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Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Disability and Media

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Edited by Katie Ellis, Gerard Goggin, Beth Haller and Rosemary Curtis

The Bodies of Film Club

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315716008-15>

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Published online on: 20 Nov 2019

How to cite :- Fiona Whittington-Walsh, Kya Bezanson, Christian Burton, Jaci MacKendrick, Katie Miller, Emma Sawatzky, Colton Turner. 20 Nov 2019, *The Bodies of Film Club from: The Routledge Companion to Disability and Media* Routledge

Accessed on: 22 Mar 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315716008-15>

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THE BODIES OF FILM CLUB

Disability, Identity and Empowerment

Fiona Whittington-Walsh, with Kya Bezanson, Christian Burton, Jaci MacKendrick, Katie Miller, Emma Sawatzky and Colton Turner

Introduction

“Each of us is different; we may learn or look different, but that doesn’t make us less human.”¹ Characters with disabilities in film have historically been represented using several stereotypes.² These stereotypes contribute to how society understands disability and include the following: criminal; evil and violent; pitiful and dependent; childlike and asexual; extraordinarily talented; comic relief; moral metaphors; and “better-off-dead.”³ Disability scholars maintain that these images of disability have been historically constructed from an *ableist*, or a non-disabled point of view where disability is represented as not normal and therefore people with disabilities are seen as somehow less than human.⁴ People with disabilities are also rarely included in the production of films either behind or in front of the camera.⁵

As with all categories of disability, there has been scholarly interest in film representation of people with intellectual disabilities.⁶ However, to date, there has not been a study that has included people with intellectual disabilities in analyzing film representations even though intellectual disability is a “popular” story line.

Despite not being included in existing research, there is a large body of research that maintains that people with intellectual disabilities need to be involved in the documentation of their own lives.⁷ Barnes⁸ maintains that research involving people with disabilities needs to empower people through the actual research process. But how can we measure this?

The Bodies of Film Club is a collaborative, participatory study⁹ that focuses on critically analyzing how movies portray disability. The most important aspect to this project is the inclusion of people with disabilities in the film analysis. The club consists of five young adults, who identify as having an intellectual and/or developmental disability, plus the principal researcher, a sociologist, a critical disability activist and the project’s research assistant.¹⁰

Once a week the club meets and watches a film that is chosen by all members. The critical analysis emerges as the group discusses the film in relation to their everyday lives. Moving beyond the scope of just film analysis, the Bodies of Film Club has emerged as a space to discuss issues important to the club such as the discrimination and lack of opportunities they experience. The relationship building that has emerged out of this project between all club members has transcended traditional research methodologies and will hopefully influence the way in which research about people with disabilities and research on film is conducted.

Creating Connections

Fiona Whittington-Walsh is currently chair of the Department of Sociology at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) in British Columbia, Canada and teaches a wide range of sociology courses. KPU is a special purpose, publicly funded, undergraduate teaching university that serves the Metro Vancouver Region and is scattered across four campuses in different city centers. It serves close to 18,000 students and offers a wide variety of programming ranging from citations to bachelor degrees.

Kya Bezanson, Christian Burton, Katie Miller, Emma Sawatzky and Colton Turner are all alumni from KPU's Access Program for People with Disabilities (APPD) in Langley British Columbia. The APPD program is a segregated employment-focused certificate program that strives to eradicate the numerous barriers people with intellectual disabilities face in the labor force. The students are generally those who would not meet the academic requirements of the wider university and have a wide range of learning abilities.¹¹

One of the central features of this project is to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable in being *who they are*, including introducing themselves to the readers of this chapter. Even though all club participants experienced bullying and negative judgments throughout their lives, they want to make sure that readers know who they are. This process was done over several in-person club meetings through face-to-face group discussions, one-on-one interviews, posters and social media messages. This is a very important aspect to the research methodology: making sure there is a connection between the club and the readers.

Kya is 20 years old and she is the club's creative leader. She often organizes activities and questions for the club and has provided numerous videos and songs for the group to connect to the film discussions. Kya is very supportive of everyone's feelings and generally can connect those feelings to her own experiences. She has also taken a very active role in the writing and editing of this chapter.

