

**Finding ways to support the transition to accessible martial  
arts services across Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation  
dojos**

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my two children, Trenton and Eneray, who give me purpose and lighten my days; to my sister and brother Stacie and Jayson, for all their insightful wisdom and discourse; and to my mother Karen and Father Derek, for pulling my head out of the sand when needed.

## ABSTRACT

Karate is a relatively popular activity that improves self-esteem, self-discipline, and cognitive functioning. It serves as an outlet for aggression and improves social skills and emotional regulation. Additionally, it provides significant health benefits and fosters community, spiritual growth and acceptance of others. Studies indicate a gap in accessible, adaptive physical activity programs across Canada. Since there are already thousands of karate clubs operating in Canada, a conclusion can be made that finding ways to support accessible karate services is a feasible and sustainable approach to reducing gaps in services. The Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation (SWKKF) is a not-for profit, national karate organization that has over seventy registered karate clubs operating in Canada. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, thirteen SWKKF karate club business owners and / or instructors were interviewed to better understand the barriers and facilitators to providing accessible karate services in their own communities. The inductive analysis generated three overarching themes that are: Keeping the legacy alive: What would Shintani do? The Floor: Spaces that foster relationships and belonging; and Unresolvable tensions: Maintaining Shintani values. The deductive analyses were generated using Disability Studies (DS) literature-driven typologies and a Human Systems Theory (HST) lens. The DS typologies confirmed by the deductive analysis were Able-ism, Enlightened ableism, Dis-ableism, and Mundane dis-ableism. The HST generated themes include regional disparities, barriers and facilitators from different points of view, and barriers and facilitators across different levels. The discussion integrates the findings from the inductive and deductive analyses with cultural change management concepts and concludes that the SWKKF can offer

## Finding ways to support accessibility

strategies that have the potential to empower instructors to support and facilitate organization wide instructor training that includes knowledge and application in the following areas regarding accessibility: policy, adapting instruction and karate, adapting services, targeting and promotion of services, accessing resources and building alliances with community members and organizations.

Keywords: Adapted Karate, Accessibility, Community, Human Systems Theory, Disability

Studies

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Martial arts have been shown to improve self-esteem, self-discipline, social skills, coping skills, and emotional regulation (Alesi et al., 2014; Cataldi, Greco, Bonavolontá & Fischetti, 2020; Palermo et al., 2006; Phung & Goldberg, 2021; Rajan, 2015; Rios, Marks, Estevan & Barnett 2018). Grubješić and Stanković's (2020) found that recreational karate (one to two classes per week) increased participants' health related fitness, such as balance and flexibility, while competitive karate (three or more classes per week) increased participants' performance related fitness, such as explosiveness, power, agility and speed. Schwartz, Takito, Vecchio, Antonietti, and Franchini (2015) measured health related fitness for a number of martial art styles and found that participants demonstrated above average in most fitness tests, reporting well above average in cardiovascular and abdominal fitness. Li, Dong and Gao (2007) found that children who participated in karate demonstrated increases in cognitive functioning, citing improvements in concentration, visual and verbal working memory. Above the significant physical benefits, karate has been shown to foster community, spiritual growth and acceptance of others (Contiero, 2019; Rios et al., 2018), and according to the Jumpstart State of Play Report (Canadian Tire Jump Start Charities, 2024) martial arts was rated number one in the top five sports that youth wanted to play but did not have an opportunity.

Evidence from recent studies suggests that karate facilitates several benefits for individuals experiencing disability as well. For example, Bahrami, Movahedi, Marandi and Sorensenet (2016) conducted a 14-week study with participants on the autism spectrum. The participants were split into an exercise control group and a karate group. When compared to the exercise control group, the karate group exhibited a significant reduction in communication

deficits after the conclusion of the study. Bahrami et al. (2012) also compared the results before and after the program and found participants' stereotypic (stimming) behaviours decreased upon completion of the program. Cataldi, Greco, Bonavolontá, & Fischetti (2020) conducted a 12-week karate study with students on the autism spectrum and found that karate training improved communication and cooperation and increased social engagement among the participants in the study. Cataldi et al. (2020) also reported that participants demonstrated increased cognitive flexibility, and lessened aggressiveness, sadness, anxiety and hyperactivity. According to Conant, Morgan, Muzykewicz, Clark and Thiele's (2007) study involving children diagnosed with epilepsy, karate was also shown to enhance self-concept and quality of life. Moreover, the parents of the participants from Conant et al.'s (2007) study reported that their child demonstrated major improvements in memory function and improved intellectual and social confidence. Palermo et al. (2006) found that participants diagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) demonstrated improved temperament in the dojo<sup>1</sup>, at school and at home. They also reported a reduction in overactive behaviours as well as greater adaptability and organization skills. Further, Palermo et al. (2006) suggested that individualized instruction in a group setting promoted positive socialization for individuals with ADHD and ODD leading to increased self-regulation and self-efficacy.

Participation (2018) and the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (2022) reported a gap in accessible community and recreation services for individuals experiencing disability across Ontario; in particular, there is a lack of adaptive physical activity programs in rural regions. Martial arts, and karate more specifically, is a relatively popular recreational pursuit and serves a

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<sup>1</sup> A dojo is a karate training hall, and means 'place of enlightenment' (Reid & Croucher, 1995).

particular niche, seeing similar participation rates as bowling, ball hockey and squash (Canadian Heritage, 2010). Additionally, Canadian Heritage (2010) reported that nearly 65% of children that take part in karate attend three or more classes per week which was significantly higher than even the most popular sports including soccer, hockey and baseball. Considering that the Canadian physical activity guidelines suggest that children aged five to 17 take part in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2012), karate may be an ideal service for individuals experiencing disabilities because it affords high amounts of moderate to vigorous physical activity, it is a highly adaptable movement form, and it has a number of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional benefits.

The Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation (SWKKF) is a not-for-profit martial arts organization established in 1966 by Masaru Shintani (1928-2000) and has 71 dojos that serve both rural and urban communities across Canada. Within Ontario the SWKKF serves 31 communities across five regions, mostly located in small townships. Furthermore, their mission statement explains that the SWKKF is “an inclusive organization modelling Hanshi Shintani’s kindness and humility, through the teaching of his traditional karate” (Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation, 2024). Considering that many rural areas lack accessible physical activity services, finding ways to make karate accessible across the SWKKF dojos may be a sustainable solution to the gaps in youth activity participation reported by Participaction (2018) and the Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport (2022). Additionally, many leaders in the organization are keen on improving their accessibility after seeing the need in their own dojos and recognizing that to adopt accessible business practices can better align their services to the organization’s mission (SWKKF, 2023).

## Positionality

This study examined SWKKF, an organization with which I have been affiliated for many years, and a life philosophy that has guided my action for many years. I would be remiss if I did not describe and discuss how my affiliation affected and influenced my conduct as a researcher. I am currently a fourth-degree black belt, a student, a sensei, and a member of the para-karate committee with the SWKKF. That being noted, I admit that I have a stake to gain from this research, although not in the monetary sense. I also admit that I worry slightly about stepping on the toes of my senior ranking instructors. The reason I began this project stems first, from my experiences growing up with my father who experienced amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) prior to his passing in 2010, and my dearest friend's sibling who has a dual diagnosis of Down Syndrome and autism spectrum disorder; and second, from my chosen career path and the barriers I have personally faced. Having many wonderful memories with both my father and my friend's sister (who is also like a sister to me), disability was a normal part of my everyday life. I recall how uncomfortable people were with my father once his speech began to fade, and he would often express frustration with not being able to get his message out, and people often looked at him like he was a "crip with a chip".<sup>2</sup> I also recall his resourcefulness in maintaining his sense of autonomy, and even how he got away with driving, in my opinion, long after it was safe to do so.

Years later, in 2014, a friend asked if I could lead a karate station for her group of disability identified adults on the autism spectrum. After this experience I was a regular guest

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<sup>2</sup> "Crip with a chip" is a common phrase or trope used to express disdain for individuals experiencing disability who are moody. In essence, only non-disabled people are allowed to be moody with-out making people feel uncomfortable (Martin, 2023).

for their movement programs and having experienced the joy of mixing my passion for teaching, with my passion for karate I opened a small business and travelled from organization to organization teaching karate to individuals across the movement and ability spectrum, from adults to children. A year after I began to lead these community programs a black belt from the SWKKF, who had a son on the autism spectrum, had contacted me through Facebook and was interested in signing his son up for karate lessons. I remember the tears that flowed down his cheeks as he watched his son take part in the same art that he cherished so much. He then introduced me to the president and the chief instructor of the SWKKF, after telling me that they were interested in learning more about how to offer karate to students with disabilities. The president, chief instructor and I met shortly after and in this meeting, they had disclosed to me that they had wanted to offer services for students with disabilities, but simply did not know how, or where to start. Serendipitously, they had also disclosed that they had hired an expert on autism spectrum disorder to come to their dojo and provide a workshop for the instructors on adaptive movement, and this expert happened to be the very friend that had asked me to run a karate station with her group in 2014. The sensei had graciously offered me their space to run accessible programs out of, and I have been there ever since.

Now, after almost a decade, I find several barriers continue to challenge my dojo and limit my students' ability to progress or find a meaningful karate experience, unlike non-disabled individuals. The SWKKF offers several perks for its members, including opportunities for outside training across the organization, opportunities for authentic competitions and opportunities to progress in rank. When special seminars and clinics are offered, there are limited instructors comfortable to train my students with little structure in place to ensure access

to the workshops. With respect to competition, the divisions that the para-committee has worked hard to incorporate into our tournaments are too small to be meaningful (often my students compete against themselves and are often the only student in their division); and with respect to progressing in rank, due to a number of barriers such as a lack of consistent transportation which is also related to a lack of value for the training,<sup>3</sup> there is much slower progression, which is discouraging for my students. Moreover, most dojos rely on the mentorship of students as helpers in class as coloured belts, then instructors when they earn a black belt. Considering my students are slow to progress and are not necessarily natural born leaders, attaining assistance in class is also a limitation. Given all these barriers, and after reflecting on how to sustain membership due to higher attrition rates, I realized that the problems in my dojo were systemic and that my dojo's accessibility was limited by the organization's lack of accessibility. This has led me to the conclusion that finding ways to support accessibility across SWKKF will ultimately provide greater accessibility for my dojo and my students. The research may have been limited by researcher bias and the hierarchical nature of the SWKKF as a traditional karate organization. There were power dynamics at play in the interviews, in the analyses, and in the reporting. I was aware of them, and I worked hard to minimize their influences, but it would be patently dishonest to claim that I could totally detach from them. Since I am a member of the organization, I naturally tend to want to say positive things about the organization. I admit to my hesitancy in disappointing my superiors since they have graciously supported my research endeavours. I also did not want to seem impertinent in my questions and I did not want to be

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<sup>3</sup> Parents / guardians often view the training as a fun activity that gives their child something to do, but since progress is slow and they do not see any drastic improvements they tend to devalue the service and so do not prioritize it.

disrespectful in my reporting. However, for the sake of offering authentic solutions, I have tried my best to report honestly so that the findings can be used in a way that supports the transition to accessible services across the organization, even if that means ruffling a few feathers.

### **Human Systems Theory as an Overarching Theoretical Framework**

Studies that examine organizational change, such as this one, must consider perspectives from various hierarchical levels and geographical locations. In this regard, this study fits within a social constructivist orientation since it aims to re-present the ways that knowledge and meaning are constructed from various positions and perspectives within the organization. Human systems theory developed in the 1960's as a response and rebuttal to Skinnerian behaviourism, and proposed that overlapping systems of influence exerted non-linear causative effects that were overlapping, interdependent, sometimes reciprocal, sometimes contradictory, yet always fluid and dynamic (Carter, 2011). It would be not only impossible, but also implausible and impractical for an analysis of a phenomenon, and especially a human phenomenon, to be carried out as if it existed within a vacuum, or within the boundedness of a single linear causality, or as if it did not exist within numerous spheres of influence. Thus HST sees humans as unavoidably intertwined and thereby influenced by numerous, overlapping, and intersected systems. This research focused on the SWKKF which is an organization that functions to sustain and promote Masura Shintani's Wado Kai Karate across Canada and abroad. The SWKKF functions within a system that is outside of itself, known as a supra-system, and as such, is both culture producing and re-producing (Carter, 2011; Smircich, 1983). A system is a complex whole formed by the

interdependence of diverse parts that serve a common function (Carter, 2011). Furthermore, there is an underlying polarity to consider, and that is, individuals at one extreme of the pole are influenced by society, at the other extreme of the pole. The smallest unit of a social system is the individual, and individual actions and behaviours cluster to form patterns that construct the social system. This, considered in Carter's (2011) words, is the atomistic, or bottom-up causation, where the whole is the sum of its parts. Carter (2011) also describes a wholistic perspective which suggests top-down causation. The function of both the micro and the macro system is necessary and one does not exist without the other, just as yin is to yang. For this research the bottom-up perspective (micro system) will be considered the individual dojos, and include the individuals within the dojos (instructors, students, parents and so forth). An example of a supra-system at the micro level are the local communities or municipalities that surround a given dojo. The top-down perspective will be considered the SWKKF, and includes the senate members, as well as the larger systems that are associated with, and influence its function (i.e., the World Karate Federation and Karate Canada). Examples of a supra-systems at the macro level are federal political and economic systems. There is also a meso system to consider. Meso systems function alongside and connect the micro systems to the macro system (Carter, 2011) and will be considered the regions and provinces as well as the governing bodies that oversee policies in a given region such as Karate Ontario. Examples of supra-systems at the meso level are provincial political and economic systems that impact on how public organizations function (such as legislation like AODA or employment opportunities that impact disposable income). Since each system is simultaneously a part and a whole, boundaries are considered fuzzy (Carter, 2011; Peers, 2018) and often the functions of one system serve, and are served by, the functions of

another; for example, the dojo instructors (micro level) are also regional representatives (meso level) and senate members (macro level). When considering how to best implement accessible services across the organization, understanding how the parts interact and serve one another is helpful. For example, what can the individual dojo do for the organization (i.e., promote an accessible karate class), and what can the organization do for the individual (i.e., provide training across the organization about accessible services).

Social systems, like biological and mechanical systems, require the expenditure and conservation of energy; and like a biological system if it does not interact with its surrounding systems, it will likely move towards an “unorganized condition, characterized by decreased interactions among its components...followed by decreases in expendable energy” (Carter, 2011, p. 9). This is known as an entropic state and signifies energy that is unavailable for use. The SWKKF experienced entropy during the two years following the Covid-19 pandemic when many dojo instructors could not sustain the cost of rent due to decreases in memberships. The organization went from 132 operating pre-pandemic to 17 dojos during the height of the pandemic (Labbe, 2020a). The opposite of entropy is synergy. Organizations that experience increases in interaction among component parts, experience synergy and growth, or at least more sufficient organization and sustainability. The SWKKF experienced synergy during the Covid-19 pandemic when several dojos began virtually training together from coast to coast (Labbe, 2020b). Not only did this help keep the organization from devolving into complete entropy (disorganization), but also, new members joined. There are currently 71 dojos operating, which is promising for the future of the organization (SWKKF, 2023a).

A key component to any system is sufficient organization that allows for the process of securing, expending and conserving energy for sustainability. A system that distributes energy randomly is naturally tending towards entropy (Carter, 2011). For example, if a dojo instructor does not intentionally secure assistant instructors to help with specific classes, all the assistant instructors may show up in one class, and none in another. Naturally this is not beneficial to the class or dojo. Sufficient organization in this scenario would be that each assistant is assigned a class to help, which will ensure that the help is distributed in a sufficient manner. Carter (2011) asserts that disorganization (entropy) and organization (synergy) of a system can occur due to both internal and external forces. The Covid-19 pandemic is an example of an external force occurring within the supra-system that did not allow the dojos to secure enough energy through memberships and therefore entropy occurred. On the other hand, the instructors that took it upon themselves to begin virtual classes are an example of how synergy occurred from internal forces. Some examples of internal / external (dis)organizing forces are: The goals of members are in opposition or aligned to the goals of the system; communication, role expectation or feedback is (un)clear; energies within the system are (un)available and / or (in)sufficient for the demands of the system; the system is or is not organized in a way that supports gaining outside energy for the system to use internally; environment or other outside influences cause (dis)organization; and energy is or is not available from outside the system (Carter, 2011). With this in mind, the SWKKF is a karate school and functions as such, including curricular standards for achieving rank and so forth (SWKKF, 2023b). However, the organization also functions as a not-for-profit business, and a community of people that function as a family. All these systems co-occur and require securing, expending and conserving energy for their sustainment. For example, for

SWKKF to remain sustainable as a business, the securing of memberships must occur, whether that be through social media marketing or word of mouth. For the SWKKF to remain sustainable as a school, it must expend energy through providing sufficient training for its instructors, which may include creating standards and policies of practice, and for the SWKKF (or its members) to remain sustainable as a family it must conserve energy through maintaining relationships with other organizations, or members.

The SWKKF is a not-for-profit martial arts organization founded by Masaru Shintani (1928-2000) in 1966, and since 1997 has a senate with committees and sub-committees to help steer the organization in accordance with its mission and vision (SWKKF, 2023). There are nine Senate members and three advisors. The members of the Senate are high ranking instructors, with some being senior students of Shintani, who are committed to upholding the mission of the organization. The organization spans six provinces and fifteen regions and serves seventy communities (SWKKF, 2023). The SWKKF's vision is to be a "premiere karate organization in North America, fostering highly skilled martial artists with exceptional character" (SWKKF, 2023). Each member pays a minimal annual fee to support the federation, and in return the federation provides its members with standardized martial arts instruction based on Shintani's core values and system of training. It also organizes national tournaments, examinations and ceremonies and provides various certification programs and alternative training opportunities and some incentives for new dojos. Furthermore, it is a well-established organization with a clear outward philosophical and ideological commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in many forms.

Through a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a Human Systems Theory framework, this project provides a critical analysis of the barriers and facilitators to accessible service provision across the various systems (senate, region, dojo) and regions (urban and rural).

The overarching questions that guided this research are:

- What are the unique cultural qualities of the SWKKF and how might they appear as barriers or facilitators to accessibility?
- How do sensei across the SWKKF perceive accessibility?
- How do SWKKF sensei perceive their accessibility?
- What systematic factors facilitate or hinder accessibility?

The purpose of this research was to find ways to better support accessible service provision by uncovering barriers and facilitators across different regions (urban and rural), across and within different levels of the system (macro / meso / micro), and from different perspectives (Senate members / regional representatives / and sensei). Although gathering information about the types of barriers that sensei experience was certainly helpful, deeper analyses using both inductive strategies to engage with participant generated interview transcripts and deductive strategies using Disability Studies literature typologies and Human Systems theory helped uncover beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that are limitations to accessibility.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To complete a critical analysis of finding ways to support accessibility across a national karate organization interested in being viewed as “inclusive,” I committed to a discussion about the underlying values that dominate our cultural discourse. This literature review addresses the historical and cultural development of disability, the emergence of disability studies and critical disability studies and their critique of ableism and its many forms of discrimination, including Neo-liberal influences on physical education and adaptive physical activity. It also includes literature relating to accessibility and inclusion, facilitators to inclusion through Universal Design for Learning, and managing cultural change.

### **The Culture of Karate**

Karate was introduced to North America in the twentieth century and has since been adapted, reconfigured and modified to suit a host of interests in sport, recreation, education and entertainment (Channon, 2012; Kim & Kim, 2022; Messaoud, 2016). Moreover, the film and entertainment industry of the twentieth century has glorified martial artists as super humans without representing the process that eighteenth / nineteenth century Asian martial artists endured, or the philosophical underpinnings that make karate more art and less sport (Bicknell, 2019; Keenan, 1989; Messaoud, 2016; Pobratyn, Ciesielska, Lesiak, & Ziental, 2017; Skidmore, 1991; Wasik & Wojcik, 2017). With respect to physical activity, dominant global hegemony has adopted a Western-centred cultural ideal of traditional (orthodox) masculinity, encouraging the underlying value of winning at all costs. As a result, Westernized karate practitioners’ identities are closely tied to the attainment of trophies, medals, belt ranks and status which is in contrast to

its original intent to provide a means for self preservation and moral development (Channon, 2012; Filipiak, 2010; Friman, 1996).

Karatedo, being entangled with martial arts history more generally, was born from the Orient's long-standing history of political and social unrest. Skidmore (1991), a scholar of the Oriental martial arts, asserts that Western martial artists, including karate-ka,<sup>4</sup> lack the perseverance and commitment required to attain the 'mystic-like' qualities because they have never felt a strong sense of urgency to the rigours of 'real' self-defense training. China's history of civil wars, threats of Mongolians, Manchurians and other hostile occupiers, as well as Japan's unstable and interchanging military rule, lack of social control and common banditry, required the people to develop a means for self-defense out of urgency for self-protection (Lawler, 1996; Yang, 2011). Moreover, Asian culture was influenced greatly by the philosophy of Confucianism and Taoism. Confucianism provides several tenets of social responsibility with three relationships reigning supremacy over all; parent to child, husband to wife and subject to state (Lawler, 1996; Simpkins & Simpkins, 2007). Confucius provided a moral and social philosophy based on principals of Taoism, and asserts that the balance of yin and yang is essential for order and harmony and that mankind must tend towards goodness and seek the virtuous path by practicing benevolence, justice, integrity and wisdom (Cynarski, 2017; Cynarski, Yu, & Warchol, 2015; McCarthy, 1995; Messaoud, 2016; Simpkins & Simpkins, 2007). Self-defense for Easterners was not only a necessity in harsh times, it was also a path for living an honourable life as it provided a means for one to practice justice and integrity by protecting family members, or

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<sup>4</sup> Karate-ka is a karate practitioner.

those who may be too weak to defend themselves, from ruffians and bandits (Lawler, 1996; Reid & Croucher, 1995).

Tao meaning “way” (“dao” or “do” in Japanese), can be seen as the suffix to most Asian martial art titles, such as karatedo, judo, aikido, iaido, kendo and so forth. The suffix represents the practice of the art as a way to peace and balance. For instance kara-te-do translates to the ‘empty handed way’; ju-do, ‘the flexible way’, iai-do, ‘the way of the sword’. The essence of Taoism is that all is one and one is all. The martial arts practitioner is one with the training and the training is one with the practitioner. Through the Tao (unknowable source of all things) the martial artist may live a simple, passive life and through training is “at one” with the art (Lawler, 1996). In karate-do, the way to peace and balance can be obtained through training the mind to overcome the deepest fear, death (Cynarski, et al., 2015). As the martial artist dives deeper into their training they are confronted consistently with the real possibility of death since the act of contemplating taking the life of another warrants automatically its opposite.<sup>5</sup> Thus, with training the acceptance of death comes to pass conquering the fear while simultaneously developing skills which serves two purposes that lead to peace and balance (Cynarski, et al., 2015). First, the karate-ka is able to defend themselves in a virtuous way, meaning they will not attack unless necessary and for the greater good (that is to protect the weak, and stop further harm from coming to others) (Kim & Kim, 2022; Kusnierz, 2011). Second, the karate-ka is able to act without emotion, reacting out of necessity and not out of fear, or ego; essentially, they are able to empty their mind and live emotionally balanced and at peace not having anxiety or fear of what may come to pass. Buddhists refer to this concept as mushin, or no mind. Kara-te-do, (empty

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<sup>5</sup> As yin and yang always exist together, one cannot contemplate taking life without the realization of one’s own life being taken.

hand way) has also this philosophical understanding in its name, to act without thought, to be empty of ego or emotion and act only out of social responsibility (Channon, 2012; Epstein, 1995; McFarlane, 2001). This mentality is presented clearly in the following adage, “[i]f your hand goes forth, withhold your temper. If your temper goes forth, withhold your hand” (Kim, 1974, p. 106). Moreover, the karate “training hall” is called a ‘dojo’ and is taken from the sanskrit word “bodhimandala” which translates to “place of enlightenment” (Mor-Stabilini, 2013), and thus, for the traditional karate-ka, the dojo represents far greater a meaning than simply a club, gym or fitness studio. The dojo represents a quest for ‘mushin,’ peace, balance and a space where the practitioner is one with the art on their journey towards enlightenment.

Karate-do has an interesting history and much has been passed down orally after Okinawa’s royal archives were burned up during WWII (Lawler, 1996).<sup>6</sup> That being noted, what is known to be a significant precursor to the development of karate-do is that in 15th century, Chinese occupier of the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa being the largest of the Islands) King Sho Shin, in an attempt to end much of the violence amongst the land brought about by war lords, banned the carrying of weapons by both nobles and peasants (Lawler, 1996; Reid & Croucher, 1995). Following this ban he collected all weapons and placed them under royal control and forced all unarmed nobles to relocate next to him in the royal capital in Shuri. Then later, Japan occupiers enforced the same ban, and thus residents of Okinawa developed karate (originally known as “te” (‘te’ translates to hand), specifically, shuri-te; “tamorite” and “naha-te” representing the location of origin) as a means for defence against occupying troops, thieves and other bandits. Shuri-te was practiced by nobles, and Naha and Tomari-te were practiced by

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<sup>6</sup> Karate originated from Okinawa (Lawler, 1996; Reid & Croucher, 1995).

commoners, and all styles of karate were practiced in secrecy (Reid & Croucher, 1995). From these three main styles multiple styles have been developed and continue to develop up to the present day.<sup>7</sup> The official title of karate was adopted and agreed upon by a multi-style committee (said to be headed by founder of modern karate Gichen Funakoshi) in 1935 (Lawler, 1996; Reid & Croucher, 1995).

Traditional karate has seen incredible change as a result of globalization (Cynarski et al., 2015). In traditional karate dojos etiquette is emphasized above all. Codes of conduct are hung on the walls as reinforcement for new students, while senior karate-ka are expected to demonstrate exemplary etiquette as leaders in the dojo and in society. To build character specific aspects of karate training include (but are not limited to) absolute respect in the dojo (exemplified through the act of removing shoes and socks upon entry, and bowing into the space to let go of the ego and outside influence); taking part in cleaning of the dojo (may include daily sweeping of floors and wiping mats down after use) and keeping tidy the student uniform. Prior to training, students bow to the sensei and to each other and then bow their heads for “mukso,” a meditation practice where the student is to empty the mind in preparation for serious training. Further, students are expected to practice with integrity for the mastery of kata<sup>8</sup> over and above fitness and conditioning (Reid & Croucher, 1995). Kata is seen as the foundation to karate training in many schools, and when practiced in the traditional manner has great potential to foster good moral character through the required harmonious interaction of mind, body and spirit (Channon, 2012).

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<sup>7</sup> Shintani Wado Kai karate is an example of this (kai meaning style) and was developed from an offshoot of Wado Ryu karate, that was developed from Shotokan karate and jujitsu.

<sup>8</sup> Kata, meaning “form” include prearranged karate techniques.

After WWII a more socially cohesive environment meant the declining popularity of martial arts in Asian. Moreover, when Japan opened its borders to the West an influx in Western culture including sport (baseball and soccer in particular) became popular in the East, exemplified through pre and post WWII popular culture magazine headlines in Japan (Hlinak, 2009; Filipaik, 2010). In order to keep the traditional arts alive karate instructors such as Gichin Funakoshi (from Shotokan karatedo) began popularizing their style by introducing sport components adopted from the West, such as sparring competitions with point systems. Other karate styles began to follow this lead in order to maintain student memberships that they were losing to Shotokan schools (Filipaik, 2010). As martial arts schools began to popularize karate with sport aspects student memberships increased along with the commercialization of karate. Organizations were more interested in the number of students and affiliated dojo's rather than the quality of the art and in the mid-twentieth century seven karate systems came together to unite karate in Japan under the 'All Japan Karate-do Organization' (Friman, 1996). The unification allowed for the construction of set rules for fair competition that can transcend borders and allow for the growth of select styles across the globe, styles that have adopted Westernized sport practices that appeal to the hegemony of masculinity (aggression, winning, dominance over others) (Channon, 2012; Filipaik, 2010). However, in the process, much of the Eastern qualities that made it more than a sport have been forgotten, lost or watered down. In essence, sport karate is indicative of a Western centred global cultural hegemony (Kim & Kim, 2022).

Presently, the West has seen an influx of revenue generated from the business of karate tournaments and competition. Dojos utilize flashy marketing, binding long-term contracts, and franchising to maintain high student enrolment for their organizations. They emphasize

competition and elite performance over self-development and often market to parents with kids glorifying the benefits only fostered through traditional training practices (that are not actually taking place), while training for competitions that serve to increase revenue for the organization (Friman, 1996; Macfarlane, 2001). As a business tactic, the art has been packaged for revenue generation and goal-orientation, the package includes sport-like engaging and fun classes, twice a week classes (or less) and a black belt in three or four years (Friman, 1996). Meanwhile, traditional karate-do has a high turnover rate, and perhaps the goal-oriented mind frame has much to do with this phenomena. In order to get a first level black belt (shodan) a minimum of four to six years is required with diligent study, physical conditioning while upholding strong moral character. A business oriented school cannot serve a large body of students with no black belts, so modern dojo's often push students through the ranks in order to maintain black belts who can lead classes or prepare students for competition.

Currently, a large part of karate is performance based. Winning matters and karate instructors try to make a name for themselves by having a lot of students win at competitions to generate more students for their dojos. Often students now must demonstrate flashy high kicks, gymnastics cartwheels, back flips and performance with music, understanding not the self-defense application, or the discipline and commitment attained through kata training (Messaoud, 2016). More so, often traditional kata's with little flash rank poorly in large open competitions, so modified techniques that make little martial sense are utilized. With respect to competitive sparring, traditional martial artists trained with no equipment in order to condition the body and to practice precision and absolute control over one's technique (to avoid injury to one's opponent). Presently, equipment used removes any need to practice restraint, or conditioning.

The most significant reason that the ‘sportification’ cannot produce martial artists with mystical qualities seen in the movies is because skills are developed through the process of continuous training, which is a lifetime commitment (Cynarski, Sieber, Kudłacz & Telesz, 2015). Throughout the early history of Asian martial arts, students often spent weeks or months proving worthy of being a student (Yang, 2011). This concept was briefly touched on in the popular film, ‘The Karate Kid’ when lead the character spent weeks performing laborious tasks to demonstrate he was committed to learning and willing to endure the hard work (Avildsen, 1984). In this sense, the strength of one’s kick, is not as valuable as the level of one’s commitment to their development.

Although the film and entertainment industry has propped up and popularized karate in the West it has limited public perception about the martial arts, including karate. Martial art scholars, including Bicknell (2021) Messaoud (2016) Pobratyn et al. (2017) and Skidmore, (1991) state that Eastern martial arts gained momentum across the West in 1970’s when Bruce Lee entered the film scene. After his passing Hong Kong made many successful action movies in the 80’s and 90’s that gathered a huge fan following for martial arts celebrities such as Jackie Chan and Jet Li (Probatyn et al., 2017; Skidmore, 1991; Yang, 2011). Following the wave of martial arts movies, westerners romanticized the martial arts but without any real understanding of the spiritual element that makes it more than a sport (MacFarlane, 2001). Further, some instructors, in an attempt to keep the traditional philosophy, emphasized too heavily the spiritual development over the fighting arts which resulted in many unsatisfied students who lacked skills required to live up to the movie stardom often fantasized over. Contrary to these spiritually traditional schools, other schools at the opposite end of the spectrum overemphasized the

fighting skills, as seen in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) and mixed martial arts (MMA) trend, with the impact being a lack of moral growth or character development (Yang, 2011). Opposed to the goals of traditional karate-do, kendo and judo (which is to develop effective martial arts skills with a peaceful and moral spirit), the UFC and MMA culture has taken Asian techniques and westernized them, where violent competition is seen as heroic and has gathered a great following (Hlinak, 2009). Herein, lies the dichotomy of ‘sport versus art’ that traditional karate schools struggle to navigate. Piepiora, Szmajke, Migasiewicz & Witkoski’s (2016) data provide evidence that skill based UFC, boxing and other more western combat styles increase aggression, while traditional martial arts, such as karatedo lessen aggression even during the most competitive competitions (Boostani, Boostani & Rezaei, 2012). The heroic violence is propagated through media representation of martial arts in films and cultures while traditional styles of martial arts such as karate-do are now viewed as inferior, compared to the more traditionally orthodox masculine styles of sport fighting such as found in sport karate and UFC gyms.

As previously mentioned, at the moment exists two realities that live at opposite ends of the martial arts physical cultural spectrum, and both proponents of these realities argue that they are the “real” thing. The sport karate practitioners think that are the “real” thing because they win in competition, and the traditional karate practitioners think that they are the “real” thing because they practice for the purpose of enlightenment (Bicknell, 2019; Channon, 2012; Cynarski, 2019; Cynarski et al., 2015; Cynarski et al., 2014; Keenan, 1989; Messaoud, 2016; Kim & Kim, 2022; ), however, what appears to transcend the dichotomy of sport and art is the severely able-body as standard. Coming back to the hegemonic masculinity, the severely able-

body is a representation of hegemonic masculinity and ableism in our culture. Standal (2023) discusses in his research how the students in adapted physical activity tend to represent the severely able body as do karate instructors. Although practitioners of traditional styles of karate state redundantly that their purpose for training is not about physical skill but rather self-betterment (Bicknell, 2019; Channon, 2012; Cynarski, 2019; Cynarski et al., 2015; Cynarski et al., 2014; Keenan, 1989; Kim & Kim, 2022; Messaoud, 2016; Tadyk, 2017), instructors are still keen on utilizing the severely able-body as measure of progression for karate practitioners. It is through the attainment of the severely able body that practitioners feel they or their students are attaining the philosophical ideals. Essentially, a traditional karate-ka would believe that the harder they train their body, the more disciplined they are and the more they have conquered themselves. Yet, whether the practitioner is involved with sport or art, the standard for progression is always against the backdrop of a severely abled body. Standal (2023) explains how ideology and power distorts the goals of practice, and this statement could never be more true for the stereotypically disabled karate practitioner. The traditional karate instructor will describe virtuous character as the main goal for karate while also measuring virtuous character traits like integrity and commitment through the lens of what an able-body can accomplish. In this regard, Cynarski (2023) asserts that martial arts, including karate, as a distinct part of physical culture, must be studied through a multi-disciplinary lens because it transcends, education, business, sociology, economics, health, community, history and culture. In this same light, Pavlik (2013), highlights in their research how most sporting organizations operate as non-profits and can only function with strong community support, but found that karate federations are undervalued and under supported compared to other sport organizations. Pavlik (2013)

found that less funding was granted, less applications were considered and that karate organizations did not apply for funding as regularly as other non-profit organizations. Cynarski (2023) in his research found that karate is not seen as a serious academic pursuit among scholars and it does not get the publications that other sports do, suggesting that it may be that traditional karate organizations resist the sport model that would provide them access to revenue streams. Pavlik (2013) also found nonprofit organizations often lack the financial skills that limits their strategies for attaining new memberships. Pavlik (2023) also reported that at the community level, organizations did not receive non-financial support from the federation and pointed at this as one of the possible reasons that the organizations lack financial skills that would support growth at the community level. At the moment, karate organizations appear successful only after giving into a capitalist sporting model (Cynarski, 2023; Filipiak, 2010; Friman, 1996), and perhaps the issues surrounding nonprofit traditional karate organizations are unresolvable because they are trying to function in a system that it does not fit into. While the early twentieth century karate styles were rich with philosophical and moral traditions, success in the West now appears to require the acceptance of a capitalist culture marked by the quantity of students, medals, and certificates. My supposition is that accessible karate practice will have to transcend both sport and art and move beyond what a body can demonstrate against the standard of a severely able body, and towards standards that can measure virtues that are recognizable for all bodies.

