

ABSTRACT

TITLE: Understanding Faculty Members Living with Disabilities in Higher Education

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DATE: December 17, 2016

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Despite increased disability awareness and the advancement of disability rights laws, the stigma of disabilities continues to be a problem in our country. Ableism is the outcome of negative attitudes towards disabilities perpetuating the belief that being able-bodied is preferable over being disabled (Siebers, 2008). This study examined attitudes towards disabilities in the world of academe through the stories of disabled faculty. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of faculty members living with a disability in higher education and how they used the transformative learning stages in their adaptation and growth. Seven faculty members were interviewed for this study selected from both a four-year public university and a two-year community college. The study was designed using an adult education framework and data was analyzed using Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Critical disability theory and feminist disability theory were also used to help understand the data. A narrative inquiry approach was used by completing semi-structured interviews which provided space for the participants to tell their stories. Each of the participants identified moments of transformative learning throughout their educational and professional journeys. Their experiences illuminated the ongoing stigma of disabilities, even within the world of higher education.