Twenty years ago, I was born into a crappy house. My parents had a disability ... and they didn't look after me, I almost died. I have fetal alcohol syndrome. If I didn't have the negative experiences with my birth family, then I wouldn't be in my family now ... My [new] family is mixed of blood children and foster/adopted children ... I don't like to see people get hurt ... So I don't really care what happens to me just really just as long as someone else doesn't get hurt.¹²

Christian is 21 years old and has an extensive knowledge of films, history and world politics. The first time Fiona met Christian, in March 2015, he came to her assistance when she was having difficulty getting a DVD to work during a guest lecture to his APPD class. In addition to being a technophile, Christian has an incredible sense of humor, full of witty, sarcastic comments. He is both the club's technical expert and fact checker.

My disability is something strange. From the way I am, I learn slowly at things like reading, writing, fine motor skills and so on. My learning that is normal but with some to little help is like science, math and etc. ... I am very good with technology. Lots of people have said I couldn't do stuff but I've showed them wrong.¹³

Jaci MacKendrick is a graduate of the sociology program at KPU and took numerous courses with Fiona, most significantly her mass media course, which examined media representations of disability. Jaci has been involved in this project as a research assistant since June 2014. Jaci is also a young mother whose daughter often accompanies her to the film club, providing the film is

child friendly! Jaci is the club's note taker. She meticulously takes notes while participating in the group discussions.

Exploring the outdoors and how other people see the world have always been essential to my life. The best and worst times of my life have been accompanied by learning through other people's experiences and through connecting with nature. These are values I hope to instil in my daughter.¹⁴

Katie is 21 years old and has an incredible spiritual energy. She helps set the tone for the meetings and can cheer people up with her great sense of humor. She has an impressive collection of dolls and toys from the gaming world that she often brings to the meetings and shares with the group. Katie loves werewolves and feels a connection to them. Katie is the emotional centre of the club.

In grade 1 my parents were told that there was something wrong with their girl—get her checked. Who would I be without my disability? I don't want to die or anything, but sometimes ... my disability is a curse. I want [you] to know who I really am and why I'm this way. Just like werewolves, who didn't choose to have panic attacks with full moons, we didn't chose to have disabilities.

We are good people but [it sometimes] is hard for people to see that. I just want [people] to possibly see a little bit from my point of view and learn and be educated [about] what it was like to grow with disabilities ... I just want to be an ordinary girl. My disability is part of me, so I am open about who/what I am and they can either accept me or go away.¹⁵

Emma is 20 years old and is one of the biggest movie fans. Her fandom is exemplified in the fact that she remembers entire dialogues from the movies that she has watched. This comes in very handy at club meetings and in writing down analysis. Emma is especially supportive of everyone in the club and is the club's collective memory:

In grade 2 I was diagnosed with ADHD for saying "no" and not cooperating with the teacher. At home no one ever treated me differently really but I felt different because my siblings had achieved their stuff without tutors or extra help. I also have DCD—developmental coordination disorder—which means I have poor eye-hand coordination ... Sometimes I get really wild. I also really love writing short stories non-fiction and fiction.¹⁶

Colton is 20 years old and shared information about himself by making a poster consisting of a montage of pictures. He has recently started working at the local movie theater and is the mascot for KPU's basketball team, the Kwantlen Eagles. Colton is the club's researcher because he is very good at researching the actors who are in the movies the club watches.

I like country music and rodeos. I like to travel and going to music festivals. I love the Vancouver Canucks [Hockey team] and really like their mascot, Fin. I like gaming and I love going to Anime Revolution, it's a convention. This year I dressed up as Death the Kid from Soul Eater. I like tattoos. I have a Mickey Mouse tattoo on my right shoulder because I love Disney Land.¹⁷

Methodology

Developing relationships is central to conducting all research including research involving people with intellectual disabilities.¹⁸ This has been a key aspect to the Bodies of Film Club. Both Fiona and Jaci established rapport with the club prior to the start of the project. In March 2014, Fiona's second-year mass media class got together with Teresa Morishita's APPD class and watched the film, *The Ringer*.¹⁹ Jaci was in Fiona's media course and both Katie and Colton were enrolled in Teresa's class.