### **Historical and Cultural Development of Disability**

The development of the disabled body is related to the “normal body” which is often referred to as the unquestioned starting point and is the physical and behavioural standard to be met with punitive or exclusionary social consequences for those who cannot or will not meet those standards (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Connolly, 2023). The concept of normalcy originated from nineteenth century statistics, where a bell curve plotted on a graph identified the “normal distribution” of human characteristics (Cameron, 2014; Davis, 2017). The normal distribution influenced the development of both the physical and moral average or standard “man.” During this time, there were also major technological advances in mechanical engineering that sparked the industrial revolution across North American and Western Europe, and gave way to a capitalist, commodity-driven economic system. The mode of production changed rapidly from mainly agrarian, cottage-based labour to urban, factory-based labour markets. As a result, people with impairments who were not able to keep up with the fast-paced production systems that were developed based on the traits of the average man, were excluded from attaining paid labour (Cameron, 2014; Davis, 2017; Oliver and Barnes, 2012). Since individuals with impairments that fell outside of the average body were not considered in the structural design of spaces, they were not valued as employees, and, having no income, they were also not valued as consumers and therefore had no place in society. Resulting from this was the social “problem” of what to do with the individuals who experience impairments when they can no longer care for themselves economically and family members are no longer in the home or able to care for them. Solutions included the segregation of people with impairments into institutions which put them directly under the gaze of medical professionals of the times and thus, disability was conceptualized as an individual medical phenomenon (Cameron, 2014). The cultural beginnings

of ableism accompanied the underlying value of the able body against the backdrop of the defective or disabled body. Ableism is a system of beliefs that idealizes non-disabled bodies as the most valued way of being in the world while simultaneously discriminating against those who are different (Peers, Eales & Goodwin, 2023). Moreover, ableism is the underlying value that fuelled the eugenics movement, one of the most insidious and oppressive forms of social control to come out of the 19th and 20th centuries (Burdett, 2014; Cameron, 2014; Paul, 2004).

Eugenics is the science of influencing reproduction to control the genetics of future generations (for example, heterosexual, white, 'intelligent' and of course non-disabled). Eugenists developed discourses such as "cure," "treat," "rehabilitate," and "sterilize" under the guise of "care," which has now also become a word associated with a medicalized view about disability (Burdett, 2014; Cameron, 2014). During this time, there was also a tension between "concern for the protection, development and welfare of those with disabilities and fear for the public good," should they pro-create (Owens et al., 2008, p. 24). All the while, individuals with disabilities were subject to the whims of new medical science, experimented on, sterilized, lobotomized and so forth (Cameron, 2014; Davis, 2017). With the institutionalization and medicalization of disability developed the core axiology that people with impairments are defective and having a disability is the worst type of existential reality (Cameron, 2014). This stereotype has reduced individuals experiencing disability to the lowest status and continues as a dominant mode of thought.

The above paragraph describes the inception of the deficit model, sometimes referred to as the individual or medical model, where individuals experiencing disablement are treated like patients at every corner, requiring therapeutic, medical or surgical intervention to cure or treat

their “condition” (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Cameron, 2014). The medical model is the dominant representation of disability in our culture in which the underlying belief is that disability resides in the individual and that the solution to the impairment is better rehabilitation, better treatment, better research in the direction of curing or preventing. As a result, individuals experiencing disability are viewed with a tragic lens, and the onus is on the individual to “cheerfully overcome” the disabling barriers resulting from their impairment, and be grateful for any ‘help,’ ‘care,’ or ‘treatment’ someone is gracious enough to provide (Martin, 2023). The framing of complex embodiment as a tragic circumstance is referred to as the “personal tragedy model” and is a cultural expression of the medical model (Cameron, 2014; Connolly, 2023).

### **The Emergence of Disability Studies and Critical Disability Studies**

In response to the medical model of disability, scholars (initiated by the research and teaching of disability scholar, Mike Oliver in the 1980s) have rejected the assumption that disabled people are a tragic defect and have insisted that disability is tied to the material limitations imposed by society, thus proposing what would be known as the social model of disability (Cameron, 2014; Martin, 2023). The social model reframes disability as a societal issue where walls have been figuratively and literally built up to exclude bodies that deviate outside of the bell curve. Proponents of the social model assert that if society was designed for inclusion, impairment would not be such a limitation. The social model puts the onus on society and identifies societal barriers, attitudes, and discrimination, intentional or not, that hinder disabled people’s participation and worth in society (Oliver & Barnes, 2012). The social model has been a significant influence in the field of disability studies. Disability studies (DS) is an

approach to studying the lives of people experiencing disabilities and is concerned with raising the voices of individuals experiencing disability, for the “development and maintenance of an inclusive, non-discriminatory and non-oppressive social world” (Cameron & Moore, 2014, p. 38, Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2017).

Critical disability studies (CDS) developed in response to the growing dichotomy between impairment being viewed either as an individual problem or as a societal problem (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2017). It was influenced by critical social theory (from the early 20th century), which criticized the “convergence of bureaucracy, capitalism, and science as progressively restricting the development of critical consciousness” (Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2017, p. 179). CDS challenges the ways in which the status quo (able-body as superior) is developed and provides space for critical reason and discourse involving the development of values, histories and culture that underly society and the relationships that are experienced within it. This is a move beyond Disability studies because although they are both concerned with identifying exclusionary practices that limit disabled peoples’ participation in society, CDS is concerned with shining a light on the very power structures that disable individuals through ableist ideologies that relegate the disabled body to the lowest rungs of society. While both Disability Studies and Critical Disability Studies focus on the oppressive consequences of normalcy as an unquestioned starting point, CDS deliberately interrogates the premises of normalcy itself. Ultimately, a society cannot be understood without also understanding the relationships within its culture. Peers (2018) utilized CDS to challenge the status quo and provide a space for critique regarding axiological assumptions in adapted physical activity (APA) research. For example, Peers (2018) states that meaningful research in disability

studies is considered that which can improve the lives of individuals with disability “through changing sport policy, affecting public opinion, improving lives, advancing understanding, challenging ideas or changing injustices” (Peers, 2018, p. 271), however, meaning is an axiological phenomena and what is meaningful for the researcher is not always meaningful for the participant. For instance, Peers (2018) provided the example that many researchers assume that disability is an undesirable trait and make assumptions that their “help” is welcome. Many people living with impairments may not feel that way and may experience the researcher’s program as oppressive. Disability scholars including, Bogart and Dunn (2019), Cameron (2014), Lyons (2013) and Peers et al. (2023), utilize the term enlightened ableism to explain the phenomena whereby individuals (usually non-disabled) appear to understand ableism and claim to work against it, but nevertheless perpetuate ableism through their efforts to help people experiencing disability become less disabled through curing, treating or rehabilitating. Furthermore, several disability scholars, such as Cameron (2014), Davis (2017) Goodley (2017), Meekosha & Shuttelworth (2017), and Oliver & Barnes (2012) have criticized disability research as “badging themselves” as disability studies while further perpetuating ableist ideologies. For example, Peers et al. (2023) in examining adapted physical education manuals, found that ableist ideologies prevailed even though the intention of the authors was to “promote a positive attitude towards people with disabilities” (p. 41), and identified numerous terms utilized throughout the texts, such as ‘rehabilitate,’ ‘cure,’ and ‘treat,’ that reproduced ideologies of inferiority and deficit.

## **Ableism and its Many Forms of Discrimination**

Filomena and Howe (2023) state that ableism is the most insidious and invisible of all the social issues because it is so engrained in our systems and institutional practices that it is hard to recognize and is internalized amongst disabled and non-disabled people alike. Professionals, including the most dedicated disability advocates unknowingly impose internalized beliefs about inferiority because of deficit centred discourses such as those found in Peers et al.,'s (2023) research (Lyons, 2013). Connolly (2023) provides a great example of internalized ableism, through the powerful narrative about a disability identified individual who is “committed to maintaining the upright posture” despite the pain she lives with, that is directly related to bearing-weight, and despite the many “catastrophic falls” she has incurred (p. 2).

Mundane dis-ableism is another form of ableism and is discrimination that is not always obvious; consider the extra steps a student experiencing disability must go through to prove they are disabled to receive accommodations to participate in society (Connolly, 2023a). The mundane errands are an example of micro-aggression that people experiencing disability face, such as having to wait for service, having to go through a process for access to services, having to apply for services, having to make an appointment for services and so forth (Heaton, 2014).

Kimberle Crenshaw, a black minority feminist scholar, is known for recognizing that multiple marginalized identities compound and significantly hinder meaningful relationships and participation in society in complex ways. Ultimately Crenshaw named this phenomena intersectionality to underscore how people encounter multiple, overlapping, and coinciding oppressive systems (Woodin, 2014). Bogart and Dunn (2019) state that ableism is “...

stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and social oppression toward people with disabilities” (p. 651), who are a part of the world's largest minority group,<sup>9</sup> and the only group that intersects all other minority groups (Bogart & Dunn, 2019).<sup>10</sup> Erevelles & Minear (2017) described a story about a woman who was shot by a police officer after resisting an eviction and stated that she was “trapped at the intersections of multiple oppressive contexts (race, class, gender and disability). If the woman had been born with one fewer marginalized identity, perhaps she may have been spared; if she was a man, perhaps she would have received a bit more respect; if she was a white woman, she may have garnered more sympathy, and if she was non-disabled, she would likely have had access to employment and been able to pay her rent. Intersectionality is also woven into deeply historical and cultural contexts (Erevelles & Minear, 2017; Woodin, 2014). With respect to accessing services, intersectionality limits the available choices individuals have access to or feel comfortable trying to access and it is linked to stereotypes often connected to histories of a given culture and hence impacts how relationships develop.

Stereotyping occurs when an individual is reduced to a set of attributes that negatively influence how people are viewed and treated (Cameron, 2014). The primary stereotype for people experiencing disability is that they are sad, that everyday life is a struggle, and even they wish they were ‘normal’ (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Cameron, 2014; Martin, 2023). When an individual or group is reduced to having “negative” attributes, or attributes not valued by a society, it can lead to stigmatization followed by rejection, avoidance or fear (Bogart & Dunn 2019; Cameron, 2014; Davis, 2017). Bogart and Dunn (2019) describe several stereotypes,

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<sup>9</sup> Claiming 15% of the global population (Bogart & Dunn, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> An individual with a disability might find themselves faced with the intersection of a number of stigmatized identities, such as disabled, black, female, gay and old (Woodin, 2014).

stating that people with disabilities are perceived as children or seniors, “warm but incompetent” (p. 656). Bogart and Dunn (2019) further explain how “non-disabled people have little or no contact with disabled people (that they know of) and are exposed to culture and media that under-represents or negatively represents disability, leading to awkward encounters that encourage a reliance on stereotypes” (p. 656). Another issue raised by Bogart and Dunn (2019), Cameron (2014) and Scheunemann (2024), is that stigmatized groups cannot avoid how others view them, and at the very least must find a socially acceptable way to react to how others view them in their interactions. Scheunemann (2024), a disability identified scholar of psychiatry, is explicit about the pressure “...to mask, appear “normal” or [be] “responsive to treatment,” and pretend to fit in environments that deny [him] belonging and value” (p. 2). A natural response on the part of the stigmatized individual is to avoid social interactions. However natural this response, Bogart and Dunn (2019) explain how stigmatized people internalize negative attributes which leads to poor self-identity, higher stress and higher rates of illness. Some examples of negative interactions experienced by individuals with disabilities include unwanted help (i.e., infantilization) and referring to the individual as an inspiration simply for taking part in tasks of daily living (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Martin, 2023). Stereotypes, or portrayals of disability common in popular culture that are often expressed through catchy phrases in media and everyday language and are known as tropes (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Martin, 2023). Common tropes that express an underlying belief that having a disability is an unwanted burden and include what disability scholars term “inspiration porn”<sup>11</sup> (Martin, 2023). Inspiration porn includes expressions that suggest individuals with a disability are heroes for completing

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<sup>11</sup> The term “inspiration porn,” coined by disability identified, Stella Young in response to the quote “the only disability is a bad attitude” (Connolly, 2023).

everyday tasks (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Scheunemann, 2024). Sports and recreation disciplines commonly use inspiration porn that sends a message that suggests, '*at least you don't have a disability,*' or that, '*your life could be a lot worse, you could have a disability*' (Martin, 2023). These common attitudes and behaviours are examples of how ableist ideologies are expressed in everyday interactions.

Beyond the medical model and social model, there is the affirmation model. The affirmation model celebrates diversity and disability as a legitimate existential way of being in the world, encompassing a value for meaningful co-dependent relationships (Cameron, 2014; Scheunemann, 2024). Bogart and Dunn (2019) provide evidence that, "...affirming a disability identity is associated with a variety of benefits including higher satisfaction with life, self-esteem, self-efficacy, social support, and lower psychological distress" (p. 657). Although many individuals and allies of disability culture embrace diverse ways of being in the world, the notion of 'normal as proper and abnormal as defective' still casts a shadow of superiority over individuals experiencing disability.

### **Accessibility and Inclusion using DS and CDS Orientations**

Tony Heaton, (2014) a disability-identified scholar, observed the emergence of the politicization of disability with the inception of the UK's Disabled Persons Act, 1986, developed in response to the disability rights movement and the social model of disability. Heaton (2014) worked closely with country transit planners to comply with public transit policies that required policy makers to seek "input from disabled people" with respect to the implementation of accessible public transit (p. 2). Heaton (2014) explains that after 25 years his dream of accessing

public transit finally did become a reality; however, acknowledges that the seat on the bus was simply a token, and his dream was not actually a mere seat on the bus, but a seat in society. This is an example of partial access. Heaton (2014) argues that partial access is a form of tokenism that disempowers people experiencing impairment as they hold out hope for the real thing. As previously mentioned, the Disabled Persons Act of 1986 was influenced in large part by the social model of disability, and it did address the social issue of not having access to transit, among other social institutions; however, moving beyond having a seat on the bus to having a seat in society has proven to be more complex than simply making modifications to the material environment. As a result, disability scholars from critical and social disciplines presented the view that dis-ableism is a socio-economic problem and that, "...marginalization is a relational concept, emerging in the routines of (and interactions between) non-disabled and disabled people, often experienced in deeply psychological ways" (Goodley, 2017, p. 83).

In reviewing the literature regarding barriers to accessing community physical activity services or facilities, access is highly dependent and entangled with the complexities of impairment, society and the multiple identities that may intersect individuals experiencing disabilities. For example, Martin Ginis, Ma, Latimer-Cheung, and Rimmer (2016) conducted a systematic review of research regarding the barriers and facilitators to long-term physical activity (LTPA) for individuals experiencing disability. Resulting from the review was a comprehensive list of barriers and facilitators to LTPA across five overarching categories: Intra-personal, inter-personal, institutional, community and policy level. Similar categories were reported by Sienko (2019), Rimmer et al. (2012), Rolfe, Yoshida, Renwick and Bailey (2012) and Shields and Synnot (2014) who also demonstrate how inter-connections between these five categories creates

more complexity. For example, Sienko (2019) reported that participation rates in movement programs for individuals with Cerebral Palsy (CP) were related to individual motor function (intra-personal) in relation to how much support was available from family members (inter-personal) to help navigate the structural barriers (institutional). Individuals who experience less motor function did not participate in physical activity programs as frequently because they required more extensive support to assist with navigating the structural barriers; that being noted, participants in the study with high support engaged in much more physical activity regardless of functional abilities (Sienko, 2019). Participants reported attitude as integral, citing that when they were surrounded by family, support workers or staff that were positive about taking the extra time required to assist with the mundane tasks of transferring, setting up equipment or maneuvering around physical barriers within the space, they were more likely to feel comfortable with repeating the experience (Sienko, 2019). Participants in the study also reported poor attitudes and discrimination as barriers to their physical activity engagement as well as the extra costs and transportation associated with taking part in ‘specialized programs’ (Sienko, 2019). Shields and Synnot (2014) conducted an exploratory study looking at barriers and facilitators from the personnel point of view and reported similar findings. The most significant facilitators included a welcoming environment, adaptive instructional strategies and encouragement from family. The most significant barriers included structurally inaccessible facilities, lack of transportation and programs that were not inclusive and not relevant (Shields & Synnot, 2014).

Rolfe et al. (2012) interviewed 15 participants experiencing disability regarding structural and social barriers to physical activity engagement in their communities. Regarding structural barriers, participants reported risking safety for the sake of access. For example, although many

facilities had poor or cluttered spaces, no grab bars, and no elevator access to specific locations, the participants opted to continue because it was that or nothing (Rolfe et al., 2012). Participants in the study cited social barriers that were linked to staff attitude, and lack of knowledge or awareness of the needs of people experiencing disabilities. For example, one participant in the study mentioned to a staff member that an elevator for access to a specific section of the facility would be beneficial, and the staff member replied by stating, “it’s a fitness studio, why would we want elevators?” (Rolfe et al., 2012, p. 274). This was also related to partial access, since many programs were not accessible on the main floor and to the participants’ disappointment, the more engaging fitness programs were offered upstairs. One participant recalls hanging on to the stair rail for dear life while ascending the stairs just to take part in a yoga class that she was told would be good for her condition (Rofe, et al., 2012). Martin Ginis et al. (2016) reported a lack of interesting, relevant or fun programs also with participants expressing interest in recreation and health focused programs rather than programs that focus on rehabilitation. Participants also reported a prevalence of negative staff attitudes and an overemphasis on competitive programs, describing program facilitators who tended to fixate on behavioural and social skill deficits which prevented an environment that felt welcoming or friendship oriented (Jones, 2003; Martin Ginis et al., 2016; Rolfe et al., 2012). Primarily, staff lacked knowledge of adaptive physical activity which limited the types of programs that could be offered and hindered an organization’s ability to offer fun and engaging program choices and activities (Martin Ginis et al., 2016; Sienko, 2019). Jones (2003) conducted focus group research with 37 parents of children with disabilities regarding barriers to accessible physical activity-based programs. Parents reported that programs were too competitive and exclusionary, and that segregated programs were limited

in the duration and number of classes their children could attend, stating that the programs were not year-round, and classes were often only offered once per week (Jones, 2003). Parents also reported that the “heart-driven” recreation programs were short lived and that many programs were designed as a method of therapeutic intervention rather than recreation based (Jones, 2003, p. 54). Moreover, parents reported that the so-called “inclusive” programs that were available did not provide sustainable engagement for their children for several reasons including: an overemphasis on skill development, a fixation on behaviour / communication deficits (parents were asked to remove their children from the program), a lack of meaningful / friendship oriented opportunities, negative attitudes from other parents or staff towards their children, and a lack of knowledge about how to adapt services (Jones, 2003). That being noted, if individuals experiencing disability are fortunate enough to have “access” to community services, why should their choices be limited. Why should they be forced to choose activities that continue to put them in the seat of needs help, needs fixing, and not fully human, rather than have nothing at all? Essentially, why is partial access acceptable as good enough?

Haegle and Wilson (2023) criticize so-called “inclusive” programs, stating that integration does not equal inclusion and that there are drastic differences between the two concepts. Haegle and Wilson (2023) point out several exclusive and discriminatory practices that often “fail to meet expectations associated with inclusive education philosophies” highlighting how the integration of non-disabled people and disabled people into one space does not mean that inclusion was felt (p. 21). Integration is a process of assimilating disabled individuals into a non-disabled society, in other words, an internalized ableist model, where people experiencing disability must strive for normalcy, while also feeling shame for existing

(Connolly, 2023; Haegele & Wilson, 2023; Oliver and Barnes, 2012). Connolly (2023a) criticizes integration as a method to foster inclusion, explaining that acceptance and tolerance of individuals with disabilities because policy requires it does not mean they will ever be regarded as equals. Inclusion ought to be marked by a change in society, not a process of assimilation, but rather a restructuring of the way society functions, so that diversity is valued rather than a problem to accommodate (Connolly, 2023), and this will likely not happen in the vacuum of a capitalist society where there is always a “bottom line”. In a capitalist society, the cost of servicing individuals with disabilities, even as mere tokens, far outweighs the amount of revenue that it can generate (Oliver and Barnes, 2012). This presents unresolvable tensions that even the most headstrong disability activists cannot seem to budge in this type of economy. Services in our capitalist economic structure (like karate) are currently designed for profit making; this can easily be seen in a typical kids’ karate program, where one karate instructor teaches 30 kids in one space twice a week. On the contrary, to provide services for people experiencing disability in our current social and material economy, several added things are required, including accessible spaces, knowledge about adapting services, additional time and in some instances additional people to support individual needs so that the services are not mere tokens. So even if a karate instructor does genuinely value and want to provide service for people experiencing disabilities, they will soon realize that they will go broke trying, and upon reaching out for government assistance (through grants or subsidies) they perpetuate inferiority through the process of attempting to rationalize who is and who is not disabled enough to receive support which only begets the problem of inferiority. Stone (as cited in Oliver and Barnes, 2012) states that these are the economic and political contradictions inherent in modern capitalist economies.

Haegele and Wilson (2023) describe how “inclusion” is the new social standard that has become nothing more than a catch all phrase for integration, at the expense of unique learning environments that have potential to foster belonging, acceptance and value. Additionally, CDS scholars suggest that those implementing integration as an “inclusive” strategy are more concerned with the appearance of attempting inclusion than they are of the students who may be receiving it (Haegele & Wilson, 2023). Authentic opportunities to belong and be included in meaningful social activities are supported by Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder (2002) who explain that learning occurs across three dimensions. The first dimension is meaning, or learning as experience, and refers to the process of learning through experiences that are meaningful. The second dimension is practice, or learning through doing, and refers to the application of the curriculum. The third dimension is community, or learning through belonging, and refers to belonging to a cohesive support group. The fourth dimension is identity, or learning as becoming, and refers to the roles that people identify with as they progress in their learning (Wenger et al., 2002). When learning spaces are universally designed, opportunities to engage in learning by doing, belonging and identifying are made accessible.

Rimmer et al. (2012) conducted a focus group study including four groups: individuals with disabilities, architects, fitness and recreational professionals, and city planners. Beyond the intra-personal, interpersonal and institutional / structural barriers mentioned above, participants in the study reported several barriers and facilitators in the natural and built environment, including “a lack of curb cuts, inaccessible access routes, doorways being too narrow for wheelchair access, facility front desk being too high for persons in wheelchairs to communicate with the person at the desk, and lack of elevators” (Rimmer et al., 2012, p. 421). Rimmer et al.

(2012) also found that there were economic barriers across all levels. For example, participants across focus groups stated that most managers of facilities were more concerned with the “bottom-line” and also explained that “...retrofitting existing facilities to comply with ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] guidelines is far more costly than designing and building an accessible facility from the outset” (Rimmer et al., p. 421). Further, participants from the consumer focus group expressed economic barriers due to the extra costs associated with transportation and described how their membership costs are the same as able-bodied members, however they are only provided partial accessibility. Additionally, with respect to policy barriers, the architect focus group reported that they were “...reluctant to stray from ADA and building code guidelines in order to design a more accessible facility,” and that building codes and policy is often confusing and “difficult to interpret” (Rimmer et al., 2012, p. 422), another example of how politicization of disability can be extremely limiting for the actual experiences of people with disabilities. Additionally, the city planner and architect group stated that the ADA is not enforced, and taking legal action may be the only way to force compliance. They also reported that many managers claim they are compliant; however, lack a review or assessment process (Rimmer et al., 2012). Finally, participants reported a lack of representation for individuals experiencing disability across all levels (within the facility, building maintenance, program development, transit planning and so forth), which led to a lack of relevant and meaningful change in the community (Rimmer et al., 2012). This narrative fits with the tokenism that has prevailed in the wake of politicized disability, in that individuals experiencing disability are still feeling excluded from society and have little access to meaningful participation (Filomena & Howe, 2023; Goodley, 2017; Heaton, 2014). Additionally, ableism, as the

dominant value system across most cultures, has set the standard for humanness, limiting people who experience disability “of the practical choices to engage in sport, as they are likely to be disadvantaged in ways that are instrumental to their participation (Filomena & Howe, p. 181).

### **Neo-Liberal Influences on Physical Education and Adaptive Physical Activity**

Physical education and APA, tend to reproduce exclusionary practices (Kirk, 2010, 2013; Reid, 2003; Goodwin and Watson, 2000; Goodwin and Fitzgerald, 2009; Svendby and Dowling, 2013), so conceptual frameworks that explicitly and practically counter exclusion can offer hope for individuals who are typically excluded even from programs declaring themselves to be inclusive. Further, many practitioners (and learners/participants) in physical education and APA encounter approaches based in a taken for granted understanding of body ideals while disregarding the embodied experiences of disabled participants/learners (Aartun, et al, 2020).

Neo-liberal values continue to fuel the engines of most corporations, institutions and organizations, including education, health care, and social services, in Western European and North American (WENA), or Global North, countries. Neoliberalism refers to monetary and trade policies of a pro-corporate, free market economy that has dominated WENA economies and cultural politics, and global markets since the early 1980’s (Richardson, 2005).

Neo-liberal education incorporates these economic values into teaching and learning processes. Positioning parents and students as consumers supposedly enhances the accountability of schools and programs in their delivery of a product consisting of common standards and assessment. This human capital paradigm approach to education or instruction of any kind includes

surveillance, testing, targeting, performativity and marketization with curricular experiences and learning reduced to little more than commodities for consumers, and submission to an economic rationality brings education and instruction into a competitive marketplace where shrinking resources and the typical capitalist responses to them threaten to reproduce the inequities so prevalent in free market economies.

Standardizing for efficiencies and comparisons means that consulting, customizing, individualizing, exploring, wondering, trying different approaches, taking peoples' bodies into account, and engaging in alternative or unconventional assessment and feedback would likely disappear in the service of more efficient, homogenous, and, mostly eugenic, strategies. Complex embodiments cannot exist with safety or dignity, much less thrive, in environments based on standards oriented towards idealized and instrumentalized bodies.

### **Facilitators to Inclusion**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) facilitates optimal learning and includes aspects of pedagogical and instructional practices as well as macro aspects such as the design of learning spaces, curricula, and service provision (Capp, 2017). The concept of Universal Design for Learning was developed first through the works of educator and neuropsychologist, David, H. Ross, whose findings suggest that a flexible learning environment, coupled with appropriately designed spaces, contributes to higher learning outcomes for more students (CAST, 2024). Capp (2017) conducted a meta-analysis on 18 studies that utilized a UDL framework. The findings suggested that the three principles of UDL enhanced learning in all 18 studies. The principles include representation, action and expression, and engagement. Representation is based on the

idea that there are multiple ways to represent knowledge, and examples from the study included how digital media enhanced outcomes in science and reading compared to traditional modes of text-based learning (Capp, 2017). The next principle, action and expression is related to the ability to demonstrate learning and knowledge outside of traditional methods of evaluation (writing, verbal speech language), and the option for using symbols to represent learning allowed for differentiated measures of learning; this is especially inclusive for students who may not use speech language communication (Capp, 2017). The third principle, engagement, is related to how teachers can develop an optimal “method for creating inclusive environments and improving student engagement through social and emotional learning, inclusive instructional practices, and student autonomy” (Capp, 2017, p. 803). Thus, UDL supports holistic development and the multi-dimensionality of the learning process since diverse modes of communication and understanding are represented in the delivery and evaluation process. Environments that pro-actively consider all modalities of learning and communication also alleviates stigma and fosters confidence and a willingness to take risks and engage in the learning process with others (Cast, 2024).

### **Facilitating Meaningful Inclusion through Cultural Change Management**

Application for the knowledge gained from the findings of this research is aimed at facilitating meaningful inclusion for people experiencing disabilities through engaging in uncomfortable conversations across all levels of the SWKKF (from the leadership down to the students). Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2017), provide four principles necessary in projects concerned with the emancipation of people experiencing disability. I will present them here in

connection with this change initiative. Principle number one, this change initiative considers that social life and human experiences are irreducible to objective facts and will include the voices of people experiencing disability in the development of services. This is important because, as Peers (2018) explained, in an ableist society it appears to be a fact that no one, not even disabled people want to be disabled, and the services that help them be more able are valuable and wanted. However, this is not an accurate statement, and in fact the opposite is more correct. Not all people want to strive for normalcy, as we can see underpinning the affirmation model of disability. Principle number two, this change initiative will link theory and knowledge gained through this research to practice, so that individuals experiencing disability will gain autonomy and have better access to participate meaningfully in society. For instance, leadership, once becoming aware that people with disabilities value themselves as they are, (or ought to and perhaps will once the veil of ableism is lifted) will have to change the way they view what karate must be, how it must look and how it must be provided. This may bring changes to the types of divisions that are included in tournaments. Presently, there are several divisions that are based on aesthetic qualities that have clear biased ideas of what “looks” good based on ableist ideologies of the upright posture. Principle number three, members of the organization will gain awareness of the histories that have led the organization to its current ableist state. For instance, to disrupt ableist ideologies about service provision, it will be helpful for the organization's members to understand that their current practices (such as tournament divisions based solely on ableist notions of aesthetics, or services created based on a profit model) developed out of socio-economic, technological and scientific modes of production and thought (i.e., capitalist economics, industrial revolution and social Darwinism) that served to make the rich richer and

the poor poorer while also facilitating mass scale oppression of people experiencing disabilities (Goodley, 2017; Oliver and Barnes, 2012). Principle number four, members of the organization must engage in dialogue among and across cultures so that their views are not held captive in a bubble having no significance outside of their own culture. Currently, the international karate organizations function in an “echo-chamber”. In other words, the SWKKF bases much of their karate tournament traditions on the traditions of the World Karate Federation (2019), including their present tournament rules, standards for rank and so on. Without engaging in dialogue with other international organizations we will fail to change because we will have to conform to compete on the worlds stage. In essence, uncomfortable conversations must be had even if they are met with struggle; indeed, perhaps the struggle is the only way forward.

Literature in cultural change management provides several factors related to leadership styles, behaviours, mindsets, visions for the future and communication methods (Bligh, Kohles & Yan, 2018; Higgs and Rowland, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2011; Kotter, 1995, 2008; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Venus, Stan & Knippenberg, 2019). To dismantle ableism and ensure cultural change within a karate organization that does not recognize its own ableist ideologies will require leaders in the organization to face and examine their “...discourses, methods and practices (Filomena and Howe, 2023, p. 184). Kotter and Cohen (2002) list eight distinct steps that all successful change management projects have implemented. The eight steps to successful change management include: “increase urgency, build a guiding team, get the vision right, communicate for buy-in, empower action, create short-term wins, don’t let up, make change stick” (p. v-vii). (I should note that Kotter and Cohen’s (2002) step seven has some ableist underpinnings or taken for granted assumptions).

John Kotter (1995, 2008), is a Harvard business professor of leadership, researcher and proponent of change management with decades of experience assisting organizations through large scale change management initiatives. From his years of experience, he asserts that the first step towards a successful organization-wide cultural transformation is to instil a sense of urgency for the change. Given the politicization of disability, (for instance, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act [2008-2024]) the high prevalence of diverse embodiments<sup>12</sup> and the gaps in services reported by Participaction (2018) and the Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport (2022), there is a legitimate cause for SWKKF leaders to feel a sense of urgency. Further, there are several reasons that adopting accessible business practices will be beneficial.

Economically speaking, the market for combat studios is saturated, and there are thousands of combat studios across Canada (Smartscrapers, 2024) competing for the same able-bodied clients. However, there are only a handful of karate studios that provide access to adaptive karate services (even if partial). According to Statistics Canada (2022), one in seven people have a disability which means there are 1.85 million people who spend 25 billion dollars annually. The SWKKF's strategic plan is to increase student membership from 2400 students to 3600 students over four years (SWKKF, 2022). By removing barriers to services, new clients will have access to training which will increase student membership. There is an economic urgency because the market is hot right now and accessibility policies are being implemented to ensure organizations are complying by the 2025 deadline. Inevitably, the competition will increase once other organizations begin to adopt and implement their accessibility policies and practices. Since a dojo's main source of revenue is from long term memberships, offering services ahead of the

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<sup>12</sup>Centre for Disease Control, (2023 ) reported that 1:36 individuals are born with Autism Spectrum Disorder

crowd will be beneficial in the long term, and will also afford wisdom in adaptive karate instruction that will position SWKKF instructors as the experts. In 2005 Ontario established legislation that requires all public serving businesses to become fully accessible by 2025 (AODA, 2008-2024) which is just around the corner. Ultimately, SWKKF need to look no further for urgency, it is here. However, this is the first real challenge to change management.

Kotter and Cohen (2000) interviewed over 100 organizations that were attempting large scale change initiatives and found that oftentimes, even in the face of real urgency (massive layoffs, business closures and so forth) “complacency” was exceptionally difficult to overcome, especially for organizations that have been operating a long time. Further, Kotter (2008) explained how people who feel the most urgency are the most removed from the sites needing change (Kotter, 2008). Consider how top executives feel pressure from shareholders, while the employees have had years to develop complacency within their work environments even if the environments are not optimal. Kotter and Cohen (2000) and Higgs and Rowland (2005) stated even when the urgency is real, many leaders are unable to instil this urgency effectively because the change is not meaningful at the grass roots level. In other words, a top-down approach is not optimal for successful change (Higgs and Rowland, 2005, 2011).

Higgs and Rowland (2011) conducted a case study analysis on 33 organizations during change and found that leader-centric approaches to change were the least likely to succeed. They also suggested that change initiatives that were tightly controlled and management driven often mitigated the success of a change project and that the most successful change outcomes were emergent in nature and often were initiated across all levels of the organization and more specifically in areas that were client centred (Higgs and Rowland, 2005, 2011). In the case of the

SWKKF, dojo driven change is necessary. As mentioned in chapter one, the reason for this project is that there are limited opportunities for students experiencing disabilities across the SWKKF. Thus, the dojos are the site for accessible services, and although promotion from the top-down will support this change initiative, only when the dojo owners and instructors begin to promote their services to students with disabilities and accept clients with diverse embodiments, will real change occur.

Bligh, Kohles, and Yan (2018), Hastings and Schwarz, 2022, Higgs and Rowland (2005, 2011) and Kotter (2008) found in their research that leadership styles and behaviours determine whether a change is top-down / leader-centred or facilitative / collaborative. Bligh et al. (2018) conducted a survey with 554 employees that compared how leadership styles and behaviours, in conjunction with employee mindset influenced employee learning for purpose of creating optimal workplace changes. Conclusions from the study suggest that meaningful learning and change is related to both leadership style and the mindset of the employees, and in particular leaders that tended to have more facilitative behaviours (such as giving positive feedback, empowering others, creating a safe environment for discussing and listening to issues, being proactive, maintaining a problem-solving approach and teaching through role modelling) contributed to successful outcomes, oppose to leaders with more leader-centred behaviours (such as talking down to employees, making employees accountable, implementing strict rules and four year plans). Bligh et al. (2018) also demonstrated that employee mindset was a factor in contributing to learning and change. They measured two types of mindsets: growth mindset and fixed mindset. Employees that demonstrated a growth mindset tended to prioritize learning, to find value in negative feedback and were more inclined to expend efforts to integrate knowledge

gained from the feedback (Bligh et al., 2005). In contrast, employees with fixed mindsets tended to react poorly to negative feedback “attributing their failures to external causes, such as a lack of resources, or a leader’s or coworker’s behaviour” (p. 125). Mindset can limit or facilitate change initiatives since individuals with a fixed mindset believe that change is outside of their control, while individuals with a growth mindset believe that change is within their control. Although Bligh et al. (2018) stated that all employees will fall into either of the two mindset categories, their analysis revealed that facilitative leadership styles influenced employees with fixed mindsets to move into a growth mindset. However, leadership styles that were more leader-centred in conjunction with fixed mindsets negatively impacted successful learning and growth (Bligh, et al., 2018). Thus, the results suggest that change management initiatives should include opportunities for leaders to gain understanding about how their behaviours impact their employees’ ‘buy-in’ to the change initiative and might mitigate any resistance coming from the grass roots level. Kotter (1995) and Kotter and Cohen’s (2000) second step, building a strong coalition, also facilitates success because it removes the barrier of a ‘top-down’ approach. A strong coalition will help move the change across the organization’s various levels. The coalition should be made up of both upper management and more importantly, employees that are at the sites where change must occur (specific to this change initiative, the coalition can be made up of senate members, committee members, regional representatives, and most importantly, sensei, students and parents) (Kotter, 1995, 2008; Kotter and Cohen, 2000).

