

Narrative Inquiry Into Postsecondary Transition Outcomes for Young Adults With Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

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Young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) continue to struggle with community engagement despite decades of research and policy initiatives addressing postsecondary transition. Evidence shows that persons with IDD are engaging in employment, postsecondary education, independent living, socialization, and other roles at significantly diminished rates, yet little data exists describing participation in the voices of those affected. The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to describe community integration of persons with IDD in the decade following postsecondary transition through the lens of critical disability theory in order to explore the successes and failures of public policy guiding this process. Research questions focused on types and frequency of community participation, personal perceptions of the transition journey, and how public policy supported and inhibited successful transition. Evidence from multiple fields was compiled to support creating multi-media narratives. Ultimately, seven collaborators shared their transition narratives by creating comic books which revealed themes indicating that transition began upon entering middle school—much earlier than addressed by policy, bullying and paternalism were major obstacles that were insufficiently addressed, sexuality was often ignored as an adult role, and that continued siloed service delivery led to fractured visions of adult roles and goals. This exposed a need for future research to explore the importance of early adolescence on transition and public policy, the prevalence of bullying for students with IDD, the impact of siblings on social skills development, and if role participation should be emphasized over community integration to respect self-determination. Ultimately, however, these findings attest the complexity and abilities of collaborators to enable social change by empowering such overlooked voices to participate in the conversations guiding their futures.

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