From that experience, Jaci, Katie and Colton accompanied Fiona and Teresa to Nanaimo, British Columbia in June 2014 to make a presentation about *The Ringer* experience at the Inclusion BC²⁰ annual conference. The following year, Fiona and Jaci attended Teresa Morishita's new APPD class where they all watched the film, *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*²¹ and discussed stereotypes and media representations of disability over a three-day period. Kya, Christian, Emma and Colton were part of that class. From both experiences, participants volunteered to be involved in the research and the Bodies of Film Club was created.

When the film club gets together and watches films, they discuss and identify stereotypes. However, perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of this research is the fact that the stereotypes that are repeatedly shown in films are not necessarily viewed as negative by the club. The research methodology for the Bodies of Film Club strives to create an environment where everyone is understood as an expert in their own lives and therefore an expert in providing a critical analysis of films representing intellectual disability. Key aspects to the methodology includes: sharing lived experiences, note taking, group discussions, one-on-one interviews, social media messaging, creating posters, sharing other content and creating alternate endings.

The club meets in the late afternoon for sessions that last between three and four hours. The club however, moves beyond the official meetings. For example, on October 21, 2015, the club went to the movie theater to see the celebratory re-release of the *Back to the Future* films. The club also dressed up for Hallowe'en and celebrated by watching *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.²² Since December 3, 2015, the club has been invited to speak at an annual film festival hosted by the Inclusion British Columbia Foundation and British Columbia Self Advocacy Foundation to celebrate the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities. These experiences are what maintains relationship building and moves beyond traditional research methodology.

Group Discussions

Key to the data collection is group discussions. After (and often during!) the films the club has unstructured discussions about the overall film and stereotypes. These discussions usually transform into discussions about other issues—this is because of the unstructured format. Fiona generally lets the discussions go where they go but eventually, and with Jaci's assistance, leads the group back to discussions around the issues in the film.

This unstructured format has allowed for the emergence of discussions whereby the club has talked openly about their lived experiences. This has been central to the overall project and for maintaining relationships and has facilitated an understanding of the life experiences of the club members. Kya, Christian, Katie, Emma and Colton are the experts and Fiona and Jaci are humbled listeners, eager to learn from them.

Experiences with bullying, struggles with independence and problems with securing employment are examples of some of the issues that emerge out of these discussions. During one club meeting, instead of watching a film the club wanted to sit in a circle and talk about themselves and their lives. This was an important moment for the club; a moment that cemented the

relationship building that has become so central to it. Led by the incredible honesty, trust and mutual support that has come to represent the club, each person talked candidly about their struggles and triumphs.

After everyone had shared their stories, Kya turned to Fiona and asked what her story was and if she had a disability. Fiona shared her own story and explained about having a rare inherited skin disease that marks her as *different* and, as she had previously maintained, now creates a sense of pride for her, but still not without shame. This journey towards self-acceptance was not easy, but being embraced by women with physical disabilities and/or differences helped create that sense of pride for her.²³

After some “hmmms” and a few glances at Fiona’s skin, the group reassured her (as she had done for them) that our “differences” are not really what challenges us. It’s the way the social world views disability and difference that causes our negative experiences. This is evident in what Emma says about her fear of people knowing she has a disability: “I don’t tell people when I meet them that I have a disability. You have to trust them. People are judgmental—they may judge you.”²⁴

The group is very aware about how their reflections of their own experiences are important for understanding not only each other but also for analyzing the films. Fiona asked each of the club members what they liked about the club. Emma and Katie said the following:

Emma: I like how we are not judgmental. We are very open ... We are very comfortable and understanding—we are understanding each other.²⁵

Katie: If we did this in a classroom, we wouldn’t be able to express our emotions on the subject. We are open to our ideas. Also, we all understand each other.²⁶

Christian spoke about how when he was younger he was very social but due to a history of bullying in school he “became more isolated and just becoming shy.”²⁷ When Fiona commented that he was really social in the club he responded with: “The club is really just bringing what I used to be back out.”²⁸

Keeping Connected

At the first club gathering, Fiona gave everyone their own notebooks in order for them to take notes during the films and during group discussions. The intent was to also encourage the recording of ideas when not in the club, similarly to what she does when performing her own data collection and writing. At the end of each meeting, Fiona takes Jaci’s notebook home to transcribe her notes along with her own. Everyone put their names on the cover and seemed to take gleeful ownership of them.