Kotter and Cohen’s (2000) third step to successful change management is to create a clear vision for the organization that is simple enough to be stated in one sentence. For example the SWKKF’s current vision statement is to be the “premiere karate organization in North America,

fostering highly skilled martial artists with exceptional character” (SWKKF, 2020). A new vision can include “... *also specializing in accessible and inclusive karate for all.*” The vision of specializing in accessible karate for all is clear and allows for a tangible reality to unfold (Kotter, 1995; Kotter and Cohen, 2000). For example, a tangible action may be to provide training in accessible or adaptive karate which will assist in facilitating the change, as is creating promotional flyers for accessible karate classes, which will bring in new clients.

Venus et al. (2019) state that change threatens identity and thus, resistance is common in large scale change initiatives. For example, leaders in the SWKKF may resist the change fearing that it may change the identity from what Shintani wanted for the organization, or they may fear that the change will move the organization away from the core values that Shintani passed down. However, Venus et al. (2019) found in their research that leaders can mitigate the resistance by communicating effectively the continuation of the original identity and vision of the organization. Kotter (1995) and Kotter and Cohen’s (2000) fourth step, to communicate buy-in, will be easier to accomplish if members of the organization do not feel threatened. Thus, to communicate effectively, Kotter and Cohen (2000) suggest the coalition keep communication “simple and heartfelt,” making sure to be authentic when communicating about “anxieties, confusion, anger [or] distrust” (p. 101).

Kotter and Cohen’s fifth step to organizational change, empower action, is linked to leadership behaviours sited in Bligh et al.’s (2018) findings. Leaders can empower others to help lead the change through transferring ownership of the change to individuals across different levels of the organization (Bligh et al., 2018) by removing barriers (Kotter & Cohen, 2000). Kotter and Cohen (2000) describe four types of barriers that hinder change action and include:

boss barriers, system barriers, barriers of the mind and information barriers. Bosses with leader-centred styles of leadership can be a significant limitation to change because they consistently disempower their subordinates (Bligh et al., 2018; Hastings & Schwarz, 2022; Higgs & Rowland, 2005, 2011). Removing their power and giving it to the subordinates was cited as an effective way to empower individuals to act (Kotter & Cohen, 2005). In the SWKKF there is a strong hierarchical function, and I anticipate boss barrier may be problematic since karate relies heavily on a tradition of hierarchy. Higgs and Rowland (2000) explored the literature related to leadership change competencies and found that the ability to build confidence in employees was related to empowerment, however, there was tension between remaining “impartial as a change leader” and stepping in with an opinion that might hinder the progress in facilitating a collaborative process to the change (p. 127). Moreover, building confidence through facilitating collaboration (rather than telling employees what to think or do), may put change leaders at risk of seeming laissez-faire, a leadership style that Bligh et al. (2018) reported has a negative and at times destructive impact on change because employees assume the leader does not care. Creating short term wins (step six) “that inspire, promote optimism and build self-confidence” (p. 123) was also shown to empower individuals across various levels of an organization (Kotter, and Cohen, 2000).

Creating short term wins is essential in the change management process and helps to maintain stamina, which is necessary for the last two steps (don't let up and make change stick). They also serve several functions according to Kotter and Cohen (2000) which include providing feedback for the coalition, providing recognition for those who expended continuous effort, building faith while attracting more buy-in and taking power away from cynics. For wins to be

meaningful they must occur regularly, timely, (soon after the initiation has begun), must be visible to as many people as possible and must “penetrate emotional defenses by being unambiguous” (p. 141). An example of a meaningful and unambiguous short-term win in the SWKKF can be a short story (that is posted on all social media accounts, in the newsletter, and on the website) that highlights the successful completion of a belt grading of a new karate student that has a disability (preferably a kid, because kids warm peoples’ hearts naturally) who is a family member of a black belt in the organization. Since the new student is a family member of one of the organizations black belts, most senior ranking belts will know of the person and will be more inclined to respond positively to and connect with the story.

The next step, don’t let up, is a repeat of steps one through six, in that the change leaders and coalition must continually find ways to keep urgency high, while continuing to communicate the vision and goals of the change and provide short-term wins (Kotter and Cohen, 2000). Once these processes have been sustained long enough the final step is to make it stick. Kotter and Cohen (2000) suggest the coalition “tell vivid stories over and over about the new organization, what it does, and why it succeeds...” as well as, “...placing people who act according to the new norms into influential and visible positions” (p. 177). Sustainable change has occurred once *this is how we do things* can be stated by members across the organization (Kotter, 1995). Higgs and Rowland (2005, 2011) state that there is no one way to implement change, nor are there any eight step methods to guarantee success or eliminate the complexity of cultural change management. That being noted, an eight-step approach in conjunction with a level of understanding about leadership, mindset, communication, and vision can be helpful for moving the change forward. Unfortunately, widespread social change cannot be attained without ruffling a few feathers. It is

only through the disruption of the status quo, and by making the lives of all people, non-disabled and disabled alike uncomfortable, that the “unlearning” of ableism might occur (Connolly, 2023; Filomena and Howe, 2023; Oliver and Barnes, 2012).

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This section includes an overview of social constructionism as the epistemological perspective that underlies the investigation, an overview of human systems theory as a theoretical framework for analysis. I also discuss the purpose and design of the study, including the sampling strategy, the recruitment process, the methods of data collection and analyses, as well as how the study upholds the expectations of trustworthiness in qualitative research.

### **Social Constructionism**

The premise for social constructionism is that the human world is constructed by individuals and therefore cannot be deduced to an absolute. Further, it is shaped by culture and language and varies widely across many contexts (Patton, 2002). Considering that this research is seeking to understand how individuals experiencing disabilities can participate more meaningfully in karate, understanding the social constructs that form the culture of the Shintani Wado Kai Karate system can provide a shared language for cultural change that is sensitive to the constructs that the members hold dear. Martial arts are an old art form, and the constructs that form the cultural backdrop have a long history, with a heavy emphasis on lineage, and tradition. Venus et al. (2019) explains how cultural change is limited by identities, and identities are shaped by the behaviours and attitudes formed through the shared experiences, stories, and memories. That being said, the older the organization the deeper the members will identify with its culture. Additionally, long-term members may identify strongly and, in this regard, may have significant influence over other members due to karate's tradition of hierarchy. Furthermore, since this organization has a history spanning more than five decades, concepts that the members

identify as being integral to the organization may be limiting for students with disabilities to uphold. For example, the social construct of self-discipline holds several meanings, including the ability to demonstrate stamina, self-control, respect, as well as the ability to remain quiet and be obedient. One might ask, can discipline as a social construct be reframed to include students who do not have stereotypical behaviours and further, can karate be inclusive while still adhering to the valued social constructs that the members identify with. In this respect, understanding the social constructs that inform the SWKKF and assuring the continuity of the most essential aspects of the SWKKF's identity will lessen resistance to change from members across the federation (Venus et al., 2019).

### **Purpose and Design**

The purpose of this study is to find ways to support the transition to fully accessible karate services in a way that is authentic and sustainable by interviewing sensei across SWKKF. A qualitative case-study methodology utilizing a HST framework was used to guide this research project. The overarching questions included: What are the unique cultural qualities of the SWKKF and how they might appear as barriers or facilitators to accessibility? How do sensei across the SWKKF perceive accessibility? How do SWKKF sensei perceive their accessibility? And what systematic factors facilitate or hinder accessibility? Purposeful sampling was used to capture the perspectives of sensei across various regions and levels of the system. For example, only karate instructors who operated a dojo, or who taught regular classes at a dojo were recruited and non-instructor black belts, other karate students, or parents of students were intentionally not included in this study (although that might be a fruitful investigation in the

future). Strategic questioning that was aimed at a purposeful sample in conjunction with an interview script that was informed by Meekosha and Shuttleworth's four principles of research, and a HST framework, were utilized to reveal barriers and facilitators across all levels of the system (see Appendix E for interview script).

## Recruitment and Sample

As mentioned in Chapter one, I am a member of the SWKKF, so prior to proposing my post-graduate research, I connected with both the president and chief instructor to ask for their support in order to conduct this research within the organization (See Appendix H & I for letters of support). The president assisted with the recruitment process by forwarding an invitation to participate in a short survey to karate instructors across the organization (see Appendix A for the invitation, Appendix B for the consent form and survey and Appendix C for the full survey). The intention of the survey was to gain access to participants that instructed in dojos that spanned across various regions, from small towns to large cities and to allow participants to self-select their participation in the study. From the short survey, 13 participants were recruited to take part in the study. Five were from a big city; five were from a small city, one was from a town, and two were from small towns. Five of the 13 were Senate members (two from a big city, two from a small city, one from a town), four were regional representatives (two from a big city, one from

Region	Macro (Senate Members)	Meso (Regional Reps)	Micro (Dojo Instructors)
Big City	2	2	1
Small City	2	2	2
Town	1	0	0
Small Town	0	1	1

Table 1, Participant data.

a small city and one from small town) and four were instructors (one from a big city, two from a small city and one from a small town) (See *Table 1*).

Three of the participants had between 12-22 years of karate training and did not train under sensei Shintani. Seven of the participants had between 35-42 years of karate training and had trained with Sensei Shintani, and three of the participants had over 50 years of training and had been direct students of sensei Shintani. Nine of the participants were from Ontario, three were from Alberta, and one was from British Columbia. Although I only recruited instructors who taught regularly, or operated a dojo, there are two black belts who are disability identified (one from a big city and one from a small town) that, in hindsight, surely, would have provided valuable insight about barriers and facilitators to accessibility in a small town or big city dojo. A follow-up investigation that includes disability identified black belts may be a fruitful investigation in the future.

### **Data Collection**

The interview script included three sections and 34 questions. Multiple types of questioning were utilized to limit the potential that participants might anticipate what they believe may be an optimal response (Patton, 2002). All three sections included a mix of value, opinion, knowledge, feeling, sensory, experience and demographic questions (Patton, 2002). Utilizing multiple types of questioning also allowed for more depth in the participants' responses, rather than simply recollecting knowledge or stating opinions, and allowed for revelations to come from the participants' responses (Jiménez & Orozco, 2021; Patton, 2002).

Questions in section one addressed the micro level, inquiring about attributes of the sensei and personal experiences with respect to accessibility. Questions in section two addressed the meso level, inquiring about attributes of the dojo and community with respect to accessibility.

Questions in section three addressed the macro level, inquiring about attributes of the SWKKF with respect to accessibility (See Appendix E for interview script).

For each interview I printed a hard copy of the script that I used to write notes in the margins, so that I was able to circle back to ideas, concepts and experiences throughout the interview. Further, the interview script was organized so that demographic and opening questions were scattered throughout each section and often served as a method to bring the participant's attention to a topic, or transition to a new topic. From the demographic or opening questions, I would dig deeper by prompting for salience of the event or experience (Jiménez & Orozco, 2021) by stating, "*you had mentioned...*" followed by, "*can you elaborate on that*" or "*can you describe what you felt when,*" or "*can you explain what you meant when you said*" and so forth. For example, I prompted a participant who had knowledge of macro systems by stating, "*you mentioned the World Karate Federation and Japanese Karate Association, can you tell me more about those connections with the SWKKF?*" Another time I prompted for salience of a participant's experience stating, "*you mentioned that you had to judge a para-athlete competing in a regular division, can you tell me more about how you felt and how he ranked compared to the other competitors?*"

Throughout the interviews I affirmed and reassured participants that their responses were valuable, for example, "*I hear that a lot,*" or "*that would be a wonderful initiative,*" and I clarified questions by stating the question in a different way or providing examples when

participants may have needed prompting. For example, after stating the question, “*what partnerships might you see as beneficial between your dojo and your community that could support accessibility?*” the participant responded by asking, “*partnerships..?*”, I responded by clarifying and providing an example stating, “*yes, for example, one dojo partnered with schools and taught martial arts to students with disabilities at the schools, can you think of any partnerships that could be beneficial?*”.

Mundane realities of how dojos operated were captured through sensory and ‘fly on the wall’ questions. For example, “*what noises suggest to you that students are engaged and learning?*” and, “*if I were a fly on the wall what would I see in one of your typical karate classes?*” Using these types of questions was particularly helpful and allowed me to capture daily activities in an authentic and revelatory way. For example, after asking “*what noises suggest to you that students are engaged and learning,*” several participants responded using descriptive words like, “*silence,*” or “*hard breathing.*” This revealed a rigid and disciplined dojo, and also revealed the types of students that would likely fit into that type of class. Other participants responded to the same question by using descriptive words like “*laughing,*” “*crying,*” and “*chatter.*” This revealed a less rigid class, and potentially, a more accessible dojo.

The interviews were audio recorded using Microsoft Teams software and the audio files were saved on two separate USB drives (in case one was lost) that were password protected. Each interview lasted between one and two hours resulting in a total of two-hundred eighty-two pages of text that was transcribed (verbatim) for analysis. I stored the master transcript on both password-protected USB drives and kept a hard copy of the transcript as a third back up. Once the interviews were transcribed, I sent a copy of the transcription to the participant for member

checking (Patton, 2002). Once participants sent back their transcripts (no additions were made to any of the transcripts), I began the analysis process.

### **Data Analysis and Preliminary Findings: Inductive**

To initiate my first cycle of coding I uploaded each transcript into Quirkos (2023) software, which is a free qualitative software program that researchers can use to organize data and is visually appealing and easy to use. For initial coding I moved within each transcript by reducing the data by assigning statements or phrases into five generic codes; value, concept, process, emotion or description (Miles, Huberman & Sadana, 2014) (See Appendix K). Once first level coding was complete, I uploaded the data into a Microsoft Excel spread sheet for a larger view of the data sets (See Appendix L). I then moved across the transcripts and assigned additional tags for codes to further elaborate on the code and differentiate the code from other codes. Value codes included: Shintani qualities, belonging and social aspects, inclusion and affordability, knowledge and personality, and philosophy. Concept codes included: barriers and facilitators, attitudes and stereotypes, inclusion and opportunity, the floor, old-school and tradition, hierarchy, ableism, “supercrip” and commercialism and sport. Emotion codes included: Fear of injury and performance, worry about legacy, burnout, frustration and disruption, shame of poverty and injury, passion for teaching and training, pride in SWKKF, gratitude for SWKKF. Process codes included: Engaging with other dojos, engaging with other organizations, competitions, grading, instructor training, teaching and learning, business processes, senate and committee processes, community, support, growth and entropy. Description codes included: What would Shintani do, benefits of karate, dream dojo, renting or

buying, SWKKF background and roots, communication in the dojo, Canadian issues, disability in the dojo, competing, exposure to disability, acquired disability, and disruptive behaviour.

In the second level of the inductive analysis, I reorganized and renamed the codes to form code clusters and assigned a thematic designation to the code clusters

### **Data Analysis: Deductive**

For the deductive analysis I applied the literature-driven typologies from Disability Studies and Critical Disability Studies literature (ableism, enlightened ableism, disableism, mundane disableism) to the codes that I generated in the inductive analysis. This allowed me to confirm the presence of the typologies in the inductive codes. Within the deductive analysis processes, I also applied a HST (human systems theory) lens to the inductive codes. For example, I examined the processes described by the informants captured in the inductive codes from several different layers within HST to re-present the different overlapping systems influencing the growth or entropy of the individual dojos and the organization as a whole. One dojo modeling inclusion might have an influence in a single region; a competition where disabled participants were given equal access might have an influence across several regions or, depending on the level of competition, several provinces.

Once my inductive and deductive analyses were complete, I duplicated the spreadsheet and reorganized one of the spreadsheets by region and the other by the perspectives associated with leadership roles within the organization. For example, in the spreadsheet organized for region I arranged findings from the analyses so that participants who ran dojos in big cities were side-by-side, followed by participants who ran dojos from small cities, followed by the

participant who ran a dojo from a town, followed by participants who ran dojos from small towns, in a descending pattern. For the spreadsheet organized for perspective, I arranged the findings from analyses so that participants who were on the senate were side-by-side, followed by participants who were regional representatives, followed by participants who were dojo instructors. This made it more convenient to capture significant aspects that were prevalent across different regions, and from different points of view. This organization of findings allowed me to do a more robust analyses using Human Systems Theory.

### **Trustworthiness**

Along with the ethical considerations, researchers must also consider how they would approach the research process in a trustworthy manner. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986), the criteria for assessing trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to whether the research findings represent a “credible” theoretical interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data, that is, the ‘believability’ of the findings. Credibility is improved through using verbatim transcripts, checking with informants, re-reading the data sets and providing clear descriptions of all steps of the analysis process along with examples of each step from the raw data. Using the language of the participants also increases credibility. Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of an inquiry can pertain or transfer beyond the boundaries of the project. This is a practical question that cannot be answered by the researcher alone. Readers of the project, other than the researcher, make the determination about its transferability. Readers will be helped in a decision about transferability if they have access to the steps taken by the researcher and a rich

description of all the processes involved in the inquiry. Also helpful will be a rich description of the informants and their contexts so that other readers can decide if the participants and contexts are like their own, and whether the findings might be transferred to their own contexts. Again, the more transparent and robust the description of informants, contexts and research processes, the more likely it will be that the findings will be useful in other contexts. Dependability refers to the inquiry's strengths in internal design that allow readers to be confident that sufficient cross comparison mechanisms in data collection and data analyses were employed. Thus, the findings can be seen to be derived inductively from the informants' original data sets and deductively from engagement with sensitizing concepts from literature and theoretical frameworks as opposed to being based in the researcher's foregone assumptions about the question under study. Triangulation of data collection and/or levels of data analyses and providing a research audit in the form of an ongoing researcher's journal, contribute to dependability, the ability to depend on the findings being derived from a rigorous process of data collection and analysis. The more clearly these processes are described, the more dependable the study and its findings are. Confirmability refers to how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected and analyzed. Using verbatim quotes, the language of the informants, and providing access to the processes of recursive reduction, either in the body of the work or in appendices, adds to confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1986).

Since I adopted most of the strategies described to enhance trustworthiness, I am confident that my study is trustworthy. Utilizing a social constructionist worldview provided a unique language for assuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. Patton (2002) states that the

credibility of the participants, as experts in their own experiences, provides an internal validity. Further, the processes and findings can be considered transferable for those who find the description of the research processes and the eventual findings useful as a tool for learning or relating, which is akin to reliability. Since multiple perspectives are both valued and valid sources of knowledge, according to a social constructionist worldview, the findings can be considered confirmable given that I used multiple levels and types of analyses and provided transparency regarding the processes involved in analyses. Furthermore, member checking was used to ensure that the participant was given the opportunity to preview the transcript before it was analyzed and was able to add or clarify any aspect of the interview. I used the verbatim expressions from my participants whenever possible, except when using them would compromise the participant's confidentiality.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This section will include the findings from the inductive analysis, the literature driven deductive analyses, and the systems theory deductive analysis. The inductive findings include three overarching themes, the literature driven deductive findings include four overarching themes and the systems theory deductive findings include three overarching themes (See Table 2, p. 132).

### **Inductive Findings**

The overarching inductive findings include three themes that are: Keeping the Legacy Alive: What Would Shintani Do, The Floor: Spaces That Foster Relationships and Belonging and Unresolved Tensions: Maintaining Shintani's Values. The inductive themes were purposefully named including words or phrases that have meaning for the participants and the organization. For instance, Shintani's legacy is essential to the organization and is the backdrop for which it functions, and the floor was referred to 88 times throughout the interviews and is a distinct inner cultural reference. The third theme was named because participants expressed concern for maintaining Shintani's values as an organization in the current society and as we move further away from Shintani's generation.

### **Keeping Legacy Alive: What would Shintani do?**

Keeping the legacy alive: What would Shintani do (WWSD) includes four sub-themes that are: WWSD: Affordability, WWSD: Inclusion, WWSD: Teaching Philosophy and WWSD: Family Oriented Karate and Building Harmonious Communities.

Masura Shintani's legacy is the pillar of the organization and throughout the interviews participants expressed the magnitude of their respect and admiration for him as a leader, role model and mentor. One participant stated that the most significant benefit attained from their martial arts training was their *"association with sensei Shintani,"* describing the *"honour"* it was to train under him. All the participants described him as legendary, in skill and character. He was not a businessman, and this was revered highly as he never put money before morals. He was a *"quiet and unassuming man"* and was said to *"dominate a room just by being in it"*.

Participants admired Sensei Shintani for his humble character; one who did not have to steal the show with charisma but won his audience with a quiet and humble regard. He spoke softly and students who knew better got to class early so that they could get a spot up front, even though his power was felt from across the floor. For example, one participant stated, *"Sensei Shintani was a very quiet person, and when he would speak everybody would listen, and he seemed to draw everything out from people."* Another participant stated that, *"it felt like the whole floor was just rippling, like he had such a presence when he came into the dojo, it was unbelievable,"* and, *"his karate was just phenomenal, like I can't even begin to describe, like you just watched him and went awwwwww wow!"* Participants also admired his humility. One participant recalled how sensei Shintani was:

*Not a judgemental person in anyway and he never carried himself as if he was better than anyone*

*else, even though everyone literally worshipped him, just as like wow, he was an amazing person but to him he just walked around like, no, I'm just like you, just a human being, but he did, he was very respectful to everyone.*

Participants shared the sentiment of remaining pure to what Shintani taught. One participant stated that they have always “*kept it very pure to sensei Shintani’s teachings,*” another participant stated that they always “*keep the karate under his knowledge, what he had set out in the first place.*” Participants also expressed concern for the organization once Shintani’s memory is gone, and stated how with each generation, qualities that are unique to Shintani’s system are watered down or forgotten. One participant described their concern stating that:

*As the organization gets bigger we get further removed from people who knew sensei, we are losing a lot of that intimacy that you just can't pass on, and as the senior students get older, I think we are getting further away from that, everything has a shelf life, everybody has a shelf life and I think you have to be very careful where this organization goes cause the expiry date is there, there is no doubt about it, it's just how long can you put it off and how long can you keep the traditional spirit of sensei alive.*

Often participants relied on their knowledge of what Shintani did, or what he would do, to help them make decisions.

#### WWSD: Affordability

Participants described Shintani’s compassion for students who could not afford karate lessons but were dedicated students. They stated he was generous with his money, recalling how

he would pay for the group's dinner with any extra money from tournaments. Participants also provided insight about his upbringing in the Japanese internment camps in British Columbia and his small apartment that he lived in with his mother, describing how he never valued money and never had any dreams of owning a large dojo or a big house. Participants explained that, "*Sensei was not a good business man, he didn't have money to invest, any money he got from the organization he gave away pretty much, so having his own dojo was not on his radar.*" Another participant described a time when Shintani said, "*if you come regularly you don't have to pay, if you start missing then you have to pay.*" Another participant claimed that, "*Sensei Shintani didn't care if you were rich or poor he was all about the people*".

#### WWSD: Inclusion

Participants recalled Shintani's inclusion of women, children, and students with disabilities over the years, even in times past when classes for children were rare and women were not typically seen in the dojo. One participant recalled thirty years ago when women had little access to karate. Shintani opened his doors to women and allowed them to compete against the men in the men's division at tournaments when there were no divisions in place. The participant stated, "*Sensei would never let the women spar with the men, but then became more open to it, and found opportunities for women within the organization.*" Another stated, "*Sensei Shintani was always very progressive, many, many, many years ago, just as crazy as it sounds now, but just having women black belts come into the system, right, having women train as students and work up to black belt, many, many, years ago he was very open and fine with this, but still respectful of that situation.*" Another participant explained:

*It is funny you ask that question back at his time, going in that direction when he first taught the classes and everything else, he was trying to do the same thing, where there wasn't a lot of women, let's take that as an example, so he opened that door; what can we do to get women involved in karate, let's see here, so that sort of concept, he opened it up brought them in, they weren't allowed to do sparring, we started off with that they were wonderful in katas<sup>13</sup>, and eventually that changed because of times, the women wanted to do sparring, so he worked with the times, he worked with the changes, he did the same thing with the elderly, he did the same thing with kids, we didn't have kids in those days, all of a sudden a kids program came into play.*

Participants described his kindness towards children and youth. One participant reminisced about a tournament he had attended, and sensei Shintani was nowhere to be found, when he was finally located, he was caught up talking karate with the children and embraced in their presence. Regarding students with disabilities, participants recalled that Shintani would often work one-on-one with individuals and had a way of providing meaningful opportunities for every personality and had a way of individualizing instruction for each and everybody. One participant recalled Shintani's student who had a disability. This student was not a stereotypical karate student but was at sensei Shintani's right hand, and part of the group just the same, performing some scheduling duties for sensei Shintani and receiving a black belt. The participant also recalled that this student had the technical skills of a yellow belt but was still honoured by sensei Shintani and was accepted and brought into the group and was on the floor. Another participant explained, *"I think we are going to have to look at sensei Shintani and his humbleness and his ability to include everyone within the organization and his ability to teach*

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<sup>13</sup> Kata is a prearranged sequenced of self-defence techniques, passed down across generations.

*people the same thing but different to suit each individual.*” Another instance, Sensei Shintani advised instructors to pass a student that was *“not that good.”* One participant stated that Shintani would do whatever it takes to teach someone who wanted to learn karate, they explained, *“we’ll find a way, whatever it takes, that would be that concept, that would be his thinking.”* Another participant stated, *“I think he would have been like us for the more complex or whatever, he would definitely look at getting someone who was trained in that field.”*

Sienko (2019) and Martin Ginis et al. (2016) stated that negative staff attitudes prevented individuals with disabilities from returning to programs. Participants stated that Shintani demonstrated a positive attitude towards individuals with disabilities and explained that he would do everything to support any student who dedicated themselves to karate, including students with disabilities. Participants expressed how students of Shintani wanted to emulate him in every way, in his skill and also in his character. One participant recalled how angry he was that a student with a disability was not given the same respect non-disabled students were given at a tournament, and even went as far as giving an instructor heck, which did not happen often.

#### WWSD: Teaching Philosophy

Participants described how Shintani was *“soo into the individual.”* They described how he valued each student for their individuality and would teach everyone in different ways. Participants described how Shintani would adapt movements to suit individual bodies and personalities and recalled sensei Shintani’s sentiments that karate must be practical, one participant recalled asking Shintani if a move was correct and Shintani responded with *“does it work?”* Another elaborated by stating:

*For us it is the realism, there is, you know, there is a lot of times where people in other styles are too rigid on, it's gotta be done exactly this way or it's wrong; and sensei Shintani was not like that, it was like you gotta feel your karate. Right, and that's it, cause his upbringing being raised in the camps in BC and stuff during the war; you know, Sensei was persecuted against there is no doubt right, people did not like Japanese people in the 40's and the 50's, so he felt that, you know so he had to, his karate is what saved his life right, and that's what he brought into his training, so when it came to, so if your stance isn't perfect, that's ok, is it real, does it work for you, you know and that to me is the defining characteristics that sets us aside from some of the other styles, I think that some of the other styles have gotten so rigid and if your foot is not pointed exactly at the 45 degree angle. If it is 44 degrees instead of 45 it's wrong right, that I think is the big difference for us, you know, so for me, I love even how now, sensei working us and stuff, it's like, ok what works for you? What feels good for you? ok well that's the way you should be doing, and that's how sensei Shintani was. He would look at you as an individual and he would get you moving it will be the best way for you, and other organizations don't do that, they have one way of moving and if you don't do it that way it's wrong.*

As the statement above described, sensei Shintani knew that different things work for different people, and to make the technique applicable it needs to be adapted. One participant recalled:

*Bodies and personalities he would look at you and he would want you to try this and he would go to someone else, and it's funny cause we would come back in a black belt work out and we would have a class on a Tuesday and some of the instructors would be doing it one way and I would be doing it the other and that's not right, and that's what sensei told me, that's what sensei told me, so we would have a discussion and then we would go back Sunday and say sensei how is this done, and I do it and he would say yeah that's ok, and another guy would do it, yeah that's ok, we didn't get the concept he was trying to put forth, we didn't understand that, but and one of*

*his favourite sayings was does it work, then what's wrong with it.*

Similarly, another participant recalled:

*I always remember sensei coming back from the black belt workouts in Hamilton and these ranking black belts at the time would all be arguing over a particular technique "sensei showed me this way," "no sensei showed me this way" and then they asked sensei, and they said "sensei is this right?" and he would say "yes," and then the other "is this right?" and he would say "yes", they are all the right way but they were all different, he had the ability to teach the technique to suit the individual.*

One participant who had travelled with, and had trained under Shintani for many years, described his ability to work with large groups, differentiating the instruction for each individual and belt level, adapting as needed. He explained:

*Sensei Shintani had the capability of having 50 people on the floor right from shodan to advanced and from sandan to yodan and he would put one work out on and he went around and he offered his instructions to each person individually as we were doing the same techniques he would say I want you to try this and he would stop by somebody else and say I want you to try it this way, and it would be two completely different concepts but the same technique or move.*

Another participant explained how they "...modify what [they] teach for the individual," while another said, "our focus is, yeah, developing the individuals through karate." Participants assert that it is "more about inner character and developing yourself as a person" than it is about skills and ability. This is the karate-do philosophy that is embedded within traditional karate teachings, being inclusive is to adapt to the individual in order to foster development and growth of the self.

All individuals are valued for their own self-development, rather than their skills alone. One participant described an analogy that expressed how adapting karate to the person is valued. They stated “...*the destination is the same, the journey is different so we want to go to [somewhere] you know, somebody is going to take a boat across... another will take a car...one might take a bike and another one might run, it all depends on where you're at, your style and what you like to do so that is the same thing in karate*”.

Participants also reported on the ego. When you enter a dojo “*you leave your ego with your shoes*”. Participants did not thirst for elitism, which is not to say that they do not appreciate the gold metals when their athletes are on the world stage but is to say that they do not tie their students to their wallet. One participant stated, “*I don't care if you come to me as a thirty-million-dollar rich guy or a lawyer that drives a Porsche, you still need to become a better individual as you learn with me. I don't care where you are starting, the idea is individual growth, how much can you grow how much can you influence yourself to be happier, to do better things,*” another stated, “*your different but you're the same, your included within the group, we are all different.*” Participants also said that instructors must be kind and have humility, stating “*...it has nothing to do with showing off egos. Like we all get along so well, I mean every organization has people with egos and stuff like that but very little of our instructors are there with egos just 'cause they have a black belt*”.

One participant also described the benefit for instructors by having to adapt instructions across the spectrum for individuals who “*are just not getting it*” and explained how “*finding ways to get that*” makes you a real sensei. They described how bringing an athlete from a two out of ten to a three out of ten is more impactful than showing off the ten out of ten on the world stage.

Another participant agreed stating *“if they were all good students the instructor wouldn’t have to be a good instructor, would he?”*

#### WWSD: Family Oriented Karate For Building Harmonious Communities

Participants explained how Shintani was compassionate about building a harmonious community, with one participant stating, *“Sensei’s traditions of community and family and humility, are mostly honoured across the organization.”* And another explained that karate people become good people and honest and sincere leaders in the community, stating also that karate can help build a strong foundation for individual growth. One participant explained:

*I have mentioned about the family, it is a family-oriented karate, we try to teach our students to be compassionate to be honest, but we also want them to be strong and to be able to maintain themselves. With karate it helps every individual, in the sense of growth where they are going to lead into the community, they become good people, they become a good example of you know what kind of person that you want to be with and what kind of person they should be with, you know the honesty and um the sincerity, you know, but you still want to be strong you want to be able to be on top of it, you know there is going to be some challenges in a different perspective of business and so on and so forth, you know the Shintani Wado Kai is very strong in leadership as some point to be able to help the ones that can’t, let’s say the ones that need, we want to be able to be there, they are there to give them the right foundation basically.*

Essentially, participants viewed karate as a way to strengthen community and build strong relationships. Participants stated that individual growth is important because we are part of a *“bigger whole,”* and to strengthen the whole you must strengthen its parts. One participant also stated that the SWKKF *“gathers and bonds people in communities especially rural communities,*

*to do karate.” Another participant described how they “do a lot of personal awareness and self-defence in the community so that the community is stronger in a safety aspect of things.” While another participant described how to build a stronger dojo by promoting a family connection but explained also how that can be a challenge in the busier dojos stating that “...you have to get them to really meld with each other; right it’s different, there’s [a large population] and everybody doesn’t know everybody, like they do in a rural situation, so it requires a different method to gain bonds and trust and relationships and things like that”.*

Participants across the organization echoed the sentiment that strong people build strong families that build strong communities. One participant stated that they have, *“always been family oriented, you teach to the family, the kids, but the parents are on the floor with them”* and another said, *“it is more of a family group, if you look at it, you know it’s just not karate it is a family environment, you go to any club, and you feel that environment, from all of the Shintani federation, you feel that environment as a family,”* and still another stated, *“collectively we are strong and we are together,”* and, *“it is a large family that we have within the organization, it is one of the few organizations that do that”*. Not only is it a large family because everyone has invested in each other over many years through supporting each other’s training, it is also literally family oriented and many of the dojos emphasize their family classes and since the organization has been around so long there are multiple generations that train together. For example, students that have grown up and now have kids and even grandkids that now train in the organization. It is not uncommon that members of the organization have close personal

relationships and attend birthday parties, weddings and funerals for their members across the organization. One participant explained how it is:

*A community, but to be honest at times it's a family as well, right, for some it can become very much a family type of atmosphere. And it's great because some people need that, they don't have that with their real family so they come and get it there...if you just look at the whole value system, our value is not about money or looks or ability. It is more about, more of that inner character and developing yourself as a person.*

The participants also explained how they would have inter-club tournaments, and that, *“parents are a big help in a lot of ways, they help with those extra activities that we do outside of just the class itself.”*

### **The Floor: Spaces That Foster Relationships and Belonging**

The floor is where the physical and social challenges offer the members an opportunity to *“be part of something bigger than themselves.”* The first tradition new students are introduced to, is the bow, and upon entering the floor students must bow to signify letting go of their outside identity and letting go of anything from their outside world that will cloud their mentality while training. Putting it *“all on the floor”* was mentioned by multiple participants, means to train with integrity; each stance, each block, and each technique is practiced with precision, whether the sensei is watching or not. The opportunity to perfect and condition your exterior provides confidence and a sense of empowerment over the self. Getting through smaller tasks (bowing, basics, sparring) and leading up to more complex tasks (katas, gradings, tournaments) provides a sense of strength, and endurance, and it all happens on the floor with the mentors, and peers

training alongside each other. One participant described how *“training with individuals that all have a common goal builds a sense of camaraderie and keeps your mind sharp”*. This section includes five sub-themes that are: Critique and Competition, “Shift in Thinking” and “Eye-Opening Experiences”, Joy in Accommodation, Accommodating for Inclusion and Belonging and Overwhelmed by Integration.

