’*

Sample questions arising from responses to scenarios:
Note: If a student would be served at their site:

Do you see many students that fit this type of scenario?

Or

How do you feel about serving this type of student within the LBS framework?

Or

[name] how long have you worked in LBS? [wait for reply] Do you think the information you gave me above for this student would have been the same or would it have been different in anyway a few years ago?

Or

Did you see many students that fit this type of scenario before 2012 [or input the amount of years back when the practitioner stated they started]?

Note: If a student would not be served at their site:

So, [name] have you been working at your site since before 2012? Do you think the information you gave me above for this student would have been the same or would it have been different in anyway before 2012? [*if they were not there before 2012 but do tell me a time when they started that date would be substituted in this dialogue example]

Or

What do you think of this?

Or

Is there somewhere in your community that this individual can go for service?