Over time, the notebooks have become a source of pride for some of the members, while others do not write in them at all. Kya has been most prolific in her writing and keeps kidding that she will need a new notebook soon. Fiona has also taken Kya’s home on several occasions and transcribed her notes.

The night the club watched *I Am Sam*,²⁹ Colton was looking at his iPhone during most of the movie. Fiona assumed he was bored but was proven wrong. After the film Colton contributed to the group discussion and shared his own critical analysis. When it was time to go home, Fiona collected Jaci’s notebook. Colton then handed her his book and said he wanted her to take his home and read it too. When she got home she opened it up and realized that far from being bored with the movie, Colton had been on his phone researching Sean Penn, who portrayed the leading character. He had written down all the information he could find about him, personal and professional. This is one of the key ways that Colton experiences the films; he does research on them while watching them.

Soon after the club first started to meet and once it was discovered that everyone had Facebook, Fiona started a private Facebook page for the club. This is a way to determine if the club is meeting and at what time. This is where the club discusses their food choices for the meeting. Everyone chips in and the club rotates between pizza and burger snacks. One week Colton posted a note to everyone that we should get A&W food because all the money was going to the MS society.³⁰ Film suggestions are also posted as are other pieces of information. We also post photos and upload video interviews on the club page.

After the September meeting where everyone shared their lived experiences, Jaci posted on the Facebook page:

I wanted to thank everyone for the conversation yesterday. Even though many things shared were sad or frustrating, I think it was empowering for us to connect through similar and different experiences. ☺³¹

Kya responded with:

I feel the same way plus we all got to connect on a personal level and I now know more about everyone and what their life through school was like.³²

Christian posted the following:

It's like terror. I'm mostly scared of strangers now and I never was. I'm getting more shy than I ever was in the past ... ☐ but that [meeting] helped me a lot.³³

Fiona also stays connected with the club individually via Facebook messenger or via texting. Constant checking in with quick messages and even emojis is central to the maintenance of the relationship-building. Kya will often send Fiona a message on Facebook asking questions regarding the writing she is doing in her notebook. Christian invited Fiona to his Hallowe'en party, Emma let her know she had her wisdom teeth out and Colton informed her that he got his movie theater job via Facebook Messenger.

The in-group discussions and Facebook postings have led to the sharing of other content. For example, the first film the group wanted to watch was *Forrest Gump*.³⁴ Soon after we watched the film there was a news item circulating on social media about a man who was inspired by the film to run across the United States.³⁵ Fiona posted the article on our Facebook page that generated a bit of interest and then followed up with a discussion at the next club meeting.

Both Katie and Kya shared videos during club meetings. These videos were about bullying issues. As previously mentioned, the club's rapport was built out of candid discussions regarding experiences with bullying. Katie shared the Ted Talk video by Lizzie Velasquez, a young woman born with a rare condition where she can't gain weight. She was bullied online and called "The Ugliest Woman in the World." Her Ted Talk is about how she defeated the bullies by not feeling shame for her appearance.³⁶ Kya brought the music video for David Guetta's *Titanium* for the club to watch, explaining that the video made her think about the bullying she and other people with disabilities have experienced.³⁷

I Am Sam

There is enormous value in exploring lived experiences as research methodology.³⁸ Watching the film *I Am Sam* allowed for an amazing conversation to unfold not just about the film but about

ourselves and the way disability is understood by those outside of our club including family members, teachers, peers and the general public. The film tells the story of a man³⁹ with an intellectual disability, Sam Dawson (played by Sean Penn), and his struggle to keep custody of his 5-year-old daughter Lucy (Dakota Fanning). Much of the film focuses on the custody court hearings where Sam and his legal team attempt to calculate what love is to demonstrate Lucy's need to remain with her father rather than live permanently with a foster family.