### Critique and Competition

Being on the floor is central to being critiqued. One participant said: *“so for me it’s you gotta be there, you gotta have an instructor there critiquing you and helping you, otherwise at that point you might as well just sell a black belt and charge people 5000 bucks and give them a black belt and I am not into that.”* Another participant stated that senior belts are respected for being on the floor and training alongside junior belts. I was interested in the term ‘*armchair athlete*,’ a term used for instructors who are no longer on the floor, but still are involved. Although the armchair athletes were not necessarily training, there was still respect owed to them due to their longstanding contribution or training in times past. There were also several participants who described their many injuries over the years, and various acquired disabilities along with the limitations of the aging body. One participant explained:

*They are on the floor, they are not armchair athletes, and sitting there, “do this, do that,” they are on the floor physically participating and they talk about how it adapts with age, and really welcoming to everyone, right, everyone is welcome on the floor, and everyone gets on the floor, and I think, teach what you know, but be able to do it, right so there is an authenticity to it, that you see when they are teaching and they are on the floor and asking opinions and you know,*

*what would you do differently? And you know the constant, we are always looking to develop, and you never stop growing.*

In the same sentiment, another participant stated, *“I am definitely not an instructor that just stands in the front and counts numbers while everybody else is doing stuff, I am beside them on the floor all the time.”* The floor is where work ethic is practiced, and everything you have *“goes on the floor.”* Participants also described instances when performing in front of others, be it during class or at gradings and tournaments, was a source of stress, the kind of stress that makes or breaks you. As challenging as it may be, participants explained how critique is what provides opportunities for growth, providing students opportunities to develop character traits like humility, perseverance, commitment and integrity, which all contribute to lifelong self-mastery. Participants also explained how being critiqued and performing also fosters a sense of belonging for both the sensei and the student because sensei have invested time and energy into a student and the student sees progress and gains confidence. Trust and a bond are formed between the sensei and student during these vulnerable interactions. Participants stated that being critiqued is important for growth at all levels from white belts to senior ranking black belts. Instructors critique their students and critique each other. The most senior ranking instructors, who were Sensei Shintani’s students, train together to critique each other and train with other karate organizations for continuous growth. One participant described:

*I have seen this in a lot of different organizations, the head instructors out there teaching something and telling, oh you shouldn’t be doing this and that, but that is what they are doing, they’re not aware they are doing it, so a lot of the high ranking students will have classes you know maybe four or five of us together and we will critique each other, we will work on*

*certain things, and say if we are five people four of us will watch the one and critique that person, than another person does it, and critiques another person and then I'll do it and they will critique me.*

Another participant explained:

*A lot of people don't like performing in front of other people, you know, they'll perform when they have it, but when they're trying to get it and it's not working for them they don't like people watching and I think that is a big step in developing your self in character, is being able to fail in-front of other people and keep striving, you know that is the whole point of karate, you know it's not about just performing really good in-front of everybody, that might be sport karate or whatever, but when you're working on character and other things and who you want to be and all that you should not be afraid to fail in-front of other people, that is the whole point of working, you come to the dojo you don't know karate, of course you are going to fail you don't know how to kick properly, but you are there and you are not afraid to do it in-front of other people.*

Competition provides an opportunity for students to test themselves against an opponent.

During the interviews one of the questions inquired about how the participant would react knowing they were competing against a student who had a disability. Most participants responded and agreed that:

*If someone has put them in my category then they're there for a reason and I would compete like I would compete with anyone else, and I have. So kata for sure, I have been in the same category with a few, I have never done kumite,<sup>14</sup> at least nothing physically that I have seen whether there was hidden disability in there that I didn't recognize I don't know but definitely not for kumite, but in kata I have competed, no I don't have a problem with that, they are there for a reason they are*

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<sup>14</sup> Kumite means sparring.

*testing themselves, and you know that's why we are there.*

Another participant described an experience when they were competing at a tournament when they realized that the competitor was not going to “take [their] head off,” so they lightened their strategy. They explained:

*So I have gone into competition with people who, how do you put it, their ability and my ability were very different, in a kumite situation, and you know within the first two exchanges of what it is going to look like, and without dealing it down, I changed my approach in terms of how, cause you don't want to obliterate someone, then they're going to have a negative experience. I really don't care if I win or lose personally, but if I have an opportunity to build someone up, and test them but test them in a fair way, then I am going to take that and if that means I lose, then ok, I am ok with that. So I have had that situation, and clearly their ability to compete wasn't where I was, you know and I have heard don't dial it down, you know what if you go in and you attack that individual like you would some one on the street say, in a competition sense, they're going to have a negative experience they're not going to come back and you have lost that opportunity. That's not what I think our federation is about.*

Another participant explained their opinion about sparring with a competitor who is disability-identified, and shares the same sentiment. They explained:

*Positive experience with as much information and feedback, cause if they are courageous enough to come into that division, the regular division and compete against me then they are deserving of the respect to be in that division and think of it that way, right, so if that means that they lose at this point in time that's great but it doesn't mean they can't get better and that you can't give them feedback to challenge and to give them better skills.*

When pondering the concept of disability, inclusion and competition, participants seemed to experience some dissonance and contemplation. There was a bit of an ‘Aha’ moment when they realized how the token is so easily passed off as being inclusive. Participants across SWKKF expressed that the competition has to be meaningful. In one participant's words, in essence you “*just compare them to where they were when they started and where they are now.*” These were the responses that sensei provided on this concept of meaningful competition:

*It comes down to being meaningful and intentional in what they will achieve, because then it's not a gimme, no person with a disability wants a gimme, and especially cognitively impaired people, but especially if you have persons with cerebral palsy or wheel chair or visual impaired, they do not accept tokens of pity, let's call it for lack of a better word. You will drive people away with that, it needs to be meaningful it needs to be appropriate. There is nothing worse than giving tokens.*

*Meaningful is first when it comes to kumite, I think again it needs to be meaningful but it needs to be honest, so if you are competing a black belt vs a black belt and one person is just that much better than that person gets a better score that's the way it is, and I think it needs to be honest as well, so a person with a disability, if they are going and they just, their quality is not as good as the quality of the other kata it needs to be represented, you know while based solely on effort. It needs to be based on the technical aspects as well because otherwise it's not meaningful.*

Another example of a participant who expressed dissonance when contemplating inclusive divisions stated that, “*you would have to really assess I think, and I think the best is if you can have a division with special needs and put them in that way and then you are judging them on the same level of competence I guess.*” Another participant also expressed dissonance, stating, “*we have to train our judges to be able to take that into account, there are students coming in to*

*compete they have this disability, I will judge that student on what they can do, not what my expectation of what the person trying should be able to do.”* And another participant while contemplating the concept of an authentic competition explained, *“I think it is just from experience, however if you have someone with autism and again you are judged by performance you know you can’t give them the extra score just cause they have autism but you give score for performing the best of their ability”*. Participants also expressed concern that there are very little meaningful divisions for students with atypical movement patters to compete in because the traditional divisions are meant to demonstrate aesthetic qualities based on an ableist ideologies (i.e., kata and kumite divisions). On the other hand one participant described the flag kumite program that was developed by the members of the organization to support disability identified students’ participation in the kumite divisions in competitions. They stated that, *“even just the vests that we have developed for people to do kumite in a fun way, without it being the full impact of kumite”* affords students the opportunity to safely practice in a competition that is challenging for them and is an authentic division. One participant stated that the para-competitors *“were just tickled pink”* to be part of the community. While another stated that they recalled seeing a group of para-competitors at their first tournament. The participant stated:

*To see that group sitting in the stands watching, cause before the tournament everybody is out on the floor practicing their katas and trying to get rid of the environmental aspects, getting rid of their nerves, and I watched this group sitting together and they are watching all these other people warming up and doing their katas and their faces were like wow we are here, but not a scary wow, but a wow, this is us too, like we are part of this.*

“Shift in Thinking” and “Eye-Opening Experiences”

Participants described a ‘*shift*’ in thinking or an ‘*eye opening*’ experience when they were on the floor with a stereotypically disabled-bodied student. One participant described an experience when they had trained with a student who had no legs. The experience had caused a shift in their thinking, they explained:

*One of my first experiences with disability was a person that came into our dojo with a wheel chair, and this person did not have any ambulatory ability, because he was missing both limbs, both legs, and so that was a number of years ago, but my first impression was Whaaaat! How’s this guy going to do karate right. But absolutely that’s when you had to shift your thinking and go how does this person still defend themselves, how do they throw their punches and the different techniques, still do a kata and all those kinds of things, right. So I think that’s the one that probably was my first real experience that really shifted my thinking.*

Another participant reflected on an experience they had after teaching students with ASD and how they knew nothing, they explained:

*We did some volunteer stuff for some autism group, where they wanted their students to come in and do a little bit of karate with us and I had a few instructors there, and the one instructor had no knowledge, and he was trying to show someone something, when he told that person no no not like that, the kid freaked out, because NO is a key word that triggers him right, so you had to be, we knew nothing about this so all of a sudden this kid freaks out yelling, running around the gym and one of the instructors were there, the leader for the autism and they took him to another room and sort of settled him down and then brought him back in, and we were informed, ya be careful, don’t say NO to him, or whatever, correction was, how to correct was a major thing*

*for that kid, so, and those are the things that like I say, we don't know these things, so we need to get educated.*

Participants stated that their eyes have been opened and that their lack of exposure to disabilities is the reason for this. They explained:

*I have to be honest with you because I didn't have much exposure to it at the start and when you came to the dojo, and then I saw some, and I reflected back to 20 years ago when we had people with autism and we didn't know anything about it and they start talking when your talking and jumps in and talks while you try and talk you know, and back then, "hey, No!" you start giving them heck and that, but it was a negative reinforcement or something, and we just didn't know or understand it, we didn't have that knowledge...I was uncomfortable at times when I saw some of these kids running around and you know doing stuff, you know and I thought, just take that little kid and shake him, you know I didn't know enough about autism, or any other special needs, that was what the reaction was, that was just my exposure to it at the time, and having [our special needs class] there has really opened up our eyes.*

Another participant also used similar phrasing. They explained:

*We even had an expert person in that area do a class to learn a little bit more about special needs students and how they think, cause it is not just teaching them karate anymore, you have to have a knowledge of how they are, what they are thinking, what makes them function to be able to be on the floor to learn karate from me, so I was able to experience that plus watching them in the tournament, watching them working out, all of those things, it just opened my eyes probably over the last ten years.*

Another participant stated, *"I had the opportunity to teach several individuals who were Downs, and that was an eye opening experience for me, you know would I have the ability to do that all*

*the time, I don't know*". Participants described that being able to accept atypical behaviour in class (such as talking, and moving around) is a shift in thinking and a move away from the stereotype of what a karate student should look like, although not easy to accept for the old-school sensei, was seen as positive, as one participant sees many sensei "*move past that deficiency model and work on the strengths and what the people can do,*" rather than what the stereotypical student should be able to do. Another participant explained how over the last ten years the para-karate has opened a whole new world in the dojo stating:

*My experiences with disability over the last couple years is just being involved with the para karate, we have just opened up a whole new world in our dojo that wasn't existing prior to a few years ago, people that are coming in that are going to learn this martial art in a different way and with different outcomes, and that's ok. Part of karate is that everybody does the perfect punch and it is exactly done exactly this way and this is now changing it around to no, there is a lot more than just this physical perfect punch in karate.*

### Joy in Accommodation

Participants described how they get a kick out of their students, and joy from watching them achieve success and attain small accomplishments and they stated that over time small accomplishments add up to the character that affords greater possibilities in life and for the community. And this is what seemed to keep them going. One participant explained:

*As much as sometimes, the kid I worked was into it, he liked it, I don't know if it was the physical or the social side, or both, just being in a class, and a lot of the kids were half his size, he really enjoyed it, now this, what I am trying to get at is, as much as sometimes they are not into it, and you see them with little kids and you struggle with it, and you go why are these people even here,*

*and then something, one thing happens, you know they finish their kata or they get a belt, or all of a sudden, oh God why are they here again, all of a sudden that doesn't matter, because they got that smile, or you know that look in their eye, that's all you need, you know, and in really up to a certain degree, that's all they need as a student is that little bit of validation, like I said whether it's a kata, or you know whether it is, you know I just sunk a mawashi geri into sensei's ribs, and they get that...that was fun, even if they don't do anything else.*

Another participant described how their student had a great time when his support worker joined him on the floor. They explained:

*We actually got the social worker to come and do karate with us, the one was really into it and then the next one there was another one that, nah, she would just sit in the corner and looked at her phone, but the one said, I want to do this, come on, my student was killing himself laughing, because she was having problems with some of the stuff, and you know he'd been doing it for a while, you would see his little smirk come up on his face.*

And another participant described a sense of joy when describing their experience training after a long day:

*You know some of the, the funniest things I have had happen to me, or not happen to me, that made me chuckle is walking in the karate club, having a bad day for what ever reason and one of the little tiny kids does something stupid, they laugh and you start laughing, and you know that makes your day and makes their day and you have an interaction between you and that kid that might have did something stupid and whether that kid is able or challenged it's the same thing.*

Another participant also explained how the students brighten up their day:

*It is a little more enlightening, cause I do private classes, they brighten up the day, with the silly things they do, it takes you out of your head and puts you back into the moment... and*

*when the class is done you have forgotten what it was you were so serious about.*

Participants across the organization described how they embraced their unique students with a zen mentality and flowed with it, adapting as needed. One participant explained how inclusion is “...giving [students] that environment where they can have that same experience, with going to tournaments, competing, coming home with a trophy in their hands and doing the same events that everybody else does.” While another participant said, “you just go with people where they are at.” Participants described a sincere pleasure accommodating unique learners, it seemed a jovial challenge, and an opportunity to be a better sensei and to bring meaning to a dojo. One participant exclaimed:

*We love it to be honest, I think if you could harness their energy they actually bring quite a level of positive to the group because they bring so much life and passion and output you know that aura, and it's sensible in the group and to be honest once you get them going and get them involved and they pick up on the fact that you want them there and that they are allowed to be there and participate and train.*

Participants that seemed to have more exposure and experience with disability-identified students expressed more strongly that character development and harmonious community were more important than performing the proper punch in the proper way. One participant exclaimed that karate, being “taught in a different way and learned in a different way with a different outcome and the same values” was positive for their organization and the community.

Participants also described how karate can be a service to the community above and beyond the limited view that dominated old-school ways of thinking. One participant stated that, “these kids with special needs don't need to learn to fight they need to focus, they need to learn dedication,

*and even if they just learn patience.” Another participant explained, “if [karate] can help them be more flexible, get the blood flowing through their body and be more aware of what their body is doing...it’s a plus”.*

### Accommodating for Inclusion and Belonging

One participant expressed how they accommodated some students by using a spotter. They explained, “...somebody that would model the kata or do the kata beside them, so I call them a spotter there is other words that can be used, you know a partner a training partner, an accommodation partner, I just like it.” Another participant described an instance when adapting the technique so it worked for the student stating “...he doesn’t really have momentum, or um, muscle to turn his body, but because I made him throw his punches hard, his upper body, it swung his body in the direction we wanted it to go, and he was able to get across the floor with that kinda motion”.

One participant explained how “you have to adapt them into the regular class... you have to see the student and what they can do and then make the change that they can work with.”

Another participant explained how they accommodate students, and because they have enough space and assistants to help, they are able to be inclusive to the needs of individuals with unique learning abilities. The participant described:

*So we run 100% inclusive classes so persons with disabilities will come in and depending on if there is some sensory issues and things like that we are very open to accommodations so you know, even one little person she wouldn’t put a gi<sup>15</sup> on for the first couple years of her*

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<sup>15</sup> A ‘gi’ is a karate uniform.

*karate training because she had sensory issues she didn't like the way it felt on her, so that is all good, if we had sensory issues with person with noise sound people you know we will provide a space that is conducive to their learning ability, we have enough brown belts and blacks belts that volunteer and come out to help, to create those little environments for them those little micro environments, so they can work, I will juggle it a bit, the same way I described the class, we start off in our big group and we move into our more technical groups, you know we will try and bring them into the fold you know if they need somebody to kind of provide a visual example, or auditory examples, we will have a partner with them, one of the brown belts, or even one of the blue belts if they want to volunteer, and come and just to be a role model or an encouraging person, and that is all they need, and you know some of them that is all they need*

One participant provided an example of how they adapted to a student's "temperature".

They explained how accommodating is more than the physical requirements of the technique it may also include accommodation of the affective, cognitive and social domains of an environment. The participant described:

*A young woman in her early twenty's, autistic and down syndrome, so we would, when we came in we kinda gauge the temperature of her that day, and ask her which sensei she would like to work with and we would let her pick and we would go from there. She always picked the male instructors, she liked the male instructors better and she had a few favourites, she liked the older male instructors, she didn't like the young boys, the sixteen / seventeen year olds. But she was pretty cute, you know, she had behaviour that was inappropriate, we would call her out on it and that, but yeah she, and sometimes she would only get through fifteen / twenty minutes of a class, and other times she would get through a whole hour of a class, so we kinda worked on her schedule.*

Similarly, a participant described how they learned from experience that the total environment must be taken into consideration. The participant explained:

*When I first started teaching my students a couple years back, like five years ago, with the student that had autism, I didn't know what that was...it was until I realized that, why is he not listening to me, you know why is he squinting, what could it be, what is it, so now we know there are factors, you know the lighting the sounds, you know when there is a fire truck going by it freaks them out, why is that? You know, as we are teaching you know, most people they block that right, we do Kiai's<sup>16</sup> in class they freak out, they never responded to that at first, you know you need to know all these factors, once you know it is easy, I can easily make that person feel more at ease more comfortable to be able to teach that person at the end of the day he'd be learning karate...we take it for granted the environment that we have, the lighting, the sound, the smell, and all of our senses in play even the touch, some of the students can't even be touched.*

Another participant explained that it is not necessary to call out some behaviours such as repetitive talking, “*as long as they are not impacting another person, you know I don't call out that kind of behaviour as oppose to say, somebody who is a little bit more authoritarian, and that it's, unless the behaviour is impacting other people, I just leave it, it just doesn't matter*”.

Participants described how they regularly split their classes to allow plenty of independent practice or small group instruction where they could adapt the technique, the pace or any number of aspects of the training. One participant said, “*you find ways to walk around and can find out what the student can do and what they can't do...and after going through all the basics then [you] would split the class.*” Another participant explained that when it comes to

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<sup>16</sup> A Kiai is the loud noise karate students make at the end of a string technique. Stereotypically sounding like “Hi-ya”.

learning kata they “usually assign an instructor to work with them to learn the kata first and then once they have the basics of it then they can come back in and join the regular class when we do it.” Another participant stated their experiences with inclusion in an inner-city dojo. They stated that they “have had as many as four ADHD people in the class, I always take one, I give one to the blue belt, and two are friends I let them work together and I just stay beside them.” Another participant described their experiences including ADHD students in the dojo and explained that:

*The whole idea is to give them focus, right, I assess them as they come in, I have had students who only have a 15 second ability to focus, and that's ok, for the 15 seconds for the first three weeks I am going to hit that 15 seconds every three minutes, and still takes in the rest of the class still part of the group and before you know it 15 seconds goes to 20 seconds, 20 goes to 25, and I talk about it with them as well, “remember when you first came here and you could not do anything like that and now look at you, right, now you got through your whole kata you had no interruptions, you went from start to finish, do you realize how good that is?” I celebrate those little micro milestones with them, so they always have a positive feedback as opposed to a negative one.*

Participants also discussed how karate changes with age, and injuries often change how karate is practiced. One participant exclaimed, *“I have a student that is you know, just has bad form because of an injury on one leg, a permanent injury. I work on them with how to manage continuing karate with that injury.”* Another participant explained how they accommodated students with injuries, elderly or physical disabilities. They said, *“I have had [students with] physical disabilities, I have had people come in with bad knees, elderly people that want to try to do something to get in shape and you just try to offer them advice on how to do things and you*

*know work to your own limitations type thing like you can't push them, if you push them into that point of pain they are not learning they just want to get off the floor”.*

One participant explained how some students may need to start individually before they move to a group class and how some students always remain in an individual class because they like them better or are more successful with individual lessons. Another participant described this sentiment when explaining how they would approach a new student with a disability. They explained:

*I would really have to sit down with mom, and figure out what they want and get a little bit of a profile together and what is going to suit the needs of that person, some people may want to be in with the crowd/full class, some may say, no that is not going to work right off the bat, maybe I need to learn some techniques first just one on one or a small class with just a couple of people.*

Another participant echoed this in stating that:

*A [student] may want to, yeah I want to be in with the whole class but the learning is too much, so somebody is going to do a one-on-one at the side of the classroom. Yeah we would have to figure out what's going to serve that student the best so they can get the best of their abilities, reach the best of their potential right. And that to me is very environmental.*

Participants also expressed that they are interested in teaching anybody that has an interest in karate and that anyone who “*dedicates themselves*” to karate is valuable and can benefit from it.

### Overwhelmed by Integration

Participants that had old-school values more often reported feeling overwhelmed because they were not able to uphold a quiet and disciplined stereotypical dojo while still being inclusive. Participants reported feeling uncomfortable and awkward and described instances where integrating students was often disruptive to the class. Moreover, students who talked during instruction, showed lack of control over their strength, had difficulty standing still or listening for long periods, or were unmanageable, were 'given a talking to', or a sit down with their parents in some instances. Other participants were ok with providing private or semi-private instruction for the student in order to suit their needs, as long as the space was available, while others felt at risk and would not have a one-on-one class without the parent in attendance due to liability.

One participant explained that before taking on a student with disabilities they would want to make sure they were comfortable with him as a teacher, and that he was comfortable teaching them. Another participant said, *"if someone had severe autism I would definitely not be qualified for that but I would assess them to see if I can deal with it and if I could handle it, teach with the techniques, the little limited techniques I have."* Another participant shared this sentiment when responding to the question, how would you feel if a new client came through your door with a disability, non-verbal, in a motorized chair and had CP? The participant responded by stating that, *"my first reaction is I would be overwhelmed, I would admit to my short comings, I would tell the mother I don't know if I am equipped to be able to do what you are asking or deliver what you are expecting."* One participant explained why they believed that some sensei do not feel qualified and explained that there is *"a bit of hesitation from the instructor's perspective of, am I really qualified to take this on and what happens if I don't succeed, I have committed to a student that may be outside of my own expertise."* Although the

participants expressed their discomfort, most are willing to try it out. Participants stated: *“I would definitely give it a try, there definitely would have to be accommodations made, because you couldn’t put a person or an individual like that into a standard class atmosphere and expect any kind of success, I would suggest we would have to be more one-on-one,”* and *“I would say come on down let’s try it,”* and *“every kid, you know, has there ups and downs, so you know, we are in a day and age where people feel they have to label everything, so we just give them an opportunity”*.

Participants from larger dojos, (larger city dojos or dojos that had several clubs close by) stated that having a larger membership and a lot more support from black belts or kyu belts<sup>17</sup> afforded them the ability to include students with disabilities. In small town dojos in particular, where memberships were smaller, and outside support from other clubs was not available, participants expressed some frustration with having to give up an instructor for one-on-one support because it took away from the other students having the extra support, one participant stated, *“if we had multiple instructors we might be able to you know, but if we have a class of 20 I can’t have my instructors be with one individual.”* One participant also expressed frustration with integration because the student experiencing disability was much too aggressive to partner with other students and they had to always work one-on-one with them. This was particularly a problem in dojos that had no extra instructors to help run classes or help provide support for other students. In another instant, a participant stated that frustration came from the parents and other students who had to continuously stop and wait for the instructor to finish explaining or

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<sup>17</sup> Kyu belts are coloured belts. The kyu belt system goes from light to dark (white, yellow, orange, green, blue, brown, black) Some dojos will also include additional coloured belts or striped belts in-between for kids)

working the technique with the student, which led to subpar teaching for the entire class.

Essentially, the student with the disability was not receiving the proper support, nor were the students in the class. One participant explained how integrating students often included making accommodation for behaviour that is not ordinarily accepted in a dojo further expressing how sensei who are rigid and old-school have a hard time with this because they cling to the old-school tradition of discipline that includes being quiet when you are told. One participant explained:

*Karate in the past has been high discipline, you come in and you know your quiet, you listen you work, so to have someone come in that maybe has to talk out loud, to understand instructions that were just told to them or something like that, that would be a shift in thinking, for some instructors to be able to accept and be able to work with that, I am not saying they couldn't, but I think for some, depending on their exposure. You know diversity and the world. Some haven't been exposed as much as others to be able to shift toward a more diverse perspective with that.*

Another participant described how the dojo they were brought up in was old-school and that the sensei:

*Expects even the youngest students to concentrate and do the best that they can. For a long time they had a lot of difficulty dealing with very young kids, especially when he started to get older, he is getting better, mainly cause some of his grandkids showed up...so he is now learning to deal with kids that have very short attention spans, but he works very hard. We actually had one family quit because they felt [the sensei] was yelling at their kids and thought he, the complained that he was too militaristic.*

Another participant shared an experience integrating students with disabilities and explained that:

*Typically it's more social issues they have challenges maybe concentrating, they have challenges focusing, they may have, there was one student that we had that would just make loud outbursts during class for no obvious reasons and you know it was disruptive right you are trying to teach these kids and then all of a sudden there'd be this outburst from this one young man, with his mom there it tended to mitigate the probability of that.*

Some participants expressed concern for the safety of the class when integrating a student with ADHD, because while they were trying to manage a student who was running around or climbing things while the rest of the group was being neglected. A participant described an experience where they did not know how to handle the student's behaviour, and spoke to the family about the student. They explained:

*We are fair, you know if we find they are being too disruptive, or they're not listening, or they are putting other students at risk, then we will sit them down, and we have had to do that in the past, where they are not, their behaviour is distracting to the other students, so you know how do you deal with that, so we would sit the parents down and we would have a discussion around that, but that's after you have given them an opportunity. The big thing is around safety, I know I have had to pull students out. I like to introduce working with partners early, you know, even as white belts, just simple things, and you just have to be very very watchful, and you know if they cannot, they demonstrate that they are unable to control, then obviously we need to say we don't do that at that class, and those sorts of things, so you adapt.*

Similarly, a participant described when they felt foolish and embarrassed because a student did not listen and sat in the middle of the floor, the participant shared, *"he was disruptive and wasn't listening, and he ended up just sitting in the middle of the floor in the way and just sat there and wouldn't do anything. So we looked at the parents and we looked at the kid and we're like OK,*

*off to the side you go, and he sat there the whole time.”* Another participant shared an experience where he had to have a talk with the parents about not leaving during the class. They stated:

*He would have really good days and other days, and you could just tell in the parents eyes when they would dropping them off, that it was going to be a brutal day and they are looking for their one hour of peace and usually those are the parents that leave. Right, haha, so you know we would have to talk to the parents about, we really need you to stay and we know that this is time, but your son's behaviour can be disruptive, and you know obviously we are in a class where we are teaching them to be physical, and if they can't control themselves then we have to step in and control it and we need you to be here because we don't want to put ourselves in a situation where you know we are putting ourselves at risk.*

Participants also felt that integrating students into a general class was challenging. One participant explained, *“the challenge you run into right now when you are running a regular class plus having all these different uh, inside of one gym you're breaking into groups you're doing your best, it's keeping everybody's attention you know”*. Similarly, another participant felt integrating is easy enough when you have one or two students, however, if they were to have a *“dedicated class for accessibility and then all of a sudden we get overwhelmed with ten people, I do not have the means right now to handle a class of ten people.”*

Communication was a common issue across the organization, participants commented on how they were not sure of the words to use, and how they did not want to offend anybody. One participant stated, *“do I say challenged do I say disabled?”* and another stated, *“Yeah because it's an old word, it has a stigma, because then you are special instead of being like everyone else, all karate, all person karate, I don't know, Karate for ...I don't know, I have to think on that...”*

*diversity... I mean I tend to go with that” and still another said, “I don’t think anybody means to offend anybody by the terms that they use, you know, it is just a term that they were brought up knowing who it meant, but sometimes the term may be insulting in some way but it was never meant to be said that way.” One participant opted for the term “divers-ability” rather than disability because “...everybody is on the spectrum of diverse-ability, right... Yeah, but I like diverse-ability, cause I think that everybody has there, their different levels, there should be no hierarchy there is just differences, and differences are ok!”*

Not only were participants unsure of the language to use to avoid being offensive, they also recognized that communicating with students was also something that they wanted to learn more about. One participant suggested that *“the first thing I need to know more is how to communicate with that person, whether it is sound, smell, or whatever;”* and another participant said that sensei have to find terms to use in their marketing so that disability identified populations will know that there are programs for them. They explained:

*I also think that it has to be a little bit up front, because other wise if you say inclusive the lay person is not going to know what that means, like if you are only targeting, person with disability and you say inclusive than they are going to get it, but if you are not in that field or that little world spectrum you know then you are not going to know, then its difficult, but I think there is a fine line between trying to avoid a word but also having like transparent conversations type thing right, so that you are making sure that everyone is on the same page. So I think you know inclusive karate for persons with disability, then you are providing a term the word inclusive and you are giving the educational piece.*

Some participants felt uncomfortable because they felt they needed more education. One participant explained how most karate practitioners become sensei because they are passionate about it and because of that they may not have the “*education piece.*” And another participant explained how they had no means of offering a class for someone in a wheelchair, stating that they did not have enough education. The participant explained “*perhaps it’s a course, perhaps it’s a knowledge of how to communicate, how to teach, you have to have special skills and knowledge to teach the special needs class.*” Another participant described when they first encountered a student with autism and didn’t know what it was, they stated that, “[*sensei*] *need to be educated enough to be able to teach these people, these circumstances, you have to know more, it would be the same thing, you have to know more about kids before we can be able to teach them.*” Another participant stated that it is important to have someone who is trained in the field to provide guidance because “*you could be screwing up somebody bad because you don’t understand how this person learns and you’re making it worse for them you know. So it’s important to have some kind of knowledge of how to teach someone with special needs what system they need you know, because it changes per person.*” This sentiment can be understood by comparing the following two statements from participants who explain how they handled students who were too aggressive. In the first example the participant explained:

*I have had over the years instances where I have to call the one whose challenged he was hitting people too hard and then I had to tell him, I said you know you are going to start getting them back if you keep it up and he thought that I was funny until he did start getting them back, and he was like whoo, and I was like you’re getting what you asked for buddy.*

In the second example, the participant explained a different way of handling an aggressive student and stated that, *“there are very few that, and usually they have a challenge of some type, that never really learned [control], and unfortunately that gentlemen never really learned that, it became, it came to a point, like I said, that I was the only one that was able to work with him.”* In the first instance, the participant did not know how to handle it and provided negative reinforcement, by giving the student *“what [he] asked for,”* while the other seemed to understand that control was something the student did not *“ever really learn”* and opted to partner himself with the student cause he was able to handle the harder contact, and the student was still able to participate in the activities without being ostracized for something that he had little control over.

### **Unresolved Tensions: Maintaining Shintani's Values**

Unresolved Tensions: Maintaining Shintani's Values has three sub-themes that include Affordability Versus Value, Volunteerism and Time Constraints, and Traditional and Old School Values Versus commercialized McDojos.

#### Affordability Versus Value

Participants unanimously described their philosophies about how the cost of programming will never be an issue for students who are dedicated and committed to their training and the organization. The apple does not fall far from the tree, to quote the modern-day expression, because as described in the previous sections, sensei Shintani was *“not a business man,”* lived modestly and money never stood between his relationship with a dedicated student.

A participant recalled early in his training when they had to stop because their family couldn't afford it and Shintani allowed them to continue to train as long as they did not miss regular classes. This was considered the "upbringing" of the senior instructors, as one participant described, "*one of our philosophies and values that we have within our organization is affordability and accessibility. You know if you have a learning disability, or any, if you are a person with a disability or not, if you are a low-income person and you want to participate in karate, we will find a way.*" Another participant stated that they "*wanted it to be accessible to everyone and provide an opportunity for everyone.*" While another participant stated that when they first started, they didn't have much money and the "*attraction of it as well, these people are not just bringing me in so they can take my money, they actually want me here.*" This value was shared across the organization, from large city dojos to small town dojos. Another participant described this sentiment by saying "*at the end of the day I just want people training, so a lot of people in my program, I will fund them coming in and don't charge so that they can actually learn karate,*" and another said, "*I have had situations where students have come in and you know, the parents couldn't really afford the monthly dues, so I would make an accommodation for that,*" and still another participant explained how they have often made accommodations for students allowing them to register for a tournament at no cost and they concluded by saying that "*we don't deny people that experience simply because of a financial barrier.*" The positive that comes from low cost is that there is a family-oriented feeling, a feeling that the student is valued as a member of the organization, not as a stream of revenue, and with that there is a familial obligation to volunteer their time and assist with classes, or other aspects within the organization. Participants explained that individuals usually will "*give back in other ways,*" they may run

classes, volunteer to help during events or provide alternative support such as website development or administrative support. Another participant expressed their compassion stating that, *“I think that it is a big problem in our city and it’s a problem in rural areas and things, it’s almost a stigma because their families can’t afford it. They don’t want to tell the instructor that, especially in a rural area. You don’t need to know my family’s financial status, it’s embarrassing or they feel ashamed from it,”* as does another stating that, *“if any child missed out on the opportunity to take karate cause I was charging too much I would feel bad about that.”* This suggests that it is not simply about subsidizing students, it is about keeping the cost of programs affordable, sometimes too affordable according to some participants. I noticed an overall pattern of dissonance with respect to keeping karate affordable while also portraying the quality of instruction that was available. A participant expressed this when stating that:

*The perception of the value of what you are getting for your money is there as well... I went out there and taught clinics, and the one year, it was the same mindset out there, they are not in it to make a whole lot of money they are there to put on an event, not to lose money is virtually what it boiled down to, but one of the candidates had a coffee can there and it was a toonie donation, and I looked at that and I thought for the quality of the instruction that they were getting. And I come back and there was an advertisement for the Abernathy clinics<sup>18</sup> in this area, and they were 100 dollars for the weekend and people were clamouring to pay that 100 bucks and here we were... We devalued our self that we are looking at toonie donations, and that is still an ongoing joke today...we put that label on our self so that is what we are worth, we are worth a toonie donation, if you don’t want to donate you don’t have to but that is all we are worth is a toonie max, and that to me it, we undermine our quality and we undermine our value, and the*

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<sup>18</sup> Ian Abernathy is a karate instructor from the United Kingdom who is well known because of social media promotion.