The news media and audiences loved the film. Its worldwide total box-office gross reached US\$97.8 million.⁴⁰ In 2002, Sean Penn was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actor in a leading role. Also in 2002 the film was awarded the Producers Guild of America's inaugural Stanley Kramer Award, which recognizes films or individuals that "illuminate and raise public awareness of important social issues."⁴¹ Academic sources were not as enthusiastic, citing the Hollywood happy ending as problematic as well as the persistent disability stereotypes, such as childlike, dependent, pitiful and asexual.⁴²

The club responded positively to the film and recognized the important themes regarding parenting, employment and discrimination. Similarly, with Colton, Christian's analysis focused on Sean Penn's performance:

Christian: *I Am Sam* was pretty good seeing how basically Sean Penn took the role and wowed everyone.

Fiona: What did you like about his performance?

Christian: His performance of that certain disability was spot on.

Fiona: What disability do you think the film was portraying?

Christian: I can totally get how he had a bit of autism ... he didn't know exactly how to react to certain things ... he knows a lot of facts about the Beatles a lot like me. A lot of different things.⁴³

Another important method for the project is to ask the club what they think happens *after* the film is over. At the end of *I Am Sam*, we don't know what the final custody agreement is. We do not get to see a court hearing where perhaps Sam is awarded custody. We do not get to hear Lucy's foster mother state out loud that Sam can offer Lucy something she cannot. We are left with the image of a happy, perhaps non-conventional family including Sam, Lucy, friends and the foster parents, all celebrating Lucy's (and Sam's) soccer match. I asked the club what they thought the custody result would be.

Emma's analysis was that Lucy would live with her foster parents in the week and live with Sam on the weekends. This way they could "see each other whenever they wanted."⁴⁴ In contrast, Colton said Sam would get custody of Lucy because he identifies that throughout the film Sam matures and develops skills he believes are needed in order to be a good parent. Colton said the following: "[H]e's growing with her ... because Sam grows and learns and he cares and raises Lucy. [He] breaks out of his routine [going to i-hop] for her and tries/does new different things."⁴⁵ Katie, Kya and Christian, on the other hand, agreed with some of the academic reviews that the happy ending was not realistic. Kya felt that "having that much support for Sam and Lucy in the system is unrealistic."⁴⁶ Katie maintained the following: "We want to live in a caring world but in reality, it isn't that way. If that was real it wouldn't end up happy."⁴⁷

The analysis of this film, and all the films we have watched,⁴⁸ comes out of the club members' own experiences. Kya and Katie said the following regarding this method:

Kya: We think about the movies and characters by putting ourselves in their shoes and also imagine what they would be like placed in the real world.⁴⁹

Katie: We reflect on how we think about the films. Our own experiences. If I was in their shoes what would I do?⁵⁰

Keeping this in mind, the club was asked if they saw any similarities with their own experiences and those of the characters in the films we have watched.

Kya: I would say mostly all of them I can relate to in my life ... but the most recent one would be *I Am Sam* because so many people say we are like Sam. People say we can't have relationships; we can't look after kids; we can't ... ah ... be off on our own, live on our own. Stuff like that. So I mostly relate to him.⁵¹

Christian: It's kind of like Sam for me—because I was pretty much hated basically. I was bullied quite a lot [in all levels of school]. I have always had a bit of a problem with just being social. At a young age I used to be just like always wanting to have friends, always talked, always being social. And as the years went on after so much bullying I became more isolated and just becoming shy.⁵²

Katie: I feel like it's great to be who I am but sometimes I would rather close off to the world like ah Quasimodo.⁵³ Ah he went out there. He exposed who he was. He was um ... everyone liked him at first and then some people were judgmental. The crowd just joined in and it just brought back memories of school, how I opened myself up and then I was destroyed from the inside out.⁵⁴