*perception from the membership a lot of the new members is they are not getting anything for their money, it's only two bucks what this guy's worth.*

Another example was described when a parent inquired about the program costs. The participant explained:

*I think people equate the quality of the instruction to the cost of dues and registration, I had one mother come to me quite a few years ago, there was taekwondo in the area, and she wasn't happy with it for whatever reason, it was expensive and all this stuff, and I think I was a godan at the time, so she asked me how much are your classes and then we were I think 20 dollars a month or whatever, not much in registration, I think we were around the same then 25 bucks a year, and she looked at me and she goes, well how much are your gradings, and our gradings were ten dollars, and she said well what kind of a club is this? I said what do you mean? She said, she rapped off of what she was paying at the other place and I said well I do this voluntarily, I am not in it to make money, I have a job, this is my hobby to be honest with you, she said, what rank are you? I said, I am a fifth degree black belt and she said, hmmph, I'll get back to you. And one of my other black belts were standing there and they left and I said, we are never going to see them again, and he said why do you say that, and I said cause we are not charging enough, and she doesn't think we are worth anything because we are not charging enough and sure enough they never come back.*

One participant explained how a “*fancy dojo and fancy gis and fancy equipment doesn't necessarily mean that the instructors themselves, have the quality that you or I would want to train under.*” While another stated that it would be “*weird*” to try and make money from karate since they are not-for-profit, stating that they are “*not in it to make money.*” Although participants agree that the organization has high quality black belts with high quality instruction, they also stated that:

*It's hard to rent in our, well in our area, because there is not a lot out there that we can afford to rent because we are a non-profit organization, number one, um but we usually end up finding somethings but it is not always the ideal place that we would want, for example, having it fully accessible things like that, if we are looking at older buildings they are the ones that tend to be cheaper in rent right, and yea we don't always get exactly what we want but it still has to serve the needs of the community that we are bringing in, um we talk about buying so many times, number one you have to have enough down payment, we are non profit, so and that's the beauty of being non profit is our student registration and our cost our monthly costs for people to come to classes is low, so we are trying to make it's accessible financially to everyone. And we even have some people come in they start and then they got layed off and somethings happen and on the side their instructor said don't worry about it, when you get your job you can start paying dues again, and so that part is wonderful about it, but the downfall is we don't have that excess money just sitting there and building up that we could put a down payment on a building I think part of us would Looove to have our own building that we could just do and create that environment exactly the way we wanted it but yeah financially you have to be able to keep up with all of the bills to be able to maintain it right, i.e., when it needs a new roof.*

In this regard, participants suggested that there is a struggle to keep the value of affordability while also struggling to keep the bills paid. One participant stated that:

*As much as it's a scramble to, and I really don't envy [the top administrators] at all, trying to keep this all together, you know they are scrambling to one, still maintain dollar values, but they are scrambling to maintain their population, not that they are the only ones having a problem I am sure everybody is having a problem, but the, what they have brought out, the breadth and the width of it is pretty amazing, it is all on volunteerism.*

### Volunteerism and Time Constraints

Participants unanimously expressed the concept that they are not in it to make money, for example, one participant stated, *“I do this voluntarily, I am not in it to make money, I have a job, this is my hobby,”* another stated, *“it's not about making money, it's just enough just to cover our costs.”* One participant suggested there is natural progression for some instructors to want to teach once they develop the skills. The participant explained:

*That's part of why you wanted to become a black belt, for a number of people, not everybody, there was lot's that became black belt and they just keep working out, but some really wanted to carry on and teach and yeah that's how they started they either got the basement of the church, or a gym in a school, and they got it once a week and yeah, that's where they taught.*

Teaching for the sake of giving back was commonly expressed by participants. One participant stated that, *“the instructors that are involved are not making any money, none of the money goes into their pocket at all, they are there out of the passion and wanting to teach, they gotta want to be there.”* Another explained that teaching provided *“opportunities to help people”* and that it has kept them *“actively engaged in community.”* One participant explained how their *“payment is the gratitude from helping others”* and recalled a student they had stating, *“you watch a kid that goes from poverty and living on the street to going to college and becoming a lawyer, you know, it is a pretty amazing feeling.”* While still another participant said that they are in it to *“make sure that [Shintani's] karate, or his philosophy and karate, stays pure and the organization stays true to those thoughts”*.

Since the costs are kept low, instructors across the organization begin to volunteer as a way to give back. Participants stated that, “*everybody helps in there own way to keep the dojo going, we used to have a schedule for everybody to clean the dojo at certain times, like I say, help run classes, the tournaments, sometimes we have inter-club tournaments, we just want to have certain things going on there so we ask for help for that.*” The organization is all run primarily on volunteerism, and this is a necessary component to assuring that the instructors “*want to be there,*” however this is not without its pitfalls, and is exceptionally limiting for promoting accessible services. For example, when inquiring about the feasibility of offering a specialized class, one participant responded by stating that, “*to be perfectly honest, I just don’t have the time to create more opportunities with people, more classes*” and, “*so for me, I am going ok, let’s share this, the leadership of this opportunity for example, because I don’t have the time, I don’t have the energy to create a class for persons with visual impairments, now that said, I just don’t have the time or the effort, to be perfectly honest, but I would love to, if somebody set it all up for me I would go and teach it.*” While another participant responded similarly by stating, “*you know, commitment in terms of how much time are we putting in, versus how much time do we have.*” There appears to be a lack of time for administering and organizing on top of a lack of time for creating more opportunities. Burnout was also mentioned with one participant stating “*I am just a bit exhausted from that kind of stuff.*” This response was regarding the struggle to continuously push accessibility. Another participant stated that they were burnt out from running four classes a week after one of their head instructors stepped back, and often would have to cover classes when other instructors could not make it.

Additionally, participants mentioned that the organization across all levels requires a lot of help and “*you tend to get pulled into all kinds of other stuff.*” One participant stated that they are mindful of how much time they were giving out because:

*If you give everybody your time they will take all of your time, so I have to really, self preserve my own stuff right? Even at the macro level with the federation, I have to say no sometimes, I'm sorry I can't help you with that, I have my own personal life to take care of, yeah, cause they will, now I am already teaching four days a week, and I am still maintaining a full-time job, I am maintaining a secondary job and I am teaching karate four nights a week already”.*

Several participants discussed being burnt out from teaching too many classes or having to do administrative tasks when they were typically not interested or “*good at*” social media, website maintenance, virtual training or typical business administrative duties such as book keeping, scheduling, communicating with students, keeping up with membership fees and so forth. Some dojos are small businesses, but for the most part they are not-for-profit and the instructors themselves are volunteers within their own club. One participant, who has been teaching karate for almost half a century, said that it is necessary to take a “*break sometimes, you need somebody else for a week to take that class for you, or anytime that you don't feel well that you can have someone just take that class, you can call and say can you run that class tonight cause I am not feeling well tonight, or I just need a break tonight.*” Another participant agreed and exclaimed, “*it was Tuesday, Thursday and then someone would call in sick and I would have to do Monday, Tuesday Thursday, so it was getting much, so it is great when you can share the load.*” With a similar sentiment, another participant exclaimed, “*so I am thinking to myself, I*

*think I am going to get stuck there”* when describing a scenario where a dojo nearby needed a sensei to take it over.

### Traditional and Old School Values Versus Commercialized ‘McDojos’

Participants described how karate-do in the traditional sense is developed through persevering through a series of tasks that are physically demanding but require spiritual heartiness. This can only take place over time, there is no fast tracking the path, it must be travelled. There seems to be less of a personal and relational connection when the membership is connected to the wallet. When money is taken out of the equation, an authentic and mutual partnership is created, having a sensei is just as special as having a student. The concept of a McDojo is tied to the idea of money, and as mentioned in the previous section, having money does create greater opportunity for accessible programs (i.e., the possibility of renting accessible spaces or paying expert instructors for services and so forth). With respect to the McDojo, participants agree that being called a McDojo is not a good thing, as one participant exclaimed, *“we are not a McDojo.”* The fast-food analogy infers fast karate that is *“watered down”* as stated by more than one participant, and a less authentic version of any traditional style. A McDojo, hypothetically, would be in the practice of fast-tracking black belts, high-cost programming, billing and automatic bank with-drawals. Participants unanimously disassociated with this business practice. One participant stated that when someone that is not trained in the traditional ways *“just comes in and teaches randomly, they are not teaching the spiritual part which I think is essential, I think that is the main part of who we are and why we are the way we are.”* Participants exclaimed that McDojo’s do not afford quality training in the sense that

authentic repetition and time is required to develop the self, along with attributes such as discipline, humility, respect, perseverance or kindness. Less time is needed to train the hand; the McDojo is looked at as being incomplete in its training methods, although some participants stated that it may be good for certain people, who may want exercise or to do something with their family for the short term, it was not highly valued as providing an authentic path to self-development. One participant explained that:

*There is always that concern, we are doing a grading, and we charge for the grading, is that so I can pay my rent and put food on the table or am I truly grading the student, that's where you get these black belts at ten, some of these styles and I have seen it and it just drives me nuts, cause of course my kids are growing up and they're an orange belt and they are squaring off with these kids that have a black belt and they cream them and it's like, ha.*

Moreover, the SWKKF is affiliated with other karate organizations and experts in the discipline, which one participant explained is another attribute that sets the organization apart from a McDojo. One participant stated:

*We are not just a Mc Dojo, the senate has worked towards that by getting us associated with these guys that are the big boys, you know the Canada's Karate Association, Japan Karate Association, you know earlier we talked about being affiliated with Super Foot, all those things makes this a better organization, you know passports, that's unique, doing the virtual across Canada, it's so unique, that's really what makes us different then some little McDojo whether it's a four or five club group or a single group, that's really the difference.*

Considering that no sensei would appreciate being called a McDojo there is still some complexity and grey area between a McDojo and being commercial. Being commercialized and being a McDojo is not the same thing, although commercialization and McDojo's both tie

students to wallet and tend to be “watered down” according to participants. Sport karate can be highly commercialized and produce skilled athletes but practice a limited number of techniques that will provide them with advantages over their opponent. They also make no attempt to be traditional karate, they are simply involved in sport. McDojo’s attempt to portray the qualities of traditional karate, the skills, the philosophy and all, in order to motivate customers to pay more money, they also provide a service with an end product (a black belt) if a student progresses too slowly they will still be pushed through the ranks in order to keep them paying and motivated, thus it is watered down.

There was also complexity around the attributes of old-school, traditional and commercial. One sensei explained the difference by stating that:

*It also goes back to the roots of our club being more traditional or old-school, you know, you see these guys, taekwondo guys doing, you know the vertical 360s, breaking boards ten feet in the air and you know you listen to [my] sensei, yeah you step into him and you drop him to the ground and you start pounding him, so as a sport, then that’s the americanization, how far, can we make it look pretty, can we make it look pretty to the masses, can we make it, yeah basically more acceptable to the masses, but then you go back to what I think our wado is, where it’s not, we haven’t been, as much as my club is probably more old school then a lot of clubs, the federation is still pretty old school.*

Sometimes the words were used interchangeably but seemed to imply different meanings. Participants stated that some instructors are too old-school and may not have the will to shift their thinking towards more accessible services. One participant also stated that students have quit because the style of teaching was too ‘militaristic.’ They described the old-school mentality as being rigid, with little positive reinforcement, and a prevalence of negative reinforcement.

They also stated that the technical and skill-based aspects are most important with an emphasis on practical application, self-defense, physical training and hard contact. A participant described how one old-school sensei would lose track of time and give no breaks to the students during class. Another participant described how the old style was about yelling at the student, and following orders, stating that students do not want to come to karate to get yelled at, they already deal with so much negativity all day long and reinforcing calmness is more beneficial for students. One participant explained how they practice traditional karate which is not the same as old-school karate, stating that if they followed the old-school way their classes would have no students.

On the contrary, old-school training was not always seen as negative, often participants described old-school as if it was a badge of honour. One participant explained how their sensei was hard because he cared. They said, *“my sensei is old-school, if he says you did a good job, that means you’re doing a really, really good job, and he will correct you if you are doing wrong, again, he doesn’t correct you to pick on you, he corrects you cause he cares about what you are doing.”* There was also an overall essence from some sensei that karate was *“unfortunately too touchy feely.”* The participant explained:

*Discipline, respect, contact.... [my] sensei always taught us as much as a kid sometimes don’t like it, cause they are brought up to be touchy feely, to make contact, I know even doing two-step<sup>19</sup>, that if I am standing across from sensei even if he is explaining something I best be ready, I have to be ready to get hit, whether it’s with gloves, bare knuckles or his feet, I am going to get hit, and he’s not pulling anything, we went out and bought special protective head gear for*

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<sup>19</sup> Two-step is partner sparring drills, where there is an attacker who delivers an attack and a defender who responds with a set counter attack.

*not only, for weapons but also for boxing, to protect the kids, we have got gloves obviously, but the one thing that has always been a major threat up until the pandemic that's gone through our club is it's very physical.*

Another participant stated that working on things that have applicability in the real world was important. They explained, *“for me I really like working the realism, and it's practical right, cause the last thing I want to teach is something that is not going to work right, if you do have to defend yourself and take away the sport side of it”*.

In terms of finding a balance between old-school and accessibility sensei stated that, *“if [the] curriculum is old-school and you gotta be disciplined, you gotta be, think of the army to exaggerate, you know, the military, whatever it takes, you have to follow certain rules and you do as I say, and follow this particular class, if that was the old-school, my class would be totally limited.”* Similarly, one participant explained that:

*Some instructors are old-school, if I can put it that way, where you know they have that stereotype image of what a karate student is, and what they better bring to the floor, to be a real karate student, and maybe don't shift their thinking to know that they need to be more flexible to accommodate different people's needs to still get a valuable outcome for that student in the end, even behaviourally, you know karate in the past has been high discipline, you come in and you know you're quiet, you listen, you work. So to have someone come in that maybe has to talk out loud, to understand instructions that were just told to them or something like that, that would be a shift in thinking, for some instructors to be able to accept and be able to work with that, I am not saying they couldn't, but I think for some, depending on their exposure, you know, diversity and the world, some have not been exposed as much as others to be able to shift toward a more diverse perspective.*

Regarding sustainability, participants explained how maintaining a dojo in today's economy is almost impossible, and they also expressed concern for *"sliding towards the commercial side"* while this was echoed by another participant who stated, *"my concern would be that down the road, are we still going to be able to maintain, like I said, I'll be gone by that point, but maybe not, who knows, but I am hoping that we will be able to maintain that and stay away from the commercialization."* One participant explained that:

*Things are getting more expensive, the actually traditional dojo is almost getting to the point where it is non-fundable you cannot do it by yourself you need to partner with communities. I really believe [karate] is a service for the community, it's not just teaching individuals karate, or teaching individuals how to fight, it is about creating better people, and it is a community service.*

Another participant explained that to be a successful full-time dojo bringing in and maintaining a student population is essential for being able to keep the doors open. The participant stated that, *"there are clubs, very few, that is all they do, that could be there main income... I have to have 25 to make my quorum, to be able to survive so I can pay for my bills. If you use the karate for that then you have to be very successful and you have to be in an area you have a lot more people."* Participants also explained that often full-time dojos that operate in larger areas are problematic because the membership contracts (that allow for business equity), and automatic bank with-drawals, or even sending members who cannot keep up with payments to debt collection agencies, tends to foster a hostile learning environment. Traditional dojos promote authentic training, which is essential for building a community of learners, but many traditional karate clubs still view karate as maintaining a disciplined and rigid structure, which limits

accessibility. On the other hand, expensive dojos may have a more accessible facility and may be better able to afford to provide services for students with disabilities, but they may not be able to promote the community and sense of belonging that can be offered in traditional dojos.

### **Literature Driven Deductive Findings**

The literature driven deductive findings include confirmatory examples of the four sensitizing concepts that serve to highlight hegemonic ideals that may hinder organizational change and are: Ableism, Enlightened Ableism, Dis-ableism and Mundane Dis-ableism.

#### Ableism

Sensei described ableist ideals when they described what the perfect student looks like, using phrases like *“he is everything you want in a student”* and *“they were good quality students too.”* Participants described students’ internalized ableism when opting to compete in the unmarked division rather than the division for students with disabilities and when they tried so hard to keep up physically with the unmarked class that they had *“fell on their ass.”* Two participants described how disappointed they were in their own level of training ever since they acquired an injury. One participant even described how they are ashamed and embarrassed to get on the floor because they cannot train like they used to, which exemplifies the concept of internalized ableism. The powerful negative message is that, *if you don’t have close to perfect form, you shouldn’t try.* Another participant described how a student will have to assimilate to the group because there will not be any extra help, the sensei said:

*So there won't be someone with that individual so I would ask whether or not would the mother be joining or is there a support worker, would there be someone there to guide and support, you know, if we had multiple instructors we might be able to you know, but if we have a class of...I can't have my instructors be with one individual, so talk about the reality about how the classes are taught and see if there were some opportunities to get them involved and have them participate without being disruptive.*

Participants also described how students internalize ableism and prefer the able-bodied divisions stating that *“you know we've got several individuals, and we do have para-divisions and stuff now, we are going to get better at some of the para-division and things like that, but sometimes our para-athletes want to compete in the regular divisions and their is nothing wrong with that.”* There is nothing wrong with that, however, it also suggests that it is the superior division. If students with disabilities avoid specialized divisions that can provide meaningful competition, then there will never be enough people entering those divisions to make them meaningful.

Able-ism was also promoted by reinforcing sensitizing concepts that portray the tragedy, and some participants echoed phrases such as teaching students with disabilities takes *“a special person,”* and takes, *“an unbelievable patience,”* which sends the message that people with disabilities are a burden, are hard to deal with and sensei don't want them in their classes. One participant with an acquired disability tended to *“avoid those situations, right wrong or indifferent you don't want to expose yourself to that so you just avoid it,”* while other students with disabilities profoundly internalized ableism and continued to try to live up to the stereotypical karate student. Further, the participant that acquired a disability tended to see

disability as a tragedy, because they saw their own circumstance as tragic and projected that belief onto others who have a disability.

Participants described what the stereotypical karate student should look like, which also tended to promote an internalized ableist view. One participant stated, *“everything that you want out of a student, enthusiastic, willing to try stuff, not worried about what his physical disability or what his abilities are.”* The stereotypical karate student was closely tied to the stereotypical sensei, disciplined, cold, and unaccommodating. One participant explained that some sensei tended to *“cling to the past like that is detrimental to today’s society and development of the art.”* Similarly, another participant explained that *“some instructors are old-school, if I can put it that way, where you know they have that stereotype image of what a karate student is, and what they better bring to the floor, to be a real karate student”*.

Just like there is a stereotypical student and sensei, there is a stereotypical dojo, with a stereotypical class schedule and class structure. This can be limiting because sensei are accustomed to following a structured and standardized lesson. One participant stated that they *“keep a pretty firm handle on the dojo so student’s do not talk while I am talking and stuff and that is for everybody, to the benefit for everybody it is one of the rules when sensei is talking you are not, I acknowledge everybody that is in there especially when I speak to somebody directly.”* Another participant explained that they are *“militant”* and stated, *“nope you’re not allowed to talk in karate, focus on your technique.”* In a typical, non-inclusive dojo the students do as they are told, they do not speak unless spoken to, and they are expected to practice independently. A number of participants also attributed *“silence”* to learning. This is standard and stereotypical in a dojo.

Enlightened ableism

Enlightened ableism is well meaning-ed ableism. When sensei worked with students who experience disabilities they adopted a therapeutic role and attempted to fix the student. One participant described an experience by explaining how they:

*Got him out of the wheelchair onto the mats...although at first he sooner stayed in his wheelchair I let him be at first for the first half but then I made him get out of it and was you know for ten minutes all of a sudden he was so surprised at what he was able to do with out the chair, so that was really good.*

Participants suggested an unmarked starting point for lack of skill for which individuals with disabilities fall short of and thus are considered limitations, where able-bodied students lack of skill is considered a natural, and not a limitation. For example, one participant stated, *“how can I help him with his limitations.”* With respect to teaching karate, all students have limitations, that is why they sought a sensei in the first place. As one participant explained, *“that is whole point of working, you come to the dojo you don’t know karate of course you are going to fail, you don’t know how to kick properly, but you are there, and you are not afraid to do it in front of other people.”*

Tragedy Model

Regarding personal injury, one participant explained how their personal limitations after acquiring a disability that impacted their mobility has shifted their thinking and inspired an

appreciation for students with disabilities. Upon asking the participant how they would respond to a new student with disabilities they explained:

*I have a different compassion now then I have had before, and I will repeat, unless you face these challenges at some time in your life you don't appreciate the full depth of the challenges that that person is facing, and to pass it off to somebody else would be almost like I am going to say irresponsible, because I would take a challenge like that personally and I would want to do everything I could to help that person succeed. And in order to do that you would have to be hands on you wouldn't be able to delegate.*

Further, one participant explained how they can provide services for students with disabilities and it is all thanks to the able-bodied people. They stated it is growing and mostly because, *“instructors took it upon themselves with the compassion of sensei concept they took them in and tried to find a way to teach them and help them the best that they can.* While another participant said that, *“if that person is not fit to be in the group with people, that is different, those people, like any other part of society, they are not able to, we find a place for them, we don't put them away we find what caused that to happen, let's fix it, lets make that person a good person.”* One participant explained a student they had with a disability that would work harder than anyone in class, calling him a *“poor bugger”*.

### Supercrip

Supercrip is a common expression used to attribute superhero status to individuals with a disability who perform everyday activities. It is related to the tragedy model because it is common that non-disabled people have a well-meaning-ed sense that people living with a

disability have a tragic life because, as one participant states, they were “*born with less.*” For example, one participant expressed this common trope when stating that, “*if they can show that kind of discipline and effort then so can we.*” Similarly, several sensei refer to students with disabilities as “*amazing,*” and “*incredible,*” for mere participation. For example, one participant exclaimed, “*I have a senior sensei on the para-team they are absolutely amazing,*” and another participant described a similar example stating, “*you know, some can at a high level which is pretty amazing, we have one lady who has down syndrome and she is totally amazing she has won world championships and she has competed in able body divisions*”.

### Infantilizing

Infantilizing is treating disabled people like perpetual children. When responding to the question of what if you had to compete against someone with a disability, participants’ responses were infantilizing because they presumed that the student with a disability would not have the ability or skill to win. Although some participants acknowledged that the competitor was in the same division as them and must have trained to get there, most presumed a lack of skill. One participant even stated that he would want to help the student and wanted them to “*feel like they’re competing.*” The Participant explained:

*I would give him the dignity I guess, that he is in a category I am going to fight him, and I am going to wait for I mean whenever he comes in, as soon as he comes in to throw me a technique I would do the same as if I am fighting a competitor; I would block and counter, but then I would be a little bit eased, I would kinda work with him, you know so that he... encouraging him to come in, so when he comes in, of course I would be expecting it, and then I would respond with a counter attack so to gain my point, but everyone that I fight has always been at an equal so that*

*they feel that they're competing.*

Another participant stated that there may be “*clear differences because being like way better because of their autism issues.*” This exemplifies the stigma that someone with autism will not be very good. They stated:

*Initially I think, because the spirit of competition and the way I have been raised with competition I would just do what I have to do and I would encourage that person to give it the best that they got and like if there was a clear difference and I am up two points and they are and we are only 30 seconds into the match and myself, I would say give it all you got, I am going to do the best I can in defending against you and at least give them an opportunity to get out there stuff and show what they know, if there is a clear difference because being like way better because of there autism issues then I would still win the match because that is what you are there to do I would still compete that way, but I would try my best to make it the most positive experience for them as I could, not hitting hard or that kinda stuff*

### Dis-ableism

Disable-ism is when students with disabilities are discriminated against even if it is not intended. For example, participants stated that they did not “*have the means*” to provide accessible services for students with disabilities if there were more than the odd student. Participants across the organization did not express outright disable-ism other than expressing that there are some structural barriers that would prevent someone with mobility impairments from participation. For example, one participant stated that they are more than willing to try any student out however there are 25 steps to get down into the dojo which is located in the

basement. Most sensei expressed enthusiasm to offer accessible services, at least on a surface level, and findings suggest mundane disable-ism was more prevalent than outright disable-ism.

### Mundane Dis-ableism

Mundane disable-ism occurs in the mundane events of everyday life that prevent meaningful engagement or participation. There were two prevalent sub-themes in the mundane disable-ism theme; *“Extra costs”* and *“I don’t have time”*.

**Extra costs.** One participant explained that *“when you start looking at that kind of accommodation, you are looking at extra costs”* and another participant stated that, *“one of the barriers for sure would be the funding, there is no question about it.”* Participants also explained that *“because [they] are renting a facility [they] don’t have endless hours, so to do one-on-one lessons is not an option for them, so it’s gotta be part of the regular class, [they] split the class into groups and just work on different things.”* Another participant described how he could integrate a student or two but wouldn’t have the means to offer a class to better serve a specialized class for disabilities. The participant explained, *“you know I think you nailed it, cause when you have the odd student, it is much easier, but when it came to your point of a dedicated class for accessibility and then all of a sudden, we get overwhelmed with ten people, I do not have the means right now to handle a class of ten people”*.

**“I Don’t Have the Time”.** Not having time was a sentiment shared amongst several participants and is tied to extra costs and extra help. As offensive as it may seem, I included this as an aspect of mundane disable-ism because time, just as cost, or funding, is tied to values. In

other words, people put time and energy into things and people they value. With respect to offering a specialized program one participant exclaimed, *“you know commitment in terms of how much time are we putting in, versus how much time do we have. And we don’t advertise, we are open, and if someone walked through the doors, but we don’t go out and seek it, and I think that is because of our own comfort level, could I, yes, would I see myself specializing in that, no, right, it’s not the path I chose”* and another participant stated, *“haha, I got enough going on in my life.”* This was echoed by multiple participants that explained:

*You know I have tasked it to two or three other organizations here and they are leading the way with some of this stuff, so for me I am going ok, let’s share this the leadership of this opportunity for example, because I don’t have the time, I don’t have the energy to create a class for persons with visual impairments, now that said, I just don’t have the time or the effort.*

*I guess then you would be more specific karate for persons with visual impairments, karate for person’s with mobility impairment, and just be more specific, because you know and we have, to be perfectly honest I just don’t have the time to create more opportunities with people, more classes.*

*Now do I think I could be doing more? You know, absolutely, you know it’s just I haven’t done it, that’s a shame on me, but it’s certainly something that we should be doing and it comes down to a lot of it’s time and stuff as well when you’re working a full time job and raising a family and running a non-profit at the same time it kinda, there’s a lot of juggling to be done.*

### **Systems Theory Deductive Findings**

As discussed in chapter two, the purpose of this project was to uncover barriers and facilitators to accessible karate services as they occur in different regions (large city, small city,

town, small town), from different perspectives (from senate members, regional representatives, from dojo instructors) and as they occur across different levels of the system (macro, meso, and micro). This section links barriers and facilitators to securing, expending and conserving energy within and across the systems (Carter, 2011). It includes three sub-themes that participants expressed (in)sufficient means to secure, expend or conserve energy due to factors internal and external to the system. The sub-themes include Regional Disparities, Barriers and Facilitators from Different Points of View, and Barriers and Facilitators Across Different Levels.

### Regional Disparities

The participants included six instructors from small city dojos, four instructors from big city dojos, two instructors from small town dojos, and one instructor from a town dojo. The participants provided insight into the unique barriers and facilitators common to specific regions and so this section was named regional disparities and includes three sub-themes that are:

Volunteerism: Commitment and Competence, Locations and Spaces and Memberships

**Volunteerism: Commitment and Competence.** Volunteerism is the main structural model of the SWKKF, is an internal cultural attribute and one of the prevailing qualities that drives the authentic and family driven community that helps sustain meaningful experiences for its members on the dojo floor. Although volunteerism is a profound attribute that is internal to the organization, participants expressed a number of barriers to attaining, and sustaining help. For example, participants expressed a consistent lack of help. One participant stated that the organization is *“always looking for people to help so when you tend to help, you tend to get pulled into all kinds of other stuff,”* and another participant said that, *“somebody has to do the*

*work to keep things going.*” Another participant explained how in their dojo there was a schedule for cleaning duties and running classes however, after a while most of the work still tended to fall to a select few. A lack of volunteers is a consistent barrier however, with respect to accessibility, even more consistent is the lack of volunteers that have a positive attitude towards working with individuals who experience disability. One participant stated that newer brown belts, or black belts that are younger and more cultured in disability may be better able to support classes for students with disabilities since they have grown up in a more diverse culture and are not as uncomfortable with disability and may have a free-er schedule. Although the barriers occur at the micro level (on the floor and in the dojos), offering solutions at the macro level is likely a good starting point for this barrier. SWKKF can support younger blackbelts by providing some incentives (start-up funding for equipment, paid training in adaptive karate or training in business and promotion), which may encourage more visibility of diverse populations and less discomfort for other dojos and instructors to start offering accessible services as well.

This applies to a business-administrative perspective as well. Sensei that are teaching from the passion of their heart, or because it is a hobby are not interested, and thus, not motivated to run business errands or *“keep up with the times”* in a business sense. One participant said that they *“hate[d] virtual training”* and other participants explained how social media, websites, online promotion and even emailing, in some circumstance, was a challenge and it was not in their interest to keep up with, which was limiting for the growth of the dojo. There is also some complexity with respect to external factors because our social systems (external to the organization and dojos) are making technological advances that impact how dojos promote services, share information and communicate within their dojo and in their

communities. One participant provided an example of an external factor that influenced disorganization, stating that they used to send flyers for their programs to the schools, however this process has since been changed to allow only for online flyer submissions that often do not make it into the households. Therefore the dojo is not organized in a way that supports gaining outside energy for the system to use internally. Although, energy is not sufficient (good teachers do not naturally do good business and with a lack of modern business practices), growth in new memberships is limited to word of mouth advertising. Although participants stated that word of mouth was one of the main contributors to growth in membership, they acknowledged that one new student has the potential to bring in an entire family for generations. Suppose leadership can support an initiative to encourage additional training in modern business or marketing strategies, and better yet include aspects of not for profit business such as charities, grants, funding and fundraising. Being a not-for-profit also supports volunteerism and the leadership can also support initiatives to share knowledge about how to recruit volunteers from secondary or post-secondary to assist where there is a lack of resources be it assisting with classes, booking keeping, administration, marketing, editing. Additionally, since there is already a marketing committee that can offer solutions to this lack of knowledge at the dojo level that may be productive in closing some of these gaps that are causing entropy.

Across all regions participants stated that tremendous support from family and significant others for bearing the brunt of the household while they were away for training or teaching was a facilitator. Further, families were appreciated for supporting karate and the organization and participants stated that it was helpful in keeping the dojo going. Participants stated that supportive family members were involved in karate life as well, attending dinners and

ceremonies while also helping out throughout the year at various events and activities. One participant shared:

*Definitely you need support from your own family as well right to be gone as much as we are gone teaching, so I have a lot of support from my wife and my kids for sure, and then support from the parents, when they are willing to bring the kids to the class and help push them a little bit and parents that are understanding when you don't give the kid what they wanted and they understand the reasons why and they support you, you know so think having support from the families and support from you own families as well.*

One participant explained how the parents of the students are a big source of support and are often involved in events and tournaments. They stated that, “*we have some parents that are super involved and just volunteer their time around tournament and fundraising and helping with set up and take down and chipping in with all kinds of parent volunteer stuff.*” Another participant suggested parents train alongside the student, and many of the participants stated that they offered no cost for a support worker to train too. One participant explained how he has the support of one of the parents of a student who has a disability and stated that, “*when parents are able and willing to get on the dojo floor and support their child through the karate training, it teaches the sensei how to work with the student but also teaches the assistants and the dojo is supported.* Families are part of the micro-system and assist in securing, expending and conserving energy utilized across multiple levels. Further, families have diverse skills and expertise that can serve the dojo and organization. Participants that described gratitude to their family members for supporting the dojo / organization were more positive about their expectations and role within their dojo and within their organization. On the contrary,

participants who expressed regret for missing out on time with their family because of dojo obligations, reported being burnt out from running too many classes which is a misalignment of goals and is entropic (Carter, 2011). As a strategy for Kotter's (1995) fifth and sixth step to change management, (empower action and create short term wins) acknowledging family members through an award ceremony for example, may be a practical way to assure the conservation of this energy.

**Locations and Spaces.** Across all regions participants collectively suggested that renting a space was more economical than buying a space. The consensus was that the cost to maintain it would likely constrain the instructors to raise the prices and tie memberships to the wallet. One participant explained that they have *“talked about buying so many times, number one you have to have enough down payment, we are non-profit, so and that's the beauty of being non-profit is our student registration and our cost, our monthly costs for people to come to classes is low, so we are trying to make it accessible financially to everyone.”* Another participant commented that, *“being not-for-profit [is] also good because there [are] greater opportunities to partner with the community in using spaces such as schools, churches, community centres and so forth”*.

Participants from rural, or small cities typically rented spaces from a church, legion or school, which they said was the most affordable, but also came with limitations such as having to remove all equipment after each use, having access only at certain times, having to share the space or having no storage, as one participant exclaimed, renting space means being *“at the mercy of the buildings.”* New builds were often more accessible, however not affordable and affordable buildings were affordable but not accessible. Participants stated the following list of

barriers that are external to the organization at the micro level that limited the ability for dojos to secure, expend or conserve energy: no main level access and only stairs, in-accessible washrooms or change rooms and / or no change rooms, poor parking, uneven surface, no curb access to the entrance points, no public transportation access point close by, heavy doors, issues with temperature control (no heat, no air-conditioning) and loud rattling of the air conditioning unit. One participant described the location they were training out of for a number of years and how it was *“in the back half of a very sort of run down sort of warehouse, so you know it wasn't readily accessible for some individuals in terms of getting through the doors and those sorts of things.”* One participant explained how they rent their space at such a low cost and that they were *“very lucky, our club, you know we talked about the rent, it is our space so we get to hang stuff which is really good, we get to leave stuff out, we get to do what we want structurally wise, there is not much I would do other than structure wise.”* Another participant stated that:

*It's hard to rent in our, well in our area, because there is not a lot out there that we can afford to rent because we are a non-profit organization, number one, um but we usually end up finding something but it is not always the ideal place that we would want, for example, having it fully accessible things like that. If we are looking at older buildings they are the ones that tend to be cheaper in rent right, and yeah we don't always get exactly what we want but it still has to serve the needs of the community that we are bringing in.*

Larger cities will also likely have more accessibility (cut curbs, public transportation points, automated doors and so forth), when compared to smaller rural area dojos. The small dojos just do not have a large enough population to make enough noise, metaphorically speaking, to advocate for the structural changes to *“at least get them through the door.”* One participant

servicing a small-town community described how his club trains out of a church because it is affordable, and then states that it is a long walk from the main entrance to get into the dojo. In larger cities, or if you are for-profit the cost of renting spaces, churches, schools etc was:

*Very very expensive, like I said, anywhere from 4-7000 dollars a month for facility rental so, you know as much as I would love to have my own dojo and my own space go in and run classes whenever I wanted have the space to just go train on your own, you know feasibility of me being able to go do that when I work full-time that's not an option for me personally.*

Partnering with municipal governments was a facilitator for one dojo and a participant described how their city was supportive in offering locations, advertising and any equipment that may facilitate accessibility. The participant stated, *“what I love about the city is if I told them I had a deaf student coming in and I need some help they would find resources for me in order to make that accessibility barrier drop for that deaf person.”* Although this participant was able to secure this partnership which now provides access to a host of energies to use within the system (spaces to run classes, free marketing and equipment) there was an 18 month process in securing this partnership. Connolly (2023a) described how micro aggressions, such as lengthy application processes, are a form mundane disable-ism, if the sensei had not had the patience to persevere through this daunting process they would not have had access to this services and nor would any of the students that their dojo serves. At the regional level, regional representatives may consider investigating what types of resources across their region can offer support for dojos and provide some training for dojos within a region.