Emma: Ummm [pause] I would say probably Sam [pause] ... because they don't think he's independent ... So, I'm like Sam in that way. Like I'm independent but I'm trying to get more independent ... like living on my own ... when I'm out in public then I'm like independent but when it comes to ... [pause] you know ... like living on my own then they think I need the extra help.⁵⁵

Colton: Ah I would probably say Jack Skeleton from *The Nightmare Before Christmas* [pause] how he well he's the king of Hallowe'en but then he goes to Christmas Town and learns about Christmas. And he comes back to Hallowe'en town and starts kind of messing with Christmas and how sometimes he doesn't understand the meaning of Christmas. Sometimes I feel like sometimes I don't understand the meaning of some things.⁵⁶

At the beginning of this chapter the question was asked “What does empowerment look like and how do we measure it?” Just before submitting this chapter to the book editors, Fiona asked Kya to write something about herself, to be included as her introduction to the readers. What Kya wrote answers that question about empowerment from the club's perspective:

In the beginning Fiona asked us if we would watch movies and talk about how they portrayed people with disabilities ... We only knew Fiona a little bit and we knew each other a little bit as well. As time went on the more we chatted the atmosphere changed with every question Fiona had to ask. We became close friends with each other. Thanks to Fiona our Bodies of Film Club is not entirely a club. [It's] more of friends catching up, celebrating special events together. As we watch these movies about people with disabilities we start seeing each other grow and we start to learn more about ourselves and each other.

Fiona has made this space into something wonderful; she fills us all with joy to teach people about who people with disabilities really are as people.⁵⁷

What Kya wrote isn't entirely just about Fiona, which is why it is perfect. It's about *us*, the Bodies of Film Club, and how this club has created an opportunity for all of us to want to share

our experiences while analyzing film portrayals of disability. The desire to both share one's life experiences and to trust that the response will be non-judgmental is a perfect example of what empowerment looks like.

Acknowledgments

Funding for this project was provided by internal research grants from Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey British Columbia, Canada. The Bodies of Film Club would like to recognize and thank Teresa Morishita for her continual support of this project. Without her, the Bodies of Film Club would not exist.