**Memberships.** Just as attaining instructors that were competent and committed was essential for maintenance of dojos, student skill progression was essential for the maintenance of student membership, as one participant stated, *“you gotta have an instructor there critiquing you.”* Participants, specifically in smaller city or town dojos stated that a lack of student progress was directly linked to loss of interest, and higher attrition. Participants in smaller dojos also explained how they had more difficulty providing progression in mixed belt classes that had a low student to instructor ratio. In larger city dojos, participants stated that they had a large enough space, and a greater number of black belts to assist in class and more quickly support progression. However, in smaller dojos with less space, and fewer assistants, participants explained how progression was challenging because the instructors were not able to split the groups and often had to utilize lower belts to help instruct because there were not enough black belts in the classes. One participant stated that they offer a free month so that students can try it and if they don’t like it they can leave. The participant stated that, *“people who have been doing it for a while don’t want to keep teaching the beginners right, but that’s always been our philosophy, we let people try it for a couple of classes and if they like it they stay and they do it, and if they don’t they leave and no harm no foul right.”* Another participant stated that not everybody wants to teach, and not having a separate class for brown / black belts was a limitation to student progression in both large and small city dojos.

Recruiting and maintaining students was also more challenging in less populated areas, and most participants across all regions offered kids classes, adult classes and family classes that were not separated by rank or skill. Some large city dojos had a large enough membership that they were able offer classes according to age and rank on different nights of the week so students

were able to have progression, however other participants preferred not to separate by rank, because this was limiting for families that had multiple students registered at different ages or ranks. With respect to specialized classes for students with disabilities, dojos that are in smaller rural towns typically will not have enough of a student population to require a separate class, resulting in a perpetual lack of these services for students who are not typical learners. One participant said:

*If you are in a rural setting you are going to have maybe one or two persons with disability that are going to be in your program in the some of the larger centres you might have the opportunity to have an accessible only program for various disabilities... but it just depends on where you live in the Country. At the provincial level, again there is a bit draw to try and bring persons with disabilities into their provincial programs but again I think it comes down to a little bit of a, you know, how do we do this, I am not to sure, and things like that, so it's just a little bit of a learning curve.*

Another participant stated that they don't envy some sensei, and *"as much as it's a scramble to, and I really don't envy [the leaders] at all trying to keep this all together, you know they are scrambling to, one, still maintain dollar values, but they are scrambling to maintain their population, not that they are the only ones having a problem I am sure everybody is having a problem."* There are several explanations for this. One participant exclaimed that:

*For the majority of karate students generally whether it's federation or not, we are not there primary athletic event during the week. We are secondary or third for that matter tertiary, I have been in a bunch of organizations that were like that, you know, hockey takes first, easy, soccer, baseball, up to a certain degree, our primary, hockey and soccer and maybe basketball, basket ball is getting stronger and soccer is getting stronger, but hockey is primary, where is your*

*brother he is at hockey practice... that's why we shut down in the summer and also I need a break, I have had students that say I want to go through all of summer, and I say if your the only one and your here only fifty percent of the time, then no, I am in firm belief, cause no one making money at karate, I am in firm belief that students need more than just karate, I think they should even if all it is, is going fishing with their dad. I think soccer baseball, basket ball, hockey, karate will make those sports better because you will understand your body better, because of our hip twists, even golf, wrist snaps, all those things, I think you'll be better, and I realize that we are a secondary or tertiary sport, so I would rather you guys go do that.*

Several participants stated that they close their dojos down for the summer, as mentioned in the above statement, and often may lose some students come September. There are also typical membership cycles that are common for dojos. One participant explained, *“through my experience at the green, advanced green to blue belt you lose a lot of people, because a lot of stuff is repetitive to them to make advancements after that and I think boredom sets in.”* Keeping individuals engaged as they progress through the ranks appears to be a significant issue with respect to karate training across the organization, and possibly across the discipline.

### Barriers and Facilitators from Different Points of View

This section will provide a summary of the barriers and facilitators from different points of view (POV). Participants included five senate members, four regional representatives and four instructors and the sub-themes are POV: Senate Members, POV: Regional Representatives and POV: Dojo Instructors.

**POV: Senate Members.** When responding to the question what barriers do you think might hinder your dojos accessibility? Senate members (SM) stated that one of the biggest barriers was

knowledge. For example, one SM stated that, *“one of the barriers is knowledge... [what] I don't have is enough education, perhaps it's a course, perhaps it's a knowledge of how to communicate or how to teach,”* and another SM stated that, *“number one I would think would be knowledge, you know how much knowledge do we have on accessibility, or of people. And if you have the knowledge you can try to make it work, you know you take down the other barriers.”* While still another SM asked, *“how can we make a program in martial arts for those who can't walk and can't kick and they can still learn martial arts, that to me is really the barriers, how do you get the extra help, how do you get the training you need to help run these programs.”* Interestingly, four of the five SMs stated that they had taken extra training to learn more about how to adapt karate for students with disabilities, as one SM stated that although they know all about teaching karate, they wanted to know more about teaching karate to students with disabilities, so they do not have to turn anyone away, or make any student feel uncomfortable.

Two SMs shared stories where they had brought in an expert from within their communities to provide training for their dojos on adaptive karate and how to work with students who had disabilities. One SM explained:

*Our dojo brought in the autistic society to come in and they gave us a two hour instructional knowledge of autism and how to deal with people with autism to like keep them on consistent routine, don't change a bunch of stuff, so how they learn, so we needed to learn how they learn, and I have always felt if you, if someone is not getting it, its not you, it's the teacher, because you haven't learned to communicate in that persons language, and sometimes they learn by sight, sometimes they learn by feel sometimes they learn by verbal, so you need to learn to get into that persons head to do that.*

Furthermore, two SM's have brought two blackbelts into the organization that have knowledge about teaching students with disabilities. One SM stated that the blackbelt has been able to provide "*all of these great [skills] that have taught all the rest of us on how we can address and make [classes] fun*" and meaningful, and the other expressed that their dojo "*is very lucky*" to have the support to be able to offer accessible services for their community.

SM's also provided examples from a leadership point of view, of how opportunities have been made more available for students with disabilities across the organization, stating that accessibility can be observed through the steps the organization has taken to assure inclusiveness, such as the creation of a para-committee, the creation of grading and tournament policies and standards, and the inclusion of the para-division at national and regional tournaments. Although the majority of the SMs believed that, "*the Shintani Wado Kai is very strong in leadership,*" is supportive of accessible services, and has come a long way in the last ten years, one participant felt that there was a lack of diverse representation at the leadership level stating that:

*Look at the lack of diversity in our leadership on the senate, one female, up until recently one Westerner. More than half the organization is from Western Canada, more... a little over fifty percent. So we lack diversity in our leadership, from a female point of view, from an age point of view...so we lack diversity in our leadership from a regional, gender and age. It is all white, so we have no representation from any other culture that way, we do have a bit of a diversity in education, but again I think there is maybe one or to of us that are university educated, so there needs to be more diversity among a lot of aspects of our leadership.*

**POV: Regional Representatives.** Four regional representatives (RR) took part in the interviews and highlighted two facilitators to accessibility; options for training with various dojos across the region and opportunities to partner with various organizations to offer accessible services for a low cost. One RR listed ten dojos within less than two-hour travel time that they could travel to and train with to improve their skill and provide extra training opportunities for their students. Additionally, one RR stated that regional diversification could allow for greater access for community members. For instance, dojos that had wheel chair access could provide seated karate, while dojos with multiple instructors could offer programs for students with developmental disabilities and so forth. As mentioned in the previous sections, cost was stated as a barrier to accessibility because renting high tech facilities that were structurally more accessible was not an option if the cost of instruction was to remain affordable. One RR discussed their partnership with the municipal and stated that after a long process and much paper work, they now have access to offer affordable programs across various community recreation centres that are run by the city; and that if needed the city would assure that they had any equipment or resources needed to provide access, especially considering AODA deadline for full accessibility is around the corner. Further, the RR exclaimed they had access to free promotion because the city run programs are advertised in the municipality's recreation guide each season. Contrary, another RR stated that they wished "*for the town to push the programs more.*"

Similarly, another RR discussed the potential to partner with disability identified serving associations to offer accessible programs. They stated, "*advertising intelligently, in partnership with associations who, so instead of just putting it out on Facebook, what I would do is I would*

*approach various associations and groups that then can amplify that message to that target group.”* Also stating that they suspect one of the barriers is that the disability identified group (whether it be development, physical or any other disability), *“feels that this activity is maybe beyond them or they just haven’t been encouraged to think about it or you know and so, there might be a variety of barriers some implicit some explicit where they haven’t really thought about martial arts as an option.”* So in partnering with associations that offer services to specific groups it can provide that sense of comfort in trying it out.

**POV: Dojo Instructors.** Four dojo instructors (DI) took part in the interviews and highlighted inter-personal and intra-personal barriers to accessible services at the dojo level. The DI also highlighted how structural barriers such as stairs, inaccessible change rooms and so forth are limitations, however those barriers were already discussed in other sections so will not be discussed in this section.

One DI described interpersonal limitations, such as attitude and stigma, as limiting factors to providing accessible services. One DI stated that some sensei may be too old-school.

The DI explained that:

*Some instructors are old school if I can put it that way, where you know they have that stereotype image of what a karate student is, and what they better bring to the floor, to be a real karate student, and maybe don’t shift their thinking to know that they need to be more flexible to accommodate different peoples needs to still get a valuable outcome for that student in the end, even behaviourally, you know karate in the past has been high discipline, you come in and you know your quiet, you listen you work, so to have someone come in that maybe has to talk out loud, to understand instructions that were just told to them or something like that, that would be a*

*shift in thinking, for some instructors to be able to accept and be able to work with that, I am not saying they couldn't, but I think for some, depending on their exposure. You know diversity and the world. Some haven't been exposed as much as others to be able to shift toward a more diverse perspective with that if that makes sense.*

Similarly, another DI stated that patience is required, and some sensei need to learn how to be more patient with the student and with themselves. The DI stated that, *“you work with your student and try something out, if it doesn't work, try something new next week, it is patience, with your student, but also with yourself.”* Another DI described intra-personal limitations, describing how students with disabilities may not see themselves as training in karate. The DI explained that:

*There might be a bit of apprehension, you see a group, they're all dressed the same they all know each other and they are doing the same thing and you are this student or this observer that wants to maybe be involved and reach out but your kinda of staying back you are not sure.*

The DI inquired about how to overcome peoples' personal feelings that they are not good enough to take part in karate, or the feeling that karate is not for them. The DI highlighted that the challenge is even worse when there are structural barriers in the way, because it confirms the notion that students with disabilities are not welcome. The DI suggested that these are the barriers that sensei may not be aware of. The students won't even walk through the door if they feel that it is not a welcome sport for them to take part in. The DI suggested that sensei connect with members of the community, *“if we see people standing around, we go out and have a chat with them... and try to make people*

*feel welcome.”* Another DI also discussed intra-personal limitations on part of the sensei and stated that, *“I think there is a bit of hesitation from the instructors perspective of, am I really qualified to take this on and what happens if I don’t succeed, I have committed to a student that may be outside of my own expertise”*.

Additionally, DI stated that barriers include not having learning tools or resources appropriate to support their students is a limitation. For example, grab bars and hand rails are useful for supporting students who have issues with balance, and also provide a welcoming environment. Along with supportive learning tools, DI stated that providing different types of classes facilitates accessibility by sending a welcoming message. One DI stated that, *“some people might start one-on-one and eventually join the group you know, but the main thing would be one-on-one, and people would enjoy that, and sometimes they need it until they build more confidence they have more confidence in what they are doing.* The DI also explained that having the different options for classes already on the schedule lets the students and the community know they are a welcomed and valued member, and that they are wanted.

### Barriers and Facilitators Across Different Levels

With respect to marketing classes, small city and town dojos typically gained new members through word of mouth, and from having a good reputation in the community. One big city dojo promoted their programs through a partnership with the city and two big city dojo stated that, *“really ugly bold signs, those orange and yellow ones”* worked really well for

bringing in new students. All the participants stated that they had utilized social media to promote their services, but this was typically not that effective for securing new members. However, participants explained how Facebook and other social media sites did provide opportunities for the dojos to build and reinforce a sense of community by posting the members' accomplishments and informing members of workshops or special events coming up (an effective way to conserve energy). Additionally, most participants across all the regions utilized a website and participants also explained that virtual karate services were significant in providing access to services for students in more remote areas.

Participants also stated that pop culture fads were limiting the growth of karate generally, and that highly commercialized combat sports like the (UFC) and the promotion of mixed martial arts across media platforms was to blame. One participant explained that their club, *“started losing as soon as that came on line”* and another participant stated that:

*The interest in karate seemed to drop off, and MMA has taken over the spotlight. You don't see any karate on the news you see the MMA and the sports and that kind of stuff but what you don't see in there is the longevity of the careers and the damage done by the impact of concussion after concussion after concussion. But I would say our biggest challenge is recruiting, maintaining and keeping students.*

One participant discussed how potential students have called in to request mixed martial arts classes or UFC level training. Participants have also stated that they want their students to know how to fight and have expressed a number of ableist ideals which is a move away from the traditional ideals of bettering the self through commitment, perseverance and character development. For example, one participant stated that they think karate has become too soft and

that, “we lose a little bit of our realism, and like I said the authenticity of it is, its there, its real, it works...I have worked out with, like [sensei], I lined up with him, he scared the [heck] out of me, and I knew he would hurt me.” Furthermore, students with disabilities were often discouraged from taking part in activities because there was a heavy emphasis on competition (Jones, 2023). With a number of combat studios making a move to more mixed martial arts, and with the heavy media promotion of combat arts like UFC, students with disabilities see themselves less and less as karate students. Popular culture reinforced through the media is an external factor that reproduces ableism and limits the value of karate to develop the self. Ableism is the privileging of stereotypically able-bodies over disabled bodies (Peers et. al., 2023) and competitive sports like the Ultimate Fighting Champion (UFC) is the ultimate show of able bodied-ness and thus the ultimate promotion of ableism.

Organization wide, findings from the interviews reveal that sensei are primarily unaware of the laws regarding accessibility, thus, providing information about accessibility laws across the various levels will be helpful as well as training about funding opportunities to support accessible services. One participant explained that:

*Partnering with the community associations is definitely one way to go, they quite often have insight into all of those things and know a lot of people, if there are social programs or sponsored programs around that deal for those sports of areas for programming for kids or whatever. Funding agencies and granting provincial for federal agencies are another way to go look at where is money going for these sorts of things because quite often they have sponsored and grant funded programs all over the place you can tap into.*

And another participant said:

*I am a registered incorporated not-for-profit you have access to government grants and you just have to google to find out so you can get grants to purchase equipment, you can get grants to further your education through sport, so municipalities sometimes do grants to help.*

*ParticipAction, for example is an opportunity where you can get a grant, but you have to set it up correctly to do that, and we were running in to some challenges where some stuff wasn't set up properly and that was just learning on our part.*

At the dojo level, participants state that they often train with other dojos in the region, which can influence values and practices that can facilitate or hinder accessible services. Multiple participants described how they *“have black belt work outs once a month, where all black belts in the region are welcome to come,”* one participant also explained how some sensei will train with other sensei to *“get that extra training, extra insight into the way they teach karate.”* Now there are only a handful of dojos that offer inclusive classes, but with the regional workouts available and instructors *“taking it upon themselves”* to get that, *“extra insight,”* there are opportunities for participants to experience and learn how to be inclusive and adaptive in their dojos. As far as participants across the organization are concerned the *“door is open to all clubs”* and clubs will engage regularly once a month and support each other's tournaments and other events.

Nationwide, the SWKKF is affiliated with a number of organizations such as Karate Canada, the National Coaching Certification Program and the Superfoot System. Participants are grateful to be *“able to train with anyone you want and whether you do it virtually or not,”* and participants stated that they have *“mentored and worked with a few of the provinces across Canada through karate Canada to help navigate the [para-karate].”* Other participants

described how they are *“working on a training program, to help instructors understand what environment you need to serve that divers-ability of our population, and then what you need to instructionally understand as an instructor what are the skills that you need to have to teach such a wide population.”* Currently, members of the SWKKF can *“travel across Canada, live in Ontario, go to BC for a one-week vacation and you could end up at a club there which you could work out and it would be very consistent with what we do, katas, technique, form, everything would be the same.”* This is because the SWKKF has been able to standardize their gradings and tournaments across Canada. Furthermore, the organization has *“a chief instructor on the senate, that over sees the instruction piece of the organization, this is somebody who goes around to different dojos all over Canada to help instructors and to make sure people are still staying in the system.”* Participants described several dojos and instructors across the organization who have experience with inclusive and adapted karate and cross training provides the opportunity for instructors to share knowledge.

Acknowledging this aspect, a karate organization’s overall values of inclusion serve to influence accessibility at a macro level. For instance, organizations that are not inclusive to individuals with disabilities do not encourage participation in national tournaments where organizations that bring a large roster do encourage participation, and the large roster sends a message to organizations that there are opportunities for students with disabilities. One participant described how some organizations have a *“good para-program,”* and suggested that this is inspiring for other organizations.

The World Karate Federation (WKF), according to one participant has been working since 2014 to accommodate disabled students. One participant described the growth stating that

in 2014 there were between 40 to 50 competitors, and in 2018 there were over a hundred competitors. The participant also stated that WKF has included new sport classes for students with disabilities in 2018 which does show continuous growth but is not the end all. They stated that the categories set out are not fully inclusive but are evolving and there are advocates that continue to push inclusion at the macro level. Additionally, participants described their experiences at the international level and stated that some countries have a large para-karate program. This is hopeful for the SWKKF members, since there is nothing worse than training the entire year for a big competition only to find when you get there you are the only competitor in that division.

Another positive aspect at the macro level is that SWKKF does have students with disabilities who participate at the international level. One participant stated that this participation will likely encourage much needed changes in the categories of competitions and also provided information about an athlete who had been competing internationally in the para-karate divisions. The participation of this athlete on the world stage can be a push towards more inclusive categories. As it is, this athlete has a physical mobility disability but does not require a wheelchair. At the Worlds competition, there is currently no standing mobility impairment division, this is limiting for the athlete because in the participants words *“someone with cerebral palsy who has worked so tirelessly to not be in a wheelchair, if they compete at that level”* they have to now be in a wheelchair and will have to relearn how they perform to suit that division.

Participants also described a move forward and progress towards accessibility. One participant explained how competition on the world stage is improving, but not quite there. They stated:

*Yeah and you see that in the para Olympics in those sorts of things, where you do have a number of those individuals, you know and I hate to say categories, but that's what it is, you have to have a measuring stick to be fair and you know, as equitable as you possibly could be in those circumstances you know cause everyone is going to be a little different, but if you put them in that, it gives them, you know, tournaments, you push yourself in tournaments to be the best of you, but you also want to compare yourself to others to see where you're at, that's part of the competition and goes with it, and you know, having that ability to do that will give them, I would hope, give them a sense of that, like we do for everyone else, but your right there isn't enough people. But I am telling you, there is a lot more now than there was ten years ago. So it has been quite good*

With respect to how other countries stack up participants had this the say:

*At the world level it's different, it's all over the place, you have some countries that still don't have inclusive policies and so you won't see them but then you get, there is some countries that just surprise the heck out of you and you go to a world games and you have got countries that bring an almost full roster of para athletes and you're like wow this is great, so exciting to see, and they are good quality students too"*

One participant explained that there is some financial assistance for the para program, funding is shared amongst professionals to help support students with disabilities. The participant explained:

*So we do actually get fair bit of financial funding for the para program, not for the people but for the people developing it like for example a certain portion of [the employees] salary is allocated to the para program, there is some funding for the para support person and we actually are getting more funding for it, for the next world and PAN AM championship in the past the very first*

*time there was no funding and the next time there was a little bit more funding and the last two worlds we were able to get a volunteer nurse to accompany us.*

**Inductive and Deductive Thematic Designations**

<b>INDUCTIVE FINDINGS</b>	<b>LITERATURE DRIVEN DEDUCTIVE FINDINGS</b>
<b>Keeping the Legacy Alive: What Would Shintani Do?</b>	<b>Ableism</b>
WWSD: Affordability	<b>Enlightened Ableism</b>
WWSD: Inclusion	<b>Supercrip</b>
WWSD: Teaching Philosophy	<b>Dis-ableism</b>
WWSD: Family Oriented Karate for Harmonious Community	<b>Mundane Dis-ableism</b>
<b>The Floor: Spaces that Foster Relationships and Belonging</b>	<b>SYSTEMS THEORY DEDUCTIVE FINDINGS</b>
Critique and Competition	<b>Regional Disparities</b>
“Shift in Thinking” and “Eye-opening Experiences”	Volunteerism: Commitment and Competence
Joy in Accommodation	Locations and Spaces
Accommodating for Inclusion and Belonging	Memberships Cycles
Overwhelmed by Integration	<b>Barriers and Facilitators from Different Points of View (POV)</b>
<b>Unresolved Tensions: Maintaining Shintani’s Values</b>	POV: Senate Members
Affordability Versus Value	POV: Regional Representatives
Volunteerism and Time Constraints	POV: Dojo Instructors
Traditional and Old School Versus Commercialized ‘McDojos’	<b>Barriers and Facilitators Across Different Levels</b>

*Table 2, Inductive and Deductive Thematic Designations*

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The Shintani legacy forms the cultural backdrop that influences how the organization functions across all levels and how sensei choose to do business (including their choices in providing access to services). Systemically, the SWKKF functions with the hierarchical characteristics of a business, a school and a family and historically, it is centred on traditions that have been mentored down for over a half century. The findings suggest that members across the organization identify strongly with Shintani and are proud to be a part of his legacy. Shintani's legacy of physical skill unmatched to none, may be a barrier since members identify strongly with the organization and primarily cite his outstanding physical skills as the measure of authenticity of the system itself; essentially, the more skilled the students are, the more authentic the training system. Cultural change is more challenging in organizations with a long history, including how competitions and gradings are run and what type of skills are seen as aesthetically valuable. Able-bodied-ness appears to be a measure of the sensei, the student and the system and therefore there is an underlying tension between trying to remain and appear the "premier" art form (in skill and character) and be inclusive and promote harmonious community considering that able-bodiedness is the unspoken measure of authenticity. Further, while the organization and the individual dojos seem to foster an environment of mostly healthy critique, the sensei who were interviewed seem to have their own fear of failing, especially in those areas of economic viability, and appropriate inclusion practices. This is yet another tension made visible by the Human Systems Theory analysis and buttressed by the inductive analysis.

Instructors across the organization express deep interest in inclusion (for example, consider the thirteen participants that volunteered to be interviewed for this research), and this is likely because Master Shintani was admired for much more than his physical skill and was described by his virtuous character, his ability to adapt instruction, and his compassion. Participants described several stories about Shintani's compassion and kindness towards all people, ability aside. He even instructed black belts to pass a student they were not going to pass because he did not embody what a black belt should look like according to ableist standards. His values such as affordability, inclusion, adaptive teaching and community centred programs are all facilitators to accessibility because they encourage an inclusive mindset. Evidence of sensei embodying an inclusive mindset can be seen on the floor, and in how the sensei have found ways to include students with divers-abilities. In the best of cases, sensei have shifted their thinking and have been empowered to find ways to provide access to karate classes. Sensei Shintani was admired and known to empower a growth mindset in his instructors which facilitates positive attitudes towards learning and adapting to change (Bligh et al., 2018). Higgs and Rowland (2011) found that cultural change was most successful with grass roots support and change taking place. Furthermore, at the macro level, the organization supports a value for accessibility, and have provided funding, space, training and so forth, in an effort to support accessibility, and at the dojo level sensei are beginning to adapt out of necessity (students with disabilities are seeking out services).

Circling back to the concept of authenticity, traditional karate forms like the Shintani practice karate-do which translates into the empty-handed way, or the way of the empty hand (kara-empty, te-hand, do-way). The 'do' suffix translates to "path" or "way", which means that

karate is the way through which one attains enlightenment. Enlightenment, in zen philosophy, is a sense of life, being at ease, and going with the flow of the tao (life force), hence “the way”, going the same “way” as life. The authenticity is in the “do” aspect of karate training which has little to do with the physical traits of an individual’s movement. Through karate training, there are opportunities to strengthen character through practicing discipline, perseverance, integrity and respect, following through with commitments, taking risks, failing in front of others, and winning in front of others. These are the opportunities to develop the self through karate. Therefore, authenticity in the sense of a traditional karate-do mentality is contradictory to authenticity measured through the able-body.

Further, because of the highly visible ableist ideologies that underlie the karate disability identified individuals likely may not feel comfortable or see karate as something they can do. Karate, and combat arts more generally, are portrayed through popular media as elitist, showing only the most ableist of bodies which confirms what we already know about our society's current cultural values (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Connolly, 202). These ideologies can be heard through phrases such as, “I am old-school like that” or “When I am talking no one else is.” This deep-rooted value for rigidity and old-school value systems is limiting for accessible services because there appears to be an unquestioned starting point for entry into karate lessons (upright, use of all four limbs, quiet, still and a student who can obey strict dojo etiquette) that students experiencing disabilities may have difficulties following along with. As expressed by Jones (2023) an overemphasis on skill development led to high attrition rates for students with disabilities, yet karate is a highly disciplined art form and often rigid in its expectations of students which is usually why parents seek out karate for their children. The findings also suggested that parents

of non-disabled students expressed annoyance with the student who was a “disruption” and added pressure on sensei to conform to old school standards. This echoes Jones (2023) research that staff and parents expressed frustration for students who needed extra support because it seemed to limit the progress of the other students. Attitude was cited as a significant barrier to access according to the literature (Sienko, 2019; Shields & Synnot, 2014), because it stems from beliefs about disability that have developed over time and are linked to social, cultural and historical representations about disability (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Cameron, 2014; Martin, 2023). The findings suggest that sensei perceive accessibility through multiple perspectives (i.e., medical, social and affirmative lens), however, most hold a medical model orientation towards disability. At times participants expressed phrases that are ableist “*what you want in a student,*” dis-ableist, “*I don’t have the time,*” enlightened ableist, “*I always felt that they are better than me because they were born with less pieces,*” or mundane dis-ableist, “*they can try it out if they are not too disruptive.*” There are also statements that affirm disability as a valuable embodiment, “*I really enjoyed [that relationship],*” and statements that expressed disability as a tragedy, “*the poor bugger!*” Throughout the interviews there were also a number of tropes that portrayed dominant narratives of disability from popular culture, such as narratives of overcoming disability and disability as a tragedy. While some tropes are seen as inspirational, they are often used to inspire able-bodied people by making the implication that life could be a lot worse, at least you don’t have a disability’ (Martin, 2023). This is exemplified in this statement that was made by a sensei: “*if they can show that kind of discipline and effort then so can we.*” Even though the findings confirm underlying ableist values, sensei across the organization still very much want to be inclusive and support the notion that, “*karate is for everybody,*” and “*everybody*

*is equal.*” Unanimously, the participants were encouraging in their responses towards bringing students experiencing disabilities onto the floor seeing the value that it could bring to the community.

However, socio-economic attributes of the supra-systems are misaligned with the cultural attributes of the organization (Carter, 2011). Thus, the findings point to several unresolvable tensions that have the potential to derail Shintani’s values while sustaining business in our current cultural and economic climate. According to participants, SWKKF is a heart-driven organization, and heart-driven recreation programs are unsustainable (Jones, 2023). There is an unresolvable tension in trying to offer authentic and meaningful karate programs for students with disabilities because quality services that are run out of accessible locations cost money. Often in recreation programs value is equated to cost, and value determines memberships, with lack of memberships, there will be lack of money, such as seen in the findings where a dojo went from offering classes three nights a week, down to two nights a week, and in one case down to one night a week because of low participation. This parallels Jones’s (2003) findings that inclusive programs were limited in the duration and number of classes available. Furthermore, potential clients de-value the SWKKF’s services because they do not have the “*fancy dojo’s,*” or, as one participant stated, the “*perception of the value*” is that you get what you pay for. Nonetheless, affordability remains a top priority for all instructors across the organization. All participants unanimously agreed that affordability, as a cultural value, was beneficial because it assured that the organization was remaining authentic to the purpose of the organization to foster harmonious community. Members across the organization claimed that charging high prices meant there was some guaranteed product, and how can a sensei guarantee the speed of

someones progression as suggested by this sensei when he said if, “*we are doing a grading, and we charge for the grading, is that so I can pay my rent and put food on the table or am I truly grading the student.*” Rimmer et al. (2012) reported the bottom-line was a significant barrier at the macro level since decision makers were typically too concerned with the high cost of accessibility. Decision makers across SWKKF were not at all concerned with the bottom-line and instead were concerned with assuring affordability. The business structure was based on affordability, the concept of WWSD to assure affordability was prevalent, rather than WWSD to bring in a profit.

Additionally, since the sensei are “*not in it for the money*” they volunteer their time and have other vocation which leaves them little time to promote their services, do administration, or offer extra classes that may be needed for students with disabilities. As presented in the literature review, one of the barriers for participation in community programs for students with disabilities is that inclusive programs are limited in the duration and number of classes available, and often classes are only offered once per week and stop for the summer and for extended periods throughout the year (Jones, 2003). Many dojos across the organization also stop during the summer, and the number of classes suitable for students with disabilities is extremely limited. This is unresolvable for two reasons. One, if karate dojos started to pay their instructors, then the prices for programs would increase significantly which is in direct opposition to Shintani’s value for affordability; and two, paid instructors teach because it is a job and not because they value the service or want to be there, which is also in opposition to Shintani’s values of building a harmonious community. Further, increasing the prices to cover the cost of rent and a paid instructor will ultimately obligate progression, often at the expense of the students who require

the most assistance in class. There are inherent traditions that take place on the floor, as well as a structure of hierarchy and mentorship that is unique to karate culture. For example, once you bow onto the floor, one's outside identity is not important. On the floor, one is respected for their rank, the effort expended in their training, as well as their discipline and commitment to training and the organization. This has huge benefits of transference to the community because character determines behaviours and good character will foster good behaviours (kindness towards others etc). The floor can afford a space where relationships with peers and mentors are developed, and where the culture is shared and constructed. Wenger et al. (2002) described four dimensions of learning: learning through meaning, learning through practice, learning through community and learning through identity. Critique and competition provide meaningful ways for individuals with disabilities to engage in all four dimensions of learning. Through their participation in competition the students encountered opportunities to practice the skills that they have developed over the duration of their training, which also provided a purpose for practice, not simply to punch and kick, but to compete against another and strive for a good performance. The para-competitors learned through community by observing all the other competitions and found it valuable because they were also part of the competition and were able to learn through identity. The para-competitors felt they were valuable members of the community, and it was obvious through the various rituals that take place at a tournament. For example, before a division begins, each competitor is called by name and accounted for, and if they are not in the designated area (or ring), someone will go out and find them. In this regard, they can see that they are an important part of the competition. Further, the divisions have an audience, people are watching and clapping and interested in what they must demonstrate, which is another reason to feel a

sense of belonging. Community is linked to identity, and students showing up at competitions in uniform, with all the other competitors in their uniforms, provides a sense of identity, which inspires a greater sense of commitment towards their training. As participants expressed, providing meaningful opportunities for authentic competition can go a long way in fostering a sense of belonging and identity that encourages longevity in their participation. The findings suggest that the floor is the training ground where tasks are oftentimes physically and mentally demanding. Conditioning and fitness are developed along the way, as well as discipline, since it takes great spirit and character traits like perseverance and commitment to push yourself through physical exhaustion or the boredom of repetition. Partner work, displays of performance in demonstrations or tournaments, critique, and ability to meet a challenge, all require specific aspects of character. The people along the way are guides through the process, and each person is a part of that process and community.

As much as community and the potential for meaningful inclusion is developed on the floor through, it is also where micro aggressions and discrimination occur. Many participants stated that they integrated students into their group classes to save time, resources and so forth. Integrated classes put tension on the parents, students and sensei to conform to the stereotypical student, parent and sensei roles. Without the social pressure to conform to stereotypes, deeper connections can be made across the group; students can connect better with the sensei, the parents can connect better with the sensei, and the parents can relax from the stress of having the “disruptive kid” and co-mingle with other parents. Martin Ginis et al., (2016) stated that individuals with disabilities often seek recreation activities for leisure not for rehabilitation and often have a hard time finding meaningful movement that does not emphasize an attempt to fix

the deficit. The findings demonstrate how several sensei across the organization expressed statements that suggested they wanted to fix the person. These statements change the relationship between a sensei - student, to therapist - patient, and once again the student with a disability is a tragic case and is obliged to sit in the seat of 'needs fixing' and the special connection that could have been sensei and student is diminished because of the training being centred on the defective body. As previously stated by one participant, getting "*past the deficiency model*" will be a challenge because the idea that disability as tragic is so deeply engrained in our beliefs. Enlightened ableism is limiting for students even if the sensei means well because it perpetuates the tragedy model and relegates the student with a disability to an inferior position. Whether they are being treated like a patient, a child, or a dependent, there comes with it an unspoken belief that the student taking part in it is not a serious student, "*giving them at least something*" is better than nothing.

Participants responded in many instances by describing how they "*need more help,*" or that they "*do not have the time.*" The primary driving force and the major source of energy that sustains the system is volunteerism. The people volunteer and are bound together by their collective attachment and obligation to the organization. Therefore, the system secures energy from within the organization through gradings, tournaments, clinics and other socio-cultural rituals that bind the organization together. In this regard, including our students who experience disabilities into our greater SWKKF community through encouraging and supporting meaningful participation in events like tournaments and demonstrations will foster a greater sense of community and a greater value which leads to more energy output and commitment.

Accessibility requires an alliance and since our systems are not aligned to view disability as valuable, the barriers that exist for adapted karate services are mundane in nature. For example, one participant discussed the process of getting around the curb, opening the heavy doors, and going up the stairs, although these are structural barriers, the mundane aspect is the necessary and drawn out process of advocating to cut a curb in front of the main entrance, to have the heavy doors replaced, to have a lift / ramp installed, or to have a bus stop or bus route modified. Going back to mundane disable-ism, to make these changes, a strong effort to advocate in solidarity with students to make the necessary changes is required; telephone calls, emails, filling out forms and so forth, and as mentioned above, as long as we do not value individuals experiencing disability and take them serious as real people equally deserving of a meaningful life, we will never make a meaningful change.

The major barriers to accessibility are observable at the dojo level. For example, participants stated that they don't have the time, they don't have the energy, they don't have the help, they don't have the space, they don't have the knowledge, they don't have the funding, and they don't have the interest. These 'don't haves' are related to the value which fuels and inspires effort needed for the advocacy piece. It is the mundane "don't haves" that seem to run the engine dry for instructors who do not find value in providing accessible services. Internally, there appears to be insufficient energy in both small and large city dojos, however, for different reasons that are related to population density. In larger and more populated regions, and big city centres there are more assistants in class to help, however less commitment to assisting in other dojo activities (administration) and less commitment to running classes on different evenings such as a specialized class. Having a large population therefore allows more energy to be

secured, through greater incoming revenue due to higher memberships, greater ability to practice UDL pedagogy through the purchase of resources, tools, or equipment that could afford great accessibility, it can also provide incentives to instructors to run classes on different nights. Moreover, big city locations are structurally more accessible and often include more space to split groups (i.e., a large gymnasium) and the ability to offer one large integrated class while utilizing good pedagogical practices (partnering off students for small group or one-on-one support and offering micro-environments). Therefore, the limitation for large city dojos is not in attaining energy, but in expending and conserving it (Carter, 2011). Perhaps in the larger city centres where there is greater potential for higher membership, incentive for black belts who volunteer, assist in classes or lead classes on different nights. It appears that clients from larger cities attain value from their training through the practice and meaning aspect (Wenger et al., 2002). Essentially, bigger city dojos function more like a school and business than a family. Therefore, considering economic factors when finding ways to support accessibility may be beneficial from an economic and political standpoint. Utilizing marketing strategies to improve business practices will improve the school (SWKKF) (i.e., marketing campaigns, and investments, providing a few paid positions or incentives, providing marketable services that will increase memberships).

In smaller towns and smaller city dojos, there was more commitment from instructors to run classes, and perform extra dojo activities such as administrative tasks, however there were less instructors all around, which prevented the ability for the club to increase membership through offering classes on different nights or offering more accessible classes. Therefore, smaller dojos did not have as much of a problem conserving energy as they did securing and

expending it. In other words, longevity is their strength. One participant stated that it was easier to build a sense of community in small towns, where everyone knows everyone.

The findings also suggest that dojos struggled to remain open, which is not surprising since, as mentioned in Jones's (2023) study, heart-driven organizations often were unsustainable. In smaller city dojos there was greater support for dojos that were on the verge of closing, or losing students, and instructors were more likely to drive the hour or so to help run the classes, take-over a location, or take on students if the location closed down. Smaller dojos also fostered a greater sense of familial obligation towards community members, and members were more willing to help when an instructor was ill or needed to take a night off. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for a brown belt to take over as a main instructor in the less populated regions. So, although large cities had more black belts in any given class which allowed the instructor to more easily split the groups and individualize instruction, there was less commitment from black belts and less community in the more populated regions. Wenger et al's (2002) dimension of learning through identity and learning through community appear to be more profound in smaller dojos where participants learn through their membership with the organization, oppose to more emphasis on learning through practice, as is the case in more populated dojos<sup>20</sup>.

Unsurprisingly, having a lack of competent instructors was a prevalent theme in small town and remote dojos that had little access to regional workouts, or less opportunities for training with higher ranking instructors, or with other clubs. In considering Wenger et al.'s (2002) dimensions of learning, in remote dojos there was less learning through the extended

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<sup>20</sup> In dojos with larger memberships a student may go years before having to teach a class because there are many higher ranks due to higher populations; in a small dojo students may get a yellow belt and be required to assist white belts due to smaller populations but a necessity to split the groups to progress students.

SWKKF community which limited progression. The findings suggest that sensei from remote regions often lacked skill, and their students often required a lot of extra work in order to pass their belt gradings, albeit participants did state that virtual training opportunities have been a tremendous support for instructors because students from remote dojos have more opportunities to engage with the larger SWKKF community, being critiqued and provided greater opportunities to engage within the organization.

Another participant shared a story about an instructor who was not a very good teacher, and utilized unsafe training practices in class, this instructor rarely engaged in the SWKKF community and thus did not develop effective methods of teaching (i.e., insufficient securing of energy). The instructor also did not develop his own skill since he only trained within his own dojo and was the highest rank in his club (i.e., insufficient expenditure and conservation of energy) (Carter, 2011). The sensei eventually lost most of his students, and as a result a senior instructor offered to step in to help run the classes. In this instance, the dojo instructor attained a black belt and stopped engaging with the community of learners which limited the growth of the dojo, and thus the dojo was not able to secure sufficient energy<sup>21</sup>.

Across all regions, many participants exclaimed that they had full-time vocation and outside commitments in other areas of society, some with young families which limited the amount of time they could commit to running classes or administrative aspects of trying to grow a club. The fact that participants stated they are, *“not in it for money,”* and *“this is not a business for me, it is a hobby,”* and *“most sensei are teaching because of the passion of their own heart,”* suggests that instructors are typically not interested in the mundane administrative

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<sup>21</sup> More specifically, the dojo was not able to secure energy because the dojo instructor did not secure the knowledge nor apply any knowledge in order to secure or conserve memberships.

aspects of running a dojo, and the likelihood that an instructor will go far out of their way is slim, since they are already volunteering. For example, upon inquiring about offering accessible programs, one participant admitted to their current frustration with a student that had ADHD, and unfortunately this caused the participant to dread teaching that class. The participant was nervous about the safety of the class and frustrated at the parent for dropping off their child and leaving. They were already burnt from volunteering two sometimes three nights a week, while trying to balance family and work obligations. Upon suggesting that perhaps a different type of service may be a better fit for the student, the participant replied, *“if karate is work to me then I’m done. Cause I don’t want it to be that way.”* In this regard, resistance to offering programs for students with challenging behaviour is not unrealistic, especially if instructors feel they will have to do more than they already are doing. This supports Sienko, (2019) and Shields and Synnot’s (2014) findings that negative attitudes and an inability to offer a welcoming environment is a barrier for individuals experiencing disability. This also supports Peers et al.’s (2023) findings that individuals experiencing disability are discriminated against and naturally seen as inferior due to the challenges associated with being inclusive in a service industry that is currently inclusive only to a select few.

Findings suggest that SWKKF is experiencing entropy from within some regions and has just enough steam to keep in balance without any push to accessibility. For example, participants expressed having no time, no energy, no knowledge, no money, and no help at the dojo level and one instructor even described how they have no new members but are content to continue training with a small group of black belts that have remained engaged with the dojo. This points to an obvious site for entropy at the dojo level and is related to business functions. The problem

becomes a question of how to recruit and maintain memberships. In larger city dojos, participants stated that they had a large enough space, and a greater number of black belts to assist in class and more quickly support progression. However, in smaller dojos with less space, and fewer assistants, participants explained how progression was challenging because the instructors were not able to split the groups and often had to utilize lower belts to help instruct because there was not enough black belts in the classes. Further, the findings suggest that not having a separate class for brown / black belts was a limitation to student progression in both large and small city dojos. Recruiting and maintaining students was also more challenging in less populated areas, and most participants across all regions offered kids classes, adult classes and family classes that were not separated by rank or skill. Some large city dojos had a large enough membership that they were able offer classes according to age and rank on different nights of the week so students were able to have progression, however other participants preferred not to separate by rank, because this was limiting for families that had multiple students registered at different ages or ranks, this is a representation of partial access (Heaton, 2014), and not simply partial access to people with disabilities but partial access to everyone, much less people experiencing disabilities. With respect to specialized classes for students with disabilities, dojos that are in smaller rural towns typically will not have enough of a student population to require a separate class, resulting in a perpetual lack of these services for students who are not typical learners. Thus, for the organization to grow in its accessible services, outside sources of energy are required. At the macro level, the organization can assist dojos by providing greater access to business support. Participants explained that the organization currently provides new dojos with a small financial incentive and a package that includes

promotion and flyer templates. Through working with some of the adaptive karate instructors in the organization, the incentive package can also include flyers and templates that support accessibility. The SWKKF already has a robust instructor's program so including training about topics relevant to access and adaptive karate practices can provide some external reinforcement which can go a long way in getting some momentum going (Kotter, 2005). Additionally, some education offered across the organization about current accessibility standards may also help support instructors in adopting accessible business practices. Public services have until 2025 to comply with the AODA; therefore, government funding is potentially available for large and small scale projects to improve community access (for instance the Enabling Accessibility Fund, 2023 or the Inclusive Community Grant, Ontario, 2023). Furthermore, it may help to provide regional representatives with information about organizations in their communities that can be supportive. For example, many post-secondary schools offer experiential learning placements for students to develop various business projects; disability and education faculties also offer co-op placements. Partnerships with municipalities or other not-for-profit organizations have proven to be a big support. One dojo, after a bit of advocacy, (paperwork and so forth) has access to community spaces across their municipality at a very low cost, and another dojo has access to an annual donation from a bingo charity each year which sensei say is a big chunk of their budget. Community partners and other not-for-profits who serve populations with unique embodiments often have spaces available for programs that dojo instructors can access to serve their populations rather than wait for a large-scale project to remove structural barriers.

Karate businesses often rely on an apprenticeship of observation where sensei are passively mentored to teach karate over the duration of their training (Bullock, 2009). The issue

with this is that in our quest for universally designed services, the findings suggest that our comfortable old ways are not inclusive and can even be harmful, as one sensei said, “*you could be screwing up somebody bad,*” therefore we cannot rely solely on the apprenticeship through observation methodology less we want to remain on the course of exclusionary services that are disabling. Moreover, considering that business is one of the disciplines that we are engaging in as dojo owners, whether we like it or not, it might be high time that instructors started to develop the tricks of the trade. There are several conferences specifically tailored for the business side of martial arts organizations, although there will likely be many “Mcdojo” types among the group, and some watered-down sport commercialized dojos; surely there will be a host of dojos that experience the same problems that the Shintani experiences in business, such as maintaining memberships and the like. Perhaps we might even gain some insight into how to navigate the morals over money piece, while still finding ways to be financially sustainable for our community. This can also spark an entrepreneurial spirit amongst regional representatives. The representatives can share the information learned with the marketing committee and the senate, as well as share it with other dojo instructors across their region. Furthermore, moving from black belt student to sensei may offer challenges related to confidence; learning communities can scaffold the transition from feeling like a black belt student to an instructor and / or dojo owner (Casey & Fletcher, 2012).

Offering training that will align with a Universal Design for Learning can help instructors imagine what services they can offer that will facilitate accessibility in their community. Universally designed services may include a hybrid of classes, from segregated, inclusive, integrated, individual or small groups (Capp, 2017). A student may opt for a recreational class

(no belts, or standard testing), or a modified curriculum for students with disabilities to experience success and progression. Offering appropriate services for students with disabilities can relieve the tension felt when a student is not in a learning environment that is appropriate. For example, there were several examples presented in the findings that describe how “disruptive behaviour” was a source of tension for the sensei and student with a disability, but also for other students and the parents. This is because the sensei must embody the stereotypes that re-produce ableism, reinforcing ideas such as, speak when spoken to and no talking in class, which may be unrealistic. As participants expressed in the findings, the old school sensei may not always be the best mentor for students experiencing complex embodiments, and that the relationships they have developed over the course of their training is what is cherished the most. So, considering in what ways students with diverse abilities can also build meaningful relationships is essential. Integrated classes are optimal at times for some learners, however, if they are the only classes offered, this will limit the types of relationships that can be built for many students. For example, if a student is always being helped in class, there can be no opportunity for students with disabilities to help other people. Haegele and Wilson (2023) and Cameron (2023) criticize, so-called “inclusive” programs, stating that integration does not equal inclusion and that there is a dramatic difference between the two concepts. I have had several students that have great skills in leading and helping to teach, but they cannot express their autonomy when they are always in the position of being helped.

To empower instructors to offer accessible services, change leaders can include adaptive karate training into the current instructor training program. Adaptive karate training can provide greater exposure, confidence and value for accessible programs and can also provide a

community of adaptive karate instructors who can share stories and strategies to better access. The most challenging barrier is value, because without it there will be no effort and no advocacy. Participants stated that they don't have the time, they don't have the energy, they don't have the help, they don't have the space, they don't have the knowledge, they don't have the funding, and they don't have the interest. The advocacy piece can eliminate all those aspects. For example, with a little extra effort a sensei can call the city and have them cut a curb where needed or have a bus stop installed at an appropriate access point. They can also apply for funding, seek outside helpers from post-secondary schools, connect with organizations in their community for accessible spaces or any number of actions that require a bit of advocacy.

Advocacy is necessary, and at the very least a requirement of effort such as setting up a class, informing the public, arranging a space and so forth. If participants are already feeling overwhelmed by the maintenance of memberships and administrative duties without considering accessible and inclusive services, then advocating for the "*odd student*" is likely not a high priority. The findings demonstrate that even though people with disabilities are usually invited to join the regular classes and as much as the instructor can pair them up, provide one on one, or split the group, the classes did not seem to serve the needs of students experiencing disabilities or not, because including a student with disabilities really slowed down the class for those who want it to speed up, and it removes an instructor from supporting others who may also need it. This is an issue of traditional-old school values that are difficult to overcome. Changing the way the class is structured, what services are offered, and which clients are valuable, is the discussion to be had. Jones (2003) stated that belonging and friendship were primary reasons that parents wanted to enroll their child in physical activity and community-based programs. The value of

harmonious community that was passed down from Shintani has provided the incentive and direction towards accessibility, since it places emphasis on community rather than skill. Jones (2023) stated that barriers to accessibility included programs that overemphasized skill development, fixation on behaviour / communication deficits and a lack of meaningful / friendship-oriented opportunities. Shintani's ability to differentiate instruction aligns with UDL's third principle, engagement. Engagement is the ability for instructors to develop an optimal “method for creating inclusive environments and improving student engagement through social and emotional learning, inclusive instructional practices, and student autonomy” (Capp. 2017, p. 803). Shintani's pedagogy facilitates accessibility because it offers a positive model for other instructors, and at the very least reinforces the idea that there are many ways to adapt a movement form.

The literature in cultural change provides a number of clear and distinguishable factors that are helpful for large and small change management projects, including factors related to leadership styles and behaviour, mindset, the vision and communication (Bligh, Kohles & Yan, 2018; Higgs and Rowland, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2011; Kotter, 1995, 2008; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Venus et al., 2019). The first significant factor in the success and failure of organizational change is instilling a sense of urgency (Kotter and Cohen, 2002). The current political climate is cause for change leaders to foster a sense of urgency since AODA legislation will be in effect in 2025. Some of the consequences for noncompliance include an audit at the organizations' expense, financial penalties, and forced closure (AODA, 2008-2024). Furthermore, individuals, clients and groups can make a discrimination claim to the Human Rights Tribunal against an organization for exclusion of services (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2019). There are

several strengths to consider. The first strength is that there are many instructors who are passionate about moving this change forward, and the second is that there is a dedicated committee of instructors that can filter and disseminate information in clever ways across the organization. To instil the urgency, change leaders (the para-committee) can compile relevant examples of businesses that have faced penalties because of non-compliance and present it to their regional representatives, at town hall meetings, in emails and the SWKKF official newsletter (The Harmonizer), that is sent out quarterly. Once the representatives are aware of the new policies and the professional and personal consequences of non-compliance, they may be less resistant to change, and more willing to commit to the initiative and see it as beneficial for the organization, the community and themselves. On a more surface level, members of the organization may not understand what distinguishes accessible business practices from regular business practices. This will be an opportunity to engage the members in dialogue about the transformation and share resources that will be helpful. This will be beneficial during the initial stages of the change process and once members come to a greater understanding regarding accessible services they will value the change on a deeper level.

To move the message across the organization Kotter's (1995) second step is to create a coalition that can lead the change and Sirkin et al. (2005) asserts that the coalition must have integrity and commitment to the organization and the initiative and be willing to put in the extra effort to see tasks accomplished. Champions can be selected from SWKKF current committee members since all committees will be impacted by this change (from the para-committee to the student proficiency and marketing committees). For example, the student proficiency committee may have to understand adapted karate and modify examination criteria for a range of learners,

the marketing committee may have to add new services to the media, website and promotional material and in consideration of accessible formats. The administrative committee will have extra duties because of the expanded market and anticipation of new clients, and the budget committee will have to consider the inclusion of new expenses and sources of revenue. Since these committees are currently operating and all have a stake in the initiative, a representative from each committee can help lead the initial effort. According to SWKKF the members that run their committees are long time instructors and senior students within the organization, they already have a high commitment to the organization and have a sense for how the organization is run. They know most, if not all, the instructors in the organization and can be trusted to move the initiative forward.

Kotter's (1995) third step, and a significant change driver, is creating a vision to direct the change effort that is accepted by members of the organization (Whelan-Berry and Somerville, 2010). In Kotter's (1995) research, successful transformations were characterized by a vision that was regarded as positive by members and was moved through the organization early on in the initiative (Whelan-Berry and Somerville, 2010). The champions can share positive experiences such as photos of disability identified martial arts students at competitions or gradings. The experiences shared will allow others to see benefits and associate positive feelings with the initiative. Additionally, the stories of the members are tangible artifacts that can foster a deep sense of belonging across the group, and a deeper sense of commitment to the organization (Smircich, 1983). The change champions can promote and communicate the vision across the Shintani's committees, website and members' websites, media sites, the Harmonizer, and so forth.

Kotter and Cohen's (2005) fourth step is empowering others to act on the vision advocating for change. There are several ways that the coalition can empower the change leaders across the SWKKF. The coalition can develop on-line<sup>22</sup> training modules for some foundational adapted karate training and include practical training alongside their instructor certification program. SWKKF has a dedicated instructor group that attends online classes weekly, and so providing senior ranking belts with information pertaining to adapted karate and accessible services should be well received and easy to deliver. Awards of recognition, news articles, student of the month, are all great ways to recognize and empower members of the dojo community and members of the coalition. Change leaders can also include new divisions at tournaments (like they did with including the flag sparring) that are inclusive and provide opportunities for greater visibility and exposure to disability. This will in turn invite higher participation among disability identified students and sensei will see the impact their changes are having at the community level.

One participant stated that the para-committee has funding available and is not yet sure how to use it to support accessible services. Since there is a problem securing energy for business and administration (i.e., attaining and maintaining memberships), perhaps some of the funds available can be used to secure energy externally through providing instructors with karate business training through organizations like the Movement Summit (2022) or Relentless Membership Summit (2023), which are conferences specific for martial arts entrepreneurs and business professionals.

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<sup>22</sup> On-line modules allow instructors from remote dojos to access the training, according to participants.

Mentioned at the top of this section is the sense of urgency. Instructors without any immediate need to run accessible classes will likely need an external push to get the momentum going, but the good news is that the outcome is universally designed karate programs across the SWKKF, placing Shintani instructors as experts in the field of accessible karate. As Kotter (2005) points out, a little extra effort will be required to move this forward, but as one sensei said, “...if I had a child with any kind of disability I would definitely, in my heart, want that child to be accepted.” In moving this initiative forward, SWKKF will have to find value in disabled people. The value determines the “*don't haves*”. The value is what brings the effort needed for advocacy. When we value something, it is important, it is not an afterthought, and it is not viewed as a waste of time. All the time in the world is available for the things we value. When we value, we advocate, and with a little imagination the advocacy can turn the ‘don't haves’ into ‘do haves,’ and Shintani instructors will say, “I have space, I have help, I have knowledge, and I have an inclusive program for my community”.

### **Limitations**

In my early interviews, I may have, at times, wandered away from the interview script and my semi-structured interviews sometimes digressed into conversational interviews that lacked structure and made the analysis more challenging. It would have been helpful for my informants and for my readers if I had made clearer distinctions across physical, intellectual, and developmental impairments, since the willingness and preparedness to engage with different kinds of bodies and different kinds of behaviours would necessarily vary given that comfort levels associated with physical impairment are usually higher than comfort levels associated with

intellectual or developmental impairment. It would have been helpful for my informants and for my readers if I had made clearer the distinctions between pedagogical adaptations and adaptations that required a change in the movement or the equipment or environment. Finally, I suspect that my somewhat slavish allegiance to including verbatim material from my informants made this document lengthy. While I do not apologize for my loyalty to the informants, I also appreciate that lengthy documents sometimes defeat the purpose; I will strive to be more efficient in my use of verbatim material in future writing.

### **Future Implications**

This research can be accessed by instructors, dojo owners, regional reps and senate members as a starting point for developing adaptive karate services. Training across all levels should include relevant accessibility laws, how to adapt karate instruction, how services can be provided, how to market and promote services, how to access resources available and how to advocate for accessibility. The organization currently has a robust instructor certification training program along with a framework for delivery, thus, the transition and inclusion of this content is feasible and sustainable. Additionally, this research will be particularly useful for other not-for-profit community organizations that specialize in movement or recreation services for individuals with disabilities. For example, other combat studios, dance, fitness, gymnastics, or sport organizations may experience similar systemic attributes related to regional disparities and so this research may be not only transferable, but also enlightening.

Furthermore, the absence of individuals with disabilities as representatives across all levels of the system suggests that there is a lack of opportunities for students experiencing

disabilities to grow as assistants, instructors, owners, regional reps, committee members and so forth, which warrants further research. For example, one instructor stated that he does not feel his disability-identified student would be able to instruct because he would not be respected as an instructor. This reflects the instructor's disablism, not the student's capacity or potential.

It is important to note that this research has already had an impact on the organization. During the process of my investigating and reporting, the organization has instituted adaptive training for instructors, para-karate divisions at provincial level competitions, and sparring as a part of the para-karate participation. Clearly, change is possible.

Future research could employ an instrumental case study design to follow this (or any) organization through its process of organizational change; self-study of the insider/researcher dynamics would also yield helpful insights into practitioner -researcher identity development.

## **Conclusion**

It would be easy to characterize this project as one more study of an organization that wants to do the right thing relating to inclusion, but does not have the time, money, or other resources to make that possible; yet another well-meaning group who strive and fall short; another example of enlightened ableism. While this project was a descriptive qualitative study of a well-meaning organization, it is also a study of an organization that is attempting to live up to its own ideals and that is wrestling with the inevitable tensions and shame associated with inauthenticity. It is a stark example of the dangers of internal contradictions and their potential for a catastrophic outcome of organizational entropy. It is not only an individual dojo or sensei issue; it is, quite literally, the preservation of a distinct philosophy of martial arts that will be lost

if the organization cannot move toward authenticity. This is the urgency that cannot be ignored or denied if the organization is to continue in a way that allows the sensei and the dojo members to remain aligned with their core principles.

The timing is optimal for creating a sense of urgency with respect to accessibility given the current ethical, economical, and political climate. Our communities are filled with folks who experience complex and stressed embodiment. We have an ethical obligation to embrace diversity and treat all human life with dignity. Diversity in the dojo allows for unique perspectives, talents and abilities to be shared among the group. The participants expressed multiple times that Master Shintani never taught his senior students a technique the same way, each technique was adapted to each individual student. Master Shintani lived by three ideals: humility, integrity, and honour and expressed deep inclusive ideals and value for all human life asserting that Wado Kai students must be ambassadors of unity and happiness through the universe (SWKKF, 2020, para, 11). Through strategic questioning, participants engaged in conversations that offered them an opportunity to ponder philosophical questions about the value of human life and who is worth serving. It also offered participants opportunities to consider the meaning of accessibility, what is involved with providing accessible services, and how inclusive services are valuable to the SWKKF and the communities the organization serves. I was born in the 80's when autism was not as prevalent, with one in twenty-five hundred being diagnosed. Presently, diagnosis for ASD is one in thirty-six (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). This is significant because my fellow martial arts instructors are not cultured for autism, nor any other disability. Even if the built environment was barrier free, with all the ramps, automatic doors and curb side entrances that a dojo needs, Western society is just now beginning

to be open to diversity and to provide accommodation. As an ally for accessibility, my only way forward will be to move away from the champion model and towards a solidarity and justice model, through a committed coalition. I must also be wary of sensationalizing the successes of disabled participants so that we do not succumb to the temptations of inspiration porn. I teach karate, but it is not about karate; it is about creating a harmonious community that is inclusive and welcoming to human diversity and complexity in all its forms.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Invitation for Readiness Survey

### 1. INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to better understand the current perceived accessibility of dojos across the SWKKF in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarian's with Disabilities Act (AODA). Your input will be valuable!

### WHAT'S INVOLVED

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a short online survey that will take between 10 - 15 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions that address key areas, namely: customer service, training and service provision. (see [www.aoda.ca](http://www.aoda.ca) for more info).

### CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you provide is considered confidential and access to data will be limited to the SPI and PI only. Your name or any identifying demographics will not be included, or associated with the data collected in the study. To assure confidentiality raw data collected during this study will be stored in a coded file on the SPI's personal computer which is passcode protected. Data will be kept until the study is complete, at which time all data will be permanently deleted.

### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any survey question. Further, you may decide to withdrawal from this study at any time and with no explanation. If you have completed the survey you may request to retract your data from the study at any time without explanation. Please contact the PI or SPI at the above contact information if you wish to withdrawal from the study, or withdrawal your data from the study. Please note there is no hard copy of any data thus if you withdrawal your data from the study it will be deleted from the data set, if you wish to retrieve a copy of you data you must let the SPI know and you will only receive your own data and not the data of other participants.

### PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Initial feedback about this study will be summarized no later than two weeks after all surveys have been collected and available for participants who may be interested. A follow up study will provide for a more in-depth analysis at which time the results of the survey may also be included in that report. Members of the SWKKF will be provided an email PDF copy of that report upon completion. Further, the research may be disseminated in academic journals and conferences. Participants can contact the SPI via email at [shancharyk@brocku.ca](mailto:shancharyk@brocku.ca), or phone 905-359-9669 to access the feedback.

### CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the SPI, or the PI using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University 20-088 -

CONNOLLY. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics via phone (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, [reb@brocku.ca](mailto:reb@brocku.ca).

## Appendix B: AODA Readiness Survey

### CONSENT FORM

In checking the box below you agree to the following statements.

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Agree

2. Since 2005 the government of Ontario has passed a law that requires businesses to adopt mandatory accessibility standards that will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living with the ultimate goal of a barrier free Ontario by 2025.

I am aware of this law.

Extremely familiar, very familiar, Moderately familiar, slightly familiar, not familiar at ALL

3. Accessing information about services is often a barrier for individuals experiencing disability. Accessible formats may include, but are not limited to, large print and audio options on websites, braille (upon request) as well as telephone.

Information regarding our services is offered in accessible formats providing options for community members to find information easily by visiting our location, our website, or accessing information via telephone.

Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree

4. Often services appear unavailable to diverse populations because flyers and promotional material do not target people with disabilities.

My organization considers diverse populations when advertising and promoting to the community (for example, utilizing photos of disability identified individuals, stating on flyers that extra support can be provided if required).

Always, Most of the time, About half the time, sometimes, never

5. To assure that all community members have access service providers must provide training in accessibility standards for all staff, volunteers and individuals who participate in developing the organization's policies.

Our dojo provides training for instructors, assistant instructors and volunteers on the requirements of the accessibility standards relevant to their position in the organization.

Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Sometimes, Never

6. To assure that organizations sustain accessible services, businesses must develop, implement and maintain policies regarding the standards of accessibility (standards relevant to the dojo include, customer service standards, information and communication standards, employment standards, and building standards).

Our dojo has developed policies relating to accessibility standards.

A great deal, A lot, A moderate amount, A little, None at all

7. If a member of the community has not been able to access services in a meaningful way it is essential that they have a means to provide feedback so that the necessary changes can be made for the dojo and for the member.

My dojo has an accessible method for receiving feedback that the instructors are made aware of and have informed their volunteers, staff and students ( eg. website, social media, phone number to call, comment box).

Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree

8. All organizations are required to make exiting emergency procedures, plans or public safety information available in an accessible format with appropriate communication supports upon request.

Our organization has implemented emergency procedures and can provide public safety information when requested.

Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree

9. I am knowledgeable about multiple disabilities including physical (i.e., wheelchair mobility, cerebral Palsy, multiple sclerosis); intellectual (i.e., learning disability); developmental disability (i.e., autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, down syndrome).

Extremely knowledgeable, Very knowledgeable, Moderately knowledgeable, Slightly knowledgeable, Not knowledgeable

10. All organizations must make accommodations and adapt instruction to suit members of their community.

Instructors in my dojo have the competence to adapt their instruction for multiple learners including for individuals with developmental, intellectual and physical disabilities.

Extremely competent, Somewhat competent, Neither competent nor incompetent, Somewhat incompetent, Extremely incompetent

11. Please select the most accurate description of the region your dojo is located.

Large city, Small city, Town, Small town, Prefer not to say

12. The next phase to this project is a more in-depth qualitative investigation that will include interviews that will last between 60-90 minutes. The purpose of this study is to find ways to support the transition to accessible and inclusive martial arts services across the Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation. Your input can help us uncover barriers and facilitators to providing accessible martial arts services across various regions.

I am interested in being part of the next phase of this study. By checking yes I consent to being a part of the next phase of this study.

Yes, No

13. If you answered yes, please provide your name and email address where the researcher can best reach you to provide more information regarding the next phase of this study.

## Appendix C: AODA Readiness Survey Report

### Question Two

Question two states: Since 2005 the government of Ontario has passed a law that requires businesses to adopt mandatory accessibility standards that will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living with the ultimate goal of a barrier free Ontario by 2025. I am aware of this law. Out of n42 responses, 12% (n5) selected the item *extremely familiar*, 21% (n9) selected the item *very familiar*, 21% (n9) selected the item *moderately familiar*, 10% (n4) selected *slightly familiar*, and 36% (n15) selected the item *not familiar at all* (See figure 1). In total 64% (n27) are aware of the AODA standards of practice across the SWKKF. The AODA is specific to Ontario laws and regulation most provinces have their own version of accessibility laws, the survey was specific to Ontario, therefore the high prevalence of participants 36% (n15) who selected *not familiar at all* may have resulted from the fact that the survey was offered to all SWKKF instructors across Canada, and was not limited to Ontario.

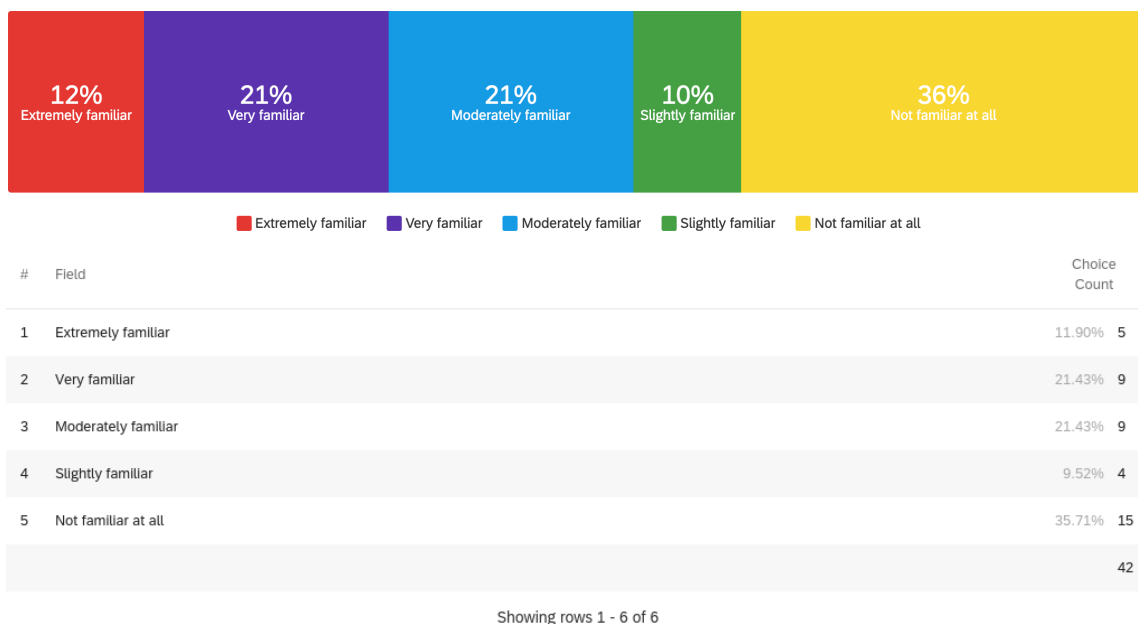
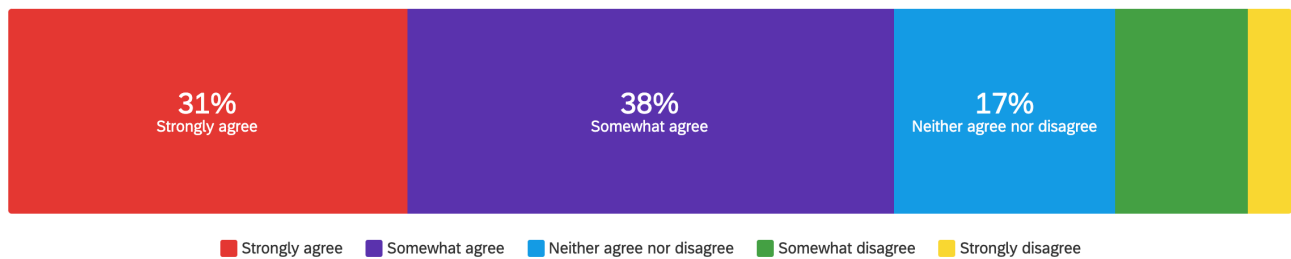


Figure 1. Question Two: Percent of participants familiar with AODA

### Question Three

Question three states: Accessing information about services is often a barrier for individuals experiencing disability. Accessible formats may include, but are not limited to, large print and audio options on websites, braille (upon request) as well as telephone. Information regarding our services is offered in accessible formats providing options for community members to find information easily by visiting our location, our website, or accessing information via telephone. Out of n29 responses 31% (n9) selected that they strongly agree that information regarding services is offered in accessible formats, 38% (n11) somewhat agree, 17% (n5) selected neither agree nor disagree, 10% (n3) somewhat disagree and 3% (n1) selected strongly disagree. This is a relatively positive outcome as 69% (n20) believe that information regarding their services is accessible where only 13% (n4) believed that information regarding their services was not accessible.



1	Strongly agree	31.03%	9
2	Somewhat agree	37.93%	11
3	Neither agree nor disagree	17.24%	5
4	Somewhat disagree	10.34%	3
5	Strongly disagree	3.45%	1
			29

Figure 2. Question Three: Information regarding our services is offered in accessible formats.

### Question Four

Often services appear unavailable to diverse populations because flyers and promotional material do not target people with disabilities. My organization considers diverse populations when advertising and promoting to the community (for example, utilizing photos of disability identified individuals, stating on flyers that extra support can be provided if required).

Out of 29 respondents, 24% (n7) selected that their organization always targets and promotes to disability identified individuals. While 21% (n6) selected most of the time, 14% (n4) selected about half the time, 17% (n5) selected sometimes, and 24% (n7) selected never. Thus, 45% (n13) believe that they target disability identified individuals in their promotional material, while 55% (n16) do not believe that they provide promotional material that targets disability identified individuals. Therefore, support and training in this area can be beneficial. Perhaps it is a matter of providing training to instructors about the appropriate terms to utilize in their promotional material as well as different types of services to offer.

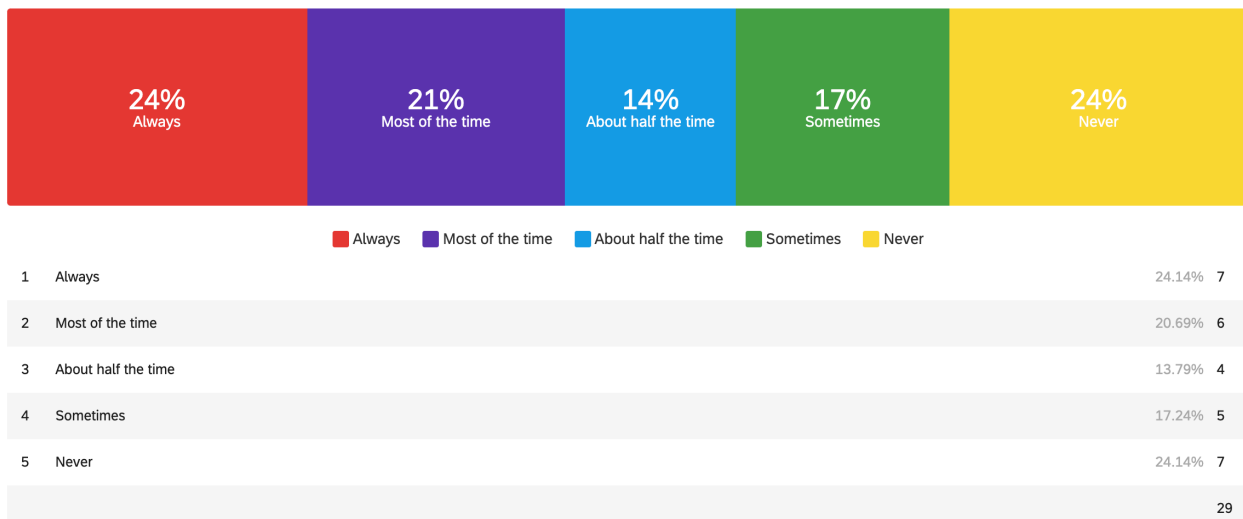


Figure 3. Question Four: My organization considers diverse populations when advertising and promoting to the community.