Notes

- 1 Christian Burton, interview by Fiona Whittington-Walsh, November 4, 2015.
- 2 This chapter is a brief introduction to the Bodies of Film Club and presents both its members and methodology. A thorough discussion of the methodology and film analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter. This chapter is written with accessibility in mind, including plain language, paragraph length and end-noting references instead of in-text referencing.
- 3 Fiona Whittington-Walsh, "From Freaks to Savants: Disability and Hegemony from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939) to *Sling Blade* (1997)," *Disability & Society* 17, no. 6 (2002): 695–707; Paul K. Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003).
- 4 Michael Berubé, "The Cultural Representation of People with Disabilities Affects Us All," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 43, no. 38 (1997): B4–B5; Paul Darke, "Understanding Cinematic Representations of Disability," in *The Disability Reader: Social Sciences Perspective*, ed. Tom Shakespeare (London: Continuum, 1998), 181–200; Katie Ellis, *Disabling Diversity: The Social Construction of Disability in 1990s Australian National Cinema* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag, 2008); Whittington-Walsh, "From Freaks to Savants."
- 5 Whittington-Walsh, "From Freaks to Savants"; Olivia Raynor and Katharine Hayward, *The Employment of Performers with Disabilities in the Entertainment Industry* (Los Angeles, CA: Screen Actors Guild, 2005); Stephen P. Safran, "The First Century of Disability Portrayal in Film: An Analysis of the Literature," *Journal of Special Education* 31, no. 4 (1998): 467–479.
- 6 Patrick Devliegar, Tal Baz and Carlos Drazen, "Mental Retardation in American Film: A Semiotic Analysis," *Semiotica* 129, no. 1/4 (2000): 1–28; Julie Stump, "Discriminatory Portrayals of the Mentally Disabled in Popular Films: Some Preliminary Thoughts," *Contemporary Justice Review* 5, no. 2 (2002): 189–193; Kathleen LeBesco, "There's Something About Disabled People: The Contradictions of Freakery in the Films of the Farrelly Brothers," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2004); Elizabeth England-Kennedy, "Media Representations of Attention Deficit Disorder: Portrayals of Cultural Skepticism in Popular Media," *Journal of Popular Culture* 41, no. 1 (2008): 91–117; Stephanie Kirkpatrick, "The Disney-Fication of Disney: The Perpetuation of Hollywood Stereotypes of Disability in Disney's Animated Films" (Master's Thesis, University of Akron, Ohio, 2009).
- 7 Len Barton, "Developing an Emancipatory Research Agenda: Possibilities and Dilemmas," in *Articulating Difficulty: Research Voices in Inclusive Education*, ed. Peter Clough and Len Barton (London, Sage, 1999), 29–39; Chris Kiernan, "Participation in Research by People with Learning Disabilities: Origins and Issues," *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 27, no. 2 (1999): 43–47; Jan Walmsley, "Inclusive Learning Disability Research: The (Nondisabled) Researcher's Role," *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 32 (2004): 65–71; Lou Townson, Sue Macauley, Elizabeth Harkness, Rohhss Chapman, Andy Docherty, John Dias, Malcolm Eardley and Niall McNulty, "We Are All in the Same Boat: Doing 'People-Led Research,'" *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 32 (2004): 72–76; Bryony Beresford, Rosemary Tozer, Parvaneh Rabiee and Patricia Sloper, "Developing an Approach to Involving Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder in a Social Care Research Project," *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 32 (2004): 180–185; Simon Abell, Jackie Ashmore, Suzie Beart, Peter Brownley, Adam Butcher, Zara Clarke, Helen Combes, Errol Francis, Stefan Hayes, Ian Hemmingham et al., "Introducing Everyone in Research: The Burton Street Group," *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 35 (2007): 121–124; Irene Tuffrey-Wijne, Jane Bernal and Sheila Hollins, "Doing Research on People with Learning Disabilities, Cancer and Dying: Ethics, Possibilities and Pitfalls," *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 36 (2008): 185–190.
- 8 Colin Barnes, "What a Difference a Decade Makes: Reflections on Doing 'Emancipatory' Disability Research," *Disability & Society* 18, no. 1 (2003): 3–17.

- 9 The study's research ethics were approved in June 2015.
- 10 Since first writing this chapter, the Bodies of Film Club has been joined by six new members, including sociology students at KPU. The inclusion of other members fulfills one of the goals of the project, which is to create a non-segregated space to watch and critically discuss films.
- 11 Fiona Whittington-Walsh is currently the lead researcher in an initiative at KPU, the Including All Citizens Project, where the five film club members are taking Faculty of Arts courses for credit on par with their peers. This project involves transforming critical pedagogy rather than offering adapted curriculum. The project has been supported by internal KPU grants as well as a large grant from the Vancouver Foundation.
- 12 Kya Bezanson, group discussion, September 23, 2015.
- 13 Christian Burton, group discussion, September 23, 2015.
- 14 Jaci MacKendrick, email message, October 8, 2018.
- 15 Katie Miller, group discussion, September 23, 2015.
- 16 Sawatzky, group discussion, September 23, 2015.
- 17 Colton Turner, group discussion, September 23, 2015.
- 18 See Kirsten Stalker. "Some Ethical and Methodological Issues in Research with People with Learning Difficulties," *Disability & Society* 13 (1998): 5–19; Walmsley, "Inclusive Learning Disability Research"; Lois Cameron and Joan Murphy, "Obtaining Consent to Participate in Research: The Issues Involved in Including People with a Range of Learning and Communicative Disabilities," *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 35 (2006): 113–120; Leanne Dowse, "'It's Like Being in a Zoo': Researching with People with Intellectual Disabilities," *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 9, no. 3 (2009): 141–153.
- 19 *The Ringer*, directed by Barry W. Blaustein (Los Angeles, CA: Fox Searchlight, 2005).
- 20 Inclusion BC is a non-profit organization that advocates for the full inclusion of people with disabilities into all aspects of society.
- 21 *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, directed by Lasse Hallström (Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1993).
- 22 *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, directed by Henry Selick (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Pictures, 1993).
- 23 See Fiona Whittington-Walsh. "The Broken Mirror: Young Women, Beauty, and Facial Difference," *Women's Health and Urban Life* 6, no. 2 (2006): 7–24.
- 24 Emma Sawatzky, group discussion, September 23, 2015.
- 25 Sawatzky, group discussion.
- 26 Sawatzky, group discussion.
- 27 Burton, interview.
- 28 Burton, interview.
- 29 *I Am Sam*, directed by Jessie Nelson (Burbank, CA: New Line Cinema, 2001).
- 30 Colton Turner, Facebook post, August 27, 2015.
- 31 Jaci MacKendrick, Facebook post, August 21, 2015.
- 32 Kya Bezanson, group discussion, September 10, 2015.
- 33 Burton, group discussion.
- 34 *Forrest Gump*, directed by Robert Zemeckis (Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1994).
- 35 Jay Grossman, "Real Life Forrest Gump Is Halfway Across U.S.," *Detroit Free Press*, July 8, 2015, www.freep.com/story/news/2015/07/08/barclay-oudersluys-forrest-gump-running/29853201.
- 36 Lizzie Velasquez, "How Do You Define Yourself?" *Ted Talk*, TEDxAustinWomen, December 20, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=c62Aqdlzvqk.
- 37 David Guetta, "Titanium," EMI Music France, December 20, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRfuAukYTKg.
- 38 See Thomas A. Schwandt, "Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Enquiry," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1994), 118–137; Marie Knox, Magdalena Mok and Trevor R. Parmenter, "Working with the Experts: Collaborative Research with People with Intellectual Disability," *Disability & Society* 15, no. 1 (2000): 49–61; Lingling Zhang and Beth Haller, "Consuming Images: How Mass Media Impact the Identity of People with Disabilities," *Communication Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2013): 319–334.
- 39 It is significant that Sam is male; most single-parent families—with or without disabilities—are female.
- 40 "I Am Sam Worldwide Box-Office," Box Office Mojo, accessed October 7, 2017, www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=iamsam.htm.
- 41 "Producers Guild of America to Honor Sean Penn With 2011 Stanley Kramer Award, January 6, 2011," accessed October 7, 2011, www.producersguild.org/news/news.asp?id=56039&hhSearchTerms=%22%22I+AM+SAM%22%22.
- 42 See Swati Varma, "Disability Through the Lens of the Movie *I Am Sam*, Hollywood production," *Psychology & Developing Societies* 23, no. 2 (2011): 297–305; Jessie Nelson, "Reviews: *I Am Sam*," *British Medical*

- Journal* 324 (2002): 12223; DeShaunta Stewart, "The Art of Educating the Disabled," *Community College Week* 15, no. 2 (2002): 4.
- 43 Burton, interview.
- 44 Sawatzky, group discussion.
- 45 Turner, group discussion.
- 46 Kya Bezanson, group discussion, September 23, 2015.
- 47 Miller, group discussion.
- 48 To date the club has watched: *Back to the Future* (1985); *Back to the Future Part II* (1989); *Down Under Mystery Tour* (2010); *Forrest Gump* (1992); *Freaks* (1932); *Ghost Busters* (1984); *Harry Potter Series* (2001–2011); *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996); *I Am Sam* (1992); *Inside/Out* (2015); *Man of Steel* (2013); *The Mighty* (1998); *Mozart and the Whale* (2005); *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993); *The Ringer* (2005); *Skull Island* (2017); *Superman* (1976); *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (1993); *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).
- 49 Bezanson, group discussion, September 23, 2015.
- 50 Miller, group discussion.
- 51 Bezanson, group discussion, September 23, 2015.
- 52 Burton, interview.
- 53 *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise (Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Pictures, 1996).
- 54 Miller, group discussion.
- 55 Emma Sawatzky, interview with Fiona Whittington-Walsh, November 4, 2015.
- 56 Colton Turner, interview with Fiona Whittington-Walsh, November 4, 2015.
- 57 Kya Bezanson, Facebook message, November 26, 2015.