### Question Five

To assure that all community members have access, service providers must provide training in accessibility standards for all staff, volunteers and individuals who participate in developing the organization’s policies. Our dojo provides training for instructors, assistant instructors and volunteers on the requirements of the accessibility standards relevant to their position in the organization.

Out of 28 respondents 18% (n5) believe that their dojo provides training on the requirements of accessibility standards, 21% (n6) selected most of the time, 14% (n4) selected about half the time. While 25% (n7) selected sometimes and 21% (n6) selected never. Thus, of the participants, only 18% of instructors appears to assure training for how best to provide accessible services, and although 21% did select most of the time, 61% of respondents reported that training was not fully provided within their dojo. Therefore when finding ways to support SWKKF dojo’s this is an area that can be targeted moving forward.

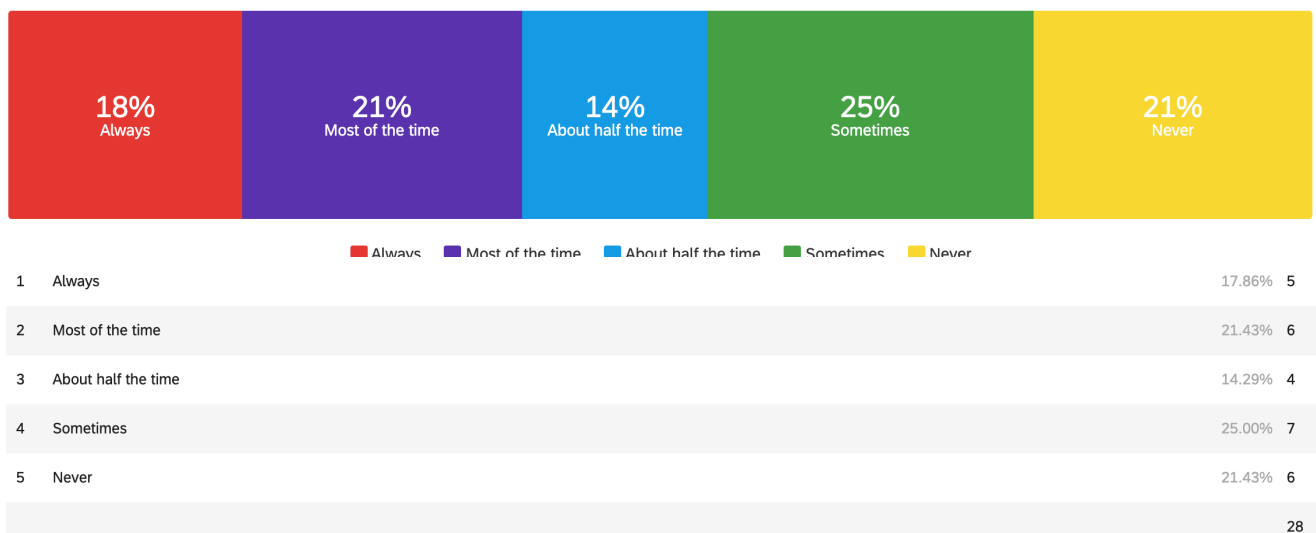


Figure 4. Question Five: Our dojo provides training for instructors, assistant instructors and volunteers on the requirements of the accessibility standards community.

### Question Six

To assure that organizations sustain accessible services, businesses must develop, implement and maintain policies regarding the standards of accessibility (standards relevant to the dojo include, customer service standards, information and communication standards, employment standards, and building standards). Our dojo has developed policies relating to accessibility standards.

Out of 29 respondents, 10% (n3) selected that their dojo had developed policies related to accessibility standards in *a great deal* and 14% (n4) selected *a lot*, and 34% (n10) selected that their dojo had developed *a moderate amount*, and 21% (n6) selected *a little*. While 21% (n6) selected *none at all*. This appears positive in many ways since the majority (79%) have at least begun the process in developing policies in assuring accessible services within their community. Training about how to deliver services and promotional material will likely add to the development of these policies in future.

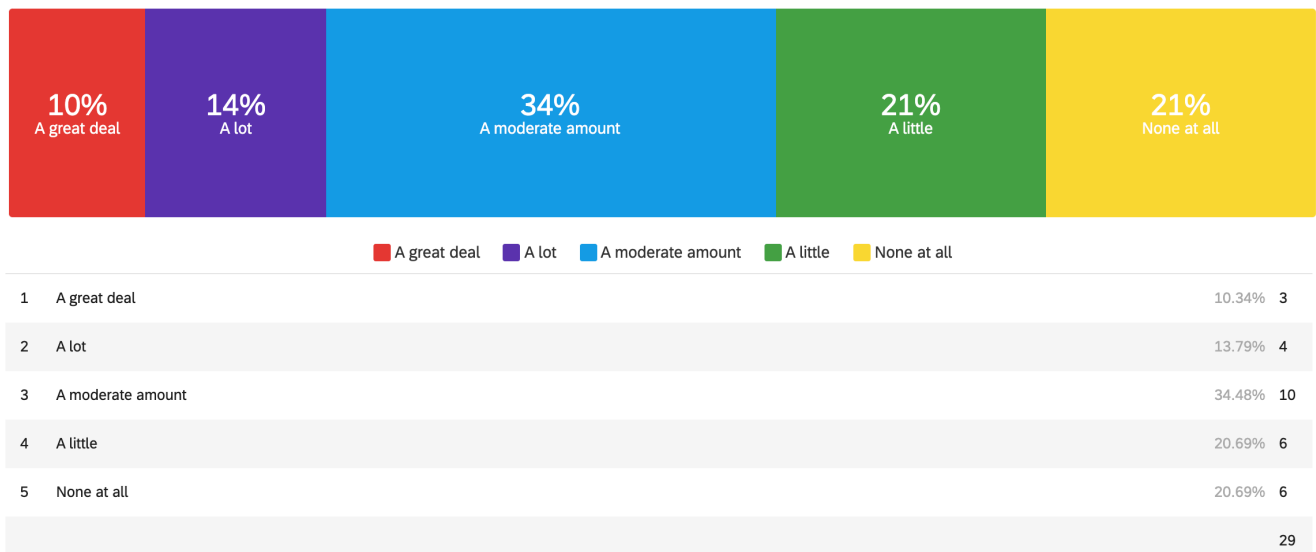


Figure 5. Question 6. Our dojo has developed policies relating to accessibility standards.

### Question Seven

If a member of the community has not been able to access services in a meaningful way it is essential that they have a means to provide feedback so that the necessary changes can be made for the dojo and for the member. My dojo has an accessible method for receiving feedback that the instructors are made aware of and have informed their volunteers, staff and students ( eg. website, social media, phone number to call, comment box).

Out of 28 respondents 50% (n14) believe that within their organization there is a method for receiving feedback from community members regarding services, and 21% (n6) *somewhat agree* with the statement, while 21% (n6) *neither agree nor disagree* and only 7% (n2) *strongly disagree*. Therefore, at least 71% have a method to receive feedback from community members.

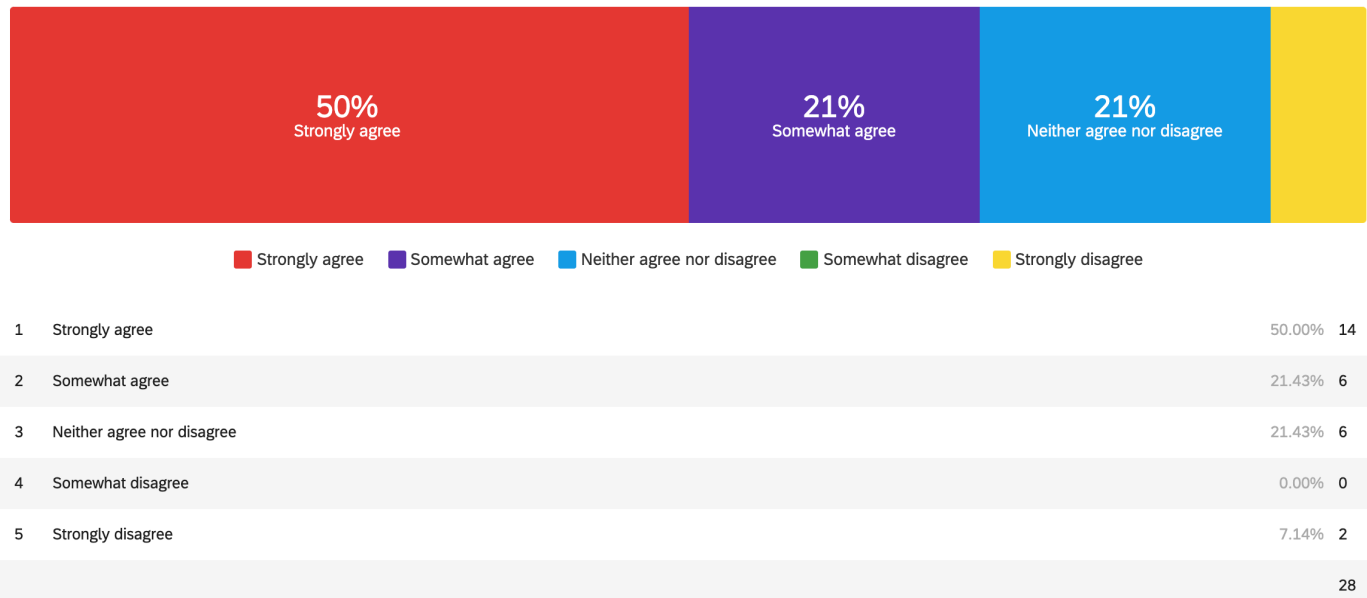


Figure 6. Question Seven: My dojo has an accessible method for receiving feedback that the instructors are made aware of

### Question Eight

All organizations are required to make exiting emergency procedures, plans or public safety information available in an accessible format with appropriate communication supports upon request. Our organization has implemented emergency procedures and can provide public safety information when requested.

Out of 28 respondents 39% (n11) stated they *strongly agree* that their dojo has implemented emergency procedures and 29% (n8) *somewhat agree*. While 21% (n6) *neither agree nor disagree*, 3% (n1) *disagree* and 7% (n2) *strongly disagree*. Therefore the majority (68%), for the most part, have implemented emergency procedures, while only 32% are unsure, or have no procedures at all.

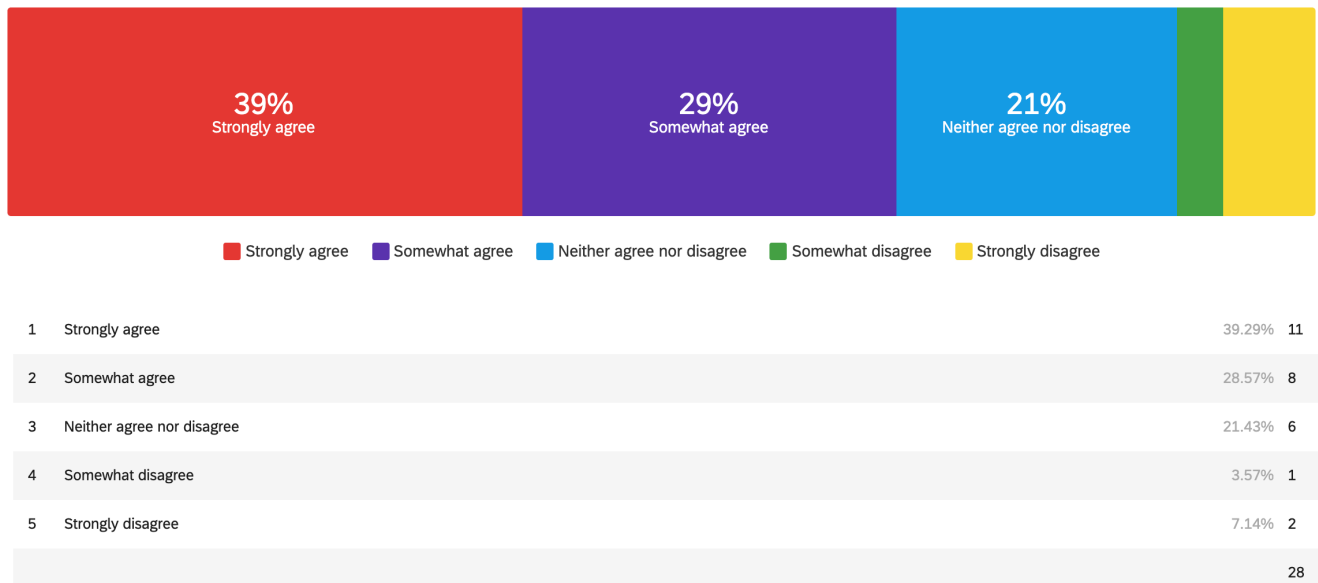


Figure 7. Question Eight: Our organization has implemented emergency procedures and can provide public safety information when requested.

### Question Nine

I am knowledgeable about multiple disabilities including physical (i.e., wheelchair mobility, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis); intellectual (i.e., learning disability); developmental disability (i.e., autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, down syndrome).

Out of 28 respondents, 7% (n2) selected that they believe they are *extremely knowledgeable* about multiple disabilities, 29% (n8) selected *very knowledgeable*, and 36% (n10) selected *moderately knowledgeable*. While 25% (n7) selected *slightly knowledgeable* and only 4% (n1) selected *not knowledgeable at all*. Therefore, the majority (96%) of the SWKKF instructors have some knowledge about multiple disabilities and only 4% have no knowledge. Although, when breaking down the data, it appears that of that majority, 65% (n28) have moderate or slight knowledge, which can be an area of focus moving forward.

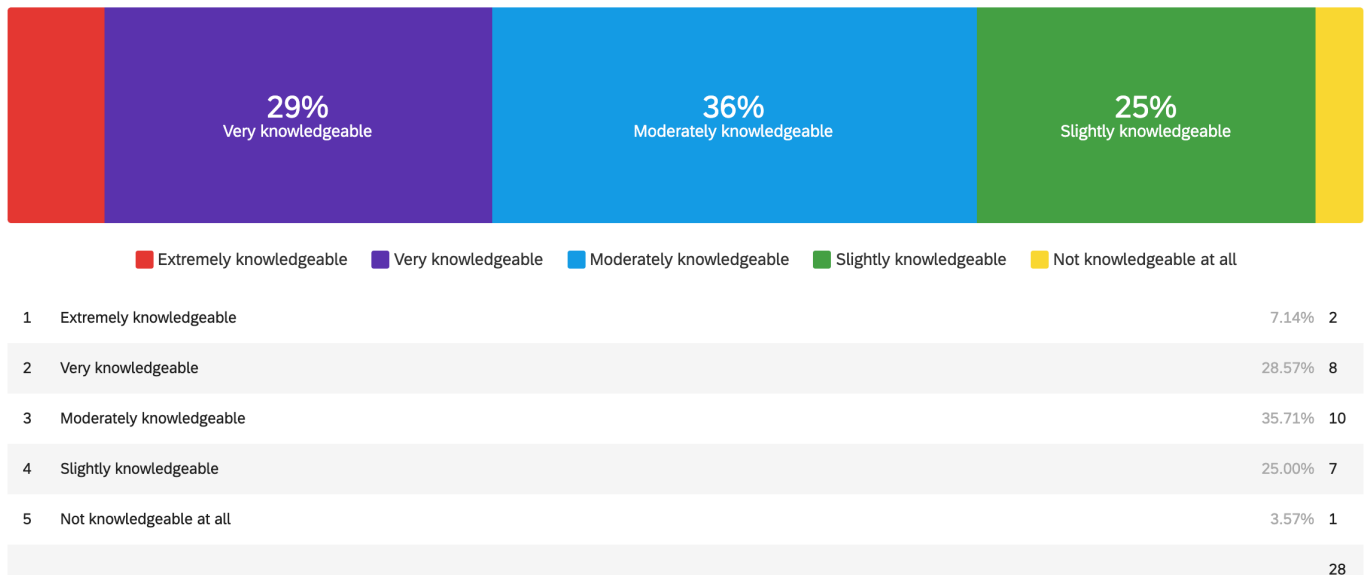


Figure 8. Question 9: I am knowledgeable about multiple disabilities including physical, intellectual, developmental

### Question Ten

All organizations must make accommodations and adaptations to instruction to suit members of their community. Instructors in my dojo have the competence to adapt their instruction for multiple learners including for individuals with developmental, intellectual and physical disabilities.

Out of 28 respondents 29% (n8) selected *extremely competent* and 43% (n12) selected *somewhat competent*, while 25% (n7) selected *neither competent no incompetent* and 3% (n1) selected *somewhat incompetent*. No respondents selected incompetent. Therefore the majority of the participants 72% (n20) believe they can competently instruct multiple learners.

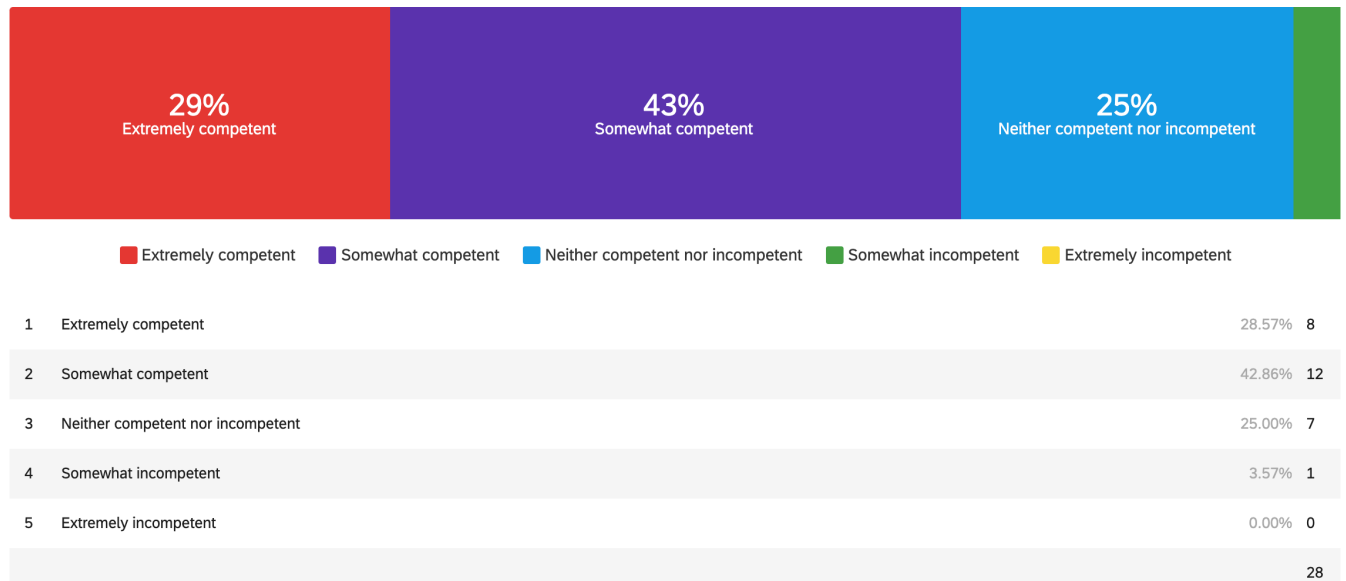


Figure 9. Question 10: Instructors in my dojo have the competence to adapt their instruction for multiple learners including for individuals with developmental, intellectual and physical disabilities.

### Question Eleven

Please select the most accurate description of the region your dojo is located in.

Of the 28 respondents, 29% (n8) selected *large city*, 21% (n6) selected *small city*, 21% (n6) selected *town*, while 25% (n7) selected *small town* and 3% (n1) *prefer not to say*. Among the respondents there was generally an even spread of the type of regions / community that the dojo's were located.

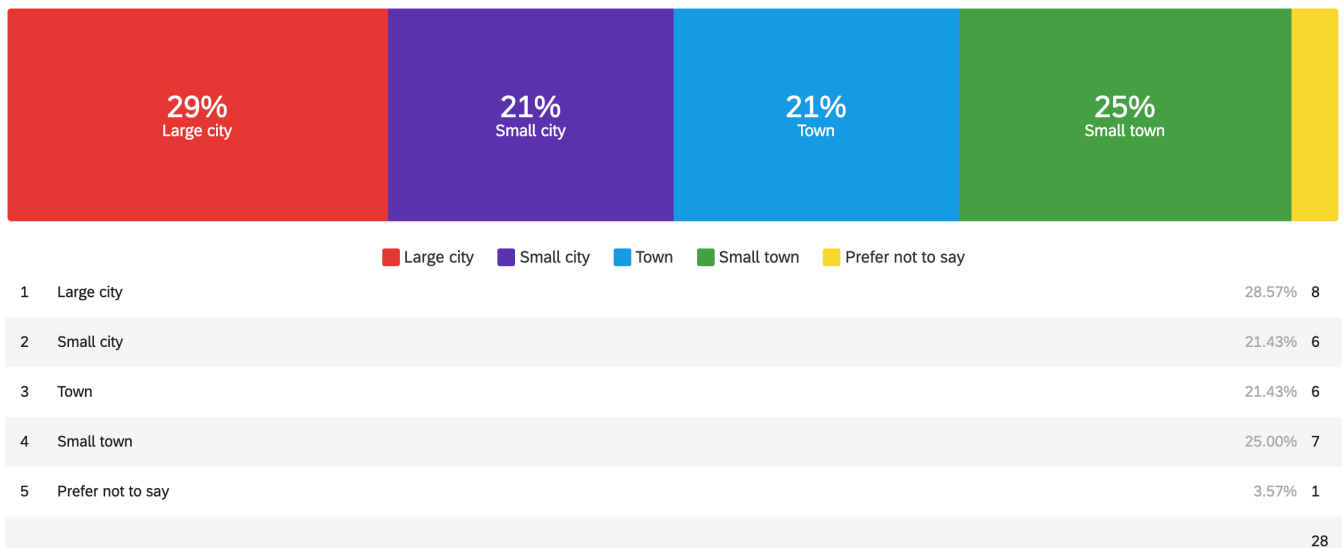


Figure 10. Question 11: Please select the most accurate description of the region your dojo is located in.

### Question Twelve

The next phase to this project is a more in-depth qualitative investigation that will include interviews that will last between 60-90 minutes. The purpose of this study is to find ways to support the transition to accessible and inclusive martial arts services across the Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation. Your input can help us uncover barriers and facilitators to providing accessible martial arts services across various regions. I am interested in being part of the next phase of this study. By checking yes I consent to being a part of the next phase of this study.

Of the 28 respondents 46% (n13) selected that they will participate in the next phase of this study and take part in an interview, while 54% (n15) replied no.



Figure 11. Question Twelve: I am interested in being part of the next phase of this study. By checking yes I consent to being a part of the next phase of this study.

## Appendix D: Letter of Invitation: Phase Two

This is an invitation to take part in the second phase of a PhD dissertation project.

Phase one: AODA readiness survey (complete)

Phase two: 60-90 minute phone (zoom) interview (in progress)

**Title of study:** Exploring barriers and facilitators to accessibility across Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation dojos

**Principal Investigator:** Maureen Connolly, Professor in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Department of Kinesiology

**Student Principal Investigator:** Steffannie Hancharyk, PhD Candidate Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Department of Kinesiology

I, Steffannie Hancharyk, PhD candidate from the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled *Supporting accessibility across Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation dojos*.

The purpose of this research project is to reveal barriers and facilitators to providing accessible martial arts and to enlist critical reflection from martial arts instructors regarding accessibility, for the ultimate outcome that dojo's become accessible for their community members. This project will initiate processes leading to cultural change across the organization to provide greater access to martial arts services in communities the SWKKF serve. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview offered online (Via Zoom), or face to face, or over the telephone, that will take between 60-90 minutes in length.

This research will provide benefits for the SWKKF, dojo owners / instructors and their community members. The data gathered from the study will assist in assuring the SWKKF's compliance with Ontario's accessibility laws, will afford dojo owners with economical benefits resulting from new markets, and will afford community members access to quality movement programs.

The SWKKF senate members support this research project and look forward to the valuable feedback that its members can provide regarding accessible practices across the organization.

### CONSENT FORM

Your consent will be requested on the date of the interview for the record and by consenting you agree to participate in this study described above and have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

*S Hancharyk*

Maureen Connolly  
Professor, Brock University  
905-688-5550 ext 3381  
mconnolly@brocku.ca

Steffannie Hancharyk  
PhD candidate, Brock University  
905-359-9669  
shancharyk@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board [file number 20-088].

## Appendix E: Interview Script

### Set 1: Micro Level

Q: What is the most significant benefit that you have gained as a result from your karate training?

Q: When you hear the word accessibility what images does it conjure up?

Q: Describe to me what experiences you have had over the last few years with respect to disability in a martial arts setting (whether be in class, at a tournament, siblings etc)

Q: How long have you been with the Wado kai?

Q: How long have you instructed for? Have you had your own dojo?

Q: Do you rent or own your space?

Q: What emotional response can you imagine feeling if you were required to teach participants who were wheelchair users or Down Syndrome, behavioural, mental health, Autistic?

Q: What emotions would you feel knowing you were competing against a student who had a special needs diagnosis?

### Set 2: Meso Level

Q: Describe to me your dream dojo.

Q: In your dream dojo what does the class schedule look like?

Q: If money were no object what three improvements would you make in your dojo right now?

Q: In a day at the dojo describe to me what might I see if I was a fly on the wall?

Q: What are the typical noises and sounds I would hear during one of your lessons.

Q: What sounds suggest to you that the students are actively engaged and learning?

Q: Describe how the noise levels change in different parts of the lesson?

Q: Which services in your dojo bring in the most revenue?

Q: What kind of ways do you market your classes? Can I have some a copy of your most recent flyers or any promotional media?

Q: Can you provide me an overview of your class schedule?

Q: To what extent do you consult with your students regarding changes you want to make in the dojo?

Q: In what ways do you receive support from within your dojo? (Parents, Student volunteer teach)

Q: In what ways do you receive support from outside of the dojo (for example landlord gives cheap rent, community space offers mats)

Q: What barriers have you experience that hinder your dojo's accessibility? (Micro, miso, macro)

Q: What partnerships would you want to see between your dojo and your community that would support community members with disabilities.

Q: How often does your dojo engage with other dojos for training opportunities?

Q: How do karate dojos/ and the SWKKF in general, engage with other dojos or organizations (locally, regionally, provincially, national, internationally)? What types of seminar and activities take place.

### Set 3: Macro Level

Q: Can you provide for me a brief he history of SWKKF?

Q: What would you say were the roots of Shintani Wado kai- defining characteristic!

Q: In what ways do you observe the roots of Wado kai across the SWKKF?

Q: How do you think that Master Shintani would approach accessibility/inclusion if he were alive today?

Q: In what ways do you observe the Wado kai being inclusive?

Q: In what ways do you observe the commercialization of wado kai and do you think it impacts the transferring of the roots of Wado kai?

Q: How does the SWKKF, engage with other or organizations (locally, regionally, provincially, national, internationally)?

Q: What concerns do you think that Canadian dojo's may face that are different than Asian or European dojos. (Meso)

Q: Considering the old stories that masters would not accept students unless they were disciplined and could work hard independently... why would it matter to be accessible?

## Appendix F: Email Survey Invitation

Hi Sensei,

Sensei Steffannie Hancharyk, a member of our Para-Karate Committee, is completing her Phd research at Brock University. Her research is centred around exploring barriers and facilitators to providing accessible martial arts services across different regions.

The first phase of the research is a short AODA (Accessibility for Ontarian's with Disability Act) readiness survey (10 questions) and is anonymous. The AODA is an act that the Ontario government has put in place to assure that ALL businesses are accessible for members in their community. Thus, it is very short (about 5 min to complete) and will provide a general idea of how familiar the SWKKF instructors / dojo owners are about the AODA law that was passed in 2005. Following the survey, Steffannie will recruit between 6-12 participants that will volunteer to take part in an interview to explore more in depth information about barriers and facilitators to accessible martial arts services in order to help the organization be the trail blazers to accessible karate in Ontario and Canada as an organization.

Here is a link to the short survey.

[https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_a5ncoa2clrAIufl](https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a5ncoa2clrAIufl)

Thank you,  
Sensei Denis

### Appendix G: Code Clusters First Cycle Analysis

Level one code categories	Value clusters	Revelatory clusters	Process clusters	Concept clusters	Emotion clusters	Description
<b>Clusters (Number of sub themes)</b>	Shintani Qualities and typical martial art values (8)	Stand alone phrases (20)	Engaging with other dojos (9)	Barriers and Facilitators (BF) Environmental / Physical space (3)	Fear of performing in front of others	Experiences/ memories with Shintani (8)
	Social Aspects (4)		Engaging with other organizations (5)	BF Lack of competent committed instructors (3)	Fear of injury	What would Shintani Do (4)
	Accessibility (2)		Competition (10)	BF Not for Profit (2)	Worry about losing tradition / Shintani	Teaching and Learning (TL) typical sounds (7)
	Teaching and Learning (5)		Evaluation / rank (3)	BF region	Burn out	TL sounds suggest learning (3)
	Philosophy (1)		Mentoring instructors / teaching karate teachers (14)	BF communication / language (2)	Intolerance	TL tension (11)
			Curriculum (5)	Lifestyle	Excuses	Reasons / benefits for karate (6)
			Pedagogy / instruction / teaching style (27)	Attitudes / stigmas / assumptions / stereotypes (7)	Shame of poverty	Dream dojo / money no object (14)
			Services offered (3)	Accessibility (5)	Joy in mundane	Renting or buying (5)
			Not for Profit	Inclusion / opportunity (10)	Passion for training	Brief description of SWKKF (2)
			Functions of committee / senate	Women in karate (4)	Benefits of diverse learners	Community partnerships (7)
			Standardization	Enlightened Ableism (13)	Organizational pride	Defining qualities / roots (5)
			Revenue generation	Super crip (6)	Gratitude for Shintani	Observe the roots (3)
			Marketing / promotion / targeted marketing (6)	Commercialization / sport (10)	Pride in good students	Feedback / dialogue from members (5)
			Community (6)	Old school (8)		Challenges faced by Canadians (7)
			Support through funding (4)	The Floor (6)		Disabilities (D) new non verbal student (10)
			Support through family / parents (8)	Hierarchy / rank (6)		D Compete with disabled student (4)
			Support from black belts (4)			D Observe inclusiveness (8)
			Support from Senior admin (3)			D Exposure to disability in the dojo (9)
			Support worker			D injury / acquired disability (3)
			Growth of org / dojo (3)			D disruptive behaviour (11)
			Decay or dojo /org (8)			
			Qualities of time (3)			

## Appendix H: Letter of Support President of SWKKF



To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Denis Labbé. I am the Canadian President of the Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation (SWKKF) and Chief Operator of the Welland Martial Arts Centre in Welland. I am writing this letter in support of Steffannie Hancharyk in her proposed research project involving the SWKKF and martial arts facilities across Ontario.

The SWKKF has been running as a Not- for -Profit (NFP) organization for over 23 years and has 132 currently operating martial arts facilities in both rural and urban regions across Canada. In 2015, I reached out to Steffannie to assist us with adapted martial arts classes. Since, she has been running classes out of the Welland Martial Arts Centre and has also become an active member earning her 4th degree black belt in June 2019.

As the president of the SWKKF, the Accessibility for Ontarion's with Disabilities Act will provide an opportunity for our member facilities to gain insight into providing accessible services for the 132 communities that our facilities serve. I have spoken with Steffannie multiple times regarding her vision for this project and have given her consent to promote her research, within our organization. As well, I will encourage all members to take part various aspects of the research when required (i.e., fill out survey, take part in interviews, provide documents for analysis and so forth). Furthermore, since Steffannie is an active member of our organization, she has also developed rapport with many of the organization's facility owners, and has been discussing this project for some time now. Thus, the project is expected by SWKKF facilities and will be received with open doors.

Upon completion of this project, I will also work with Steffannie to disseminate the guide book to all of our member facilities and work closely with instructors to assist with full AODA compliance.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 905-788-7999, or through email at [ddlabbe3@gmail.com](mailto:ddlabbe3@gmail.com).

Sincerely

Denis Labbé  
President Shintani  
Wado Kai Karate Federation

## Appendix I: Letter of Support Chief Instructor of SWKKF



To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Ron Mattie. I am the Chief Instructor of the Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation (SWKKF) and one of three Chief Operator of the Welland Martial Arts Centre in Welland. I am writing this letter in support of Steffannie Hancharyk in her proposed research project involving the SWKKF and martial arts facilities across Ontario.

The SWKKF has been running as a Not- for -Profit (NFP) organization for over 24 years and has 132 currently operating martial arts facilities in both rural and urban regions across Canada. In 2015, Sensei Labbe and I reached out to Steffannie to assist us with adapted martial arts classes. Since, she has been running classes out of the Welland Martial Arts Centre and has also become an active member earning her 4th degree black belt in June 2019.

As the Chief Instructor of the SWKKF, the Accessibility for Ontarian's with Disabilities Act will provide an opportunity for our member facilities to gain insight into providing accessible services for the 132 communities that our facilities serve. I have spoken with Steffannie multiple times regarding her vision for this project and have given her consent to promote her research, within our organization. As well, I will encourage all members to take part various aspects of the research when required (i.e., fill out survey, take part in interviews, provide documents for analysis and so forth). Furthermore, since Steffannie is an active member of our organization, she has also developed rapport with many of the organization's facility owners, and has been discussing this project for some time now. Thus, the project is expected by SWKKF facilities and will be received with open doors.

Upon completion of this project, I will also work with Steffannie to disseminate the guide book to all of our member facilities and work closely with instructors to assist with full AODA compliance.

Sensei Hancharyk is also involved in other martial arts such as taichi, iaido and other styles of karate. Her magnificent personality makes it easy for her to be accepted in any group she presents herself to. Not only is she a great teacher, she is a great student who is very easy to coach and mentor. She is the example of discipline that we all look for in our students and wants to learn more of Sensei Shintani's philosophies and help to spread it to the world.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 905-736-0943, or through email at [rmattie@vaxxine.com](mailto:rmattie@vaxxine.com).

Sincerely

Ron Mattie  
Chief Instructor  
Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation

Appendix J: SWKKF Logo



## Appendix K: Quirkos Coding Level One

The screenshot displays the Quirkos software interface. On the left, there are several vertical columns of codes, each with a color-coded header and a list of text segments. The columns include:

- Revelation / Verbatim (phra...)**: Contains codes like "Come in contact" | 1, "Them" | 15, "a women" | 5, "Get 15 black belts out of ...", "Because of their upbringing...", "Then I would be that" | 1, "Make this work" | 3 (26), "Deal with" | 21, "Let's fix it" | 2, "They are people they are ...", "in the event things go do...", "given they are able to" | ..., "I dont want to take a cha...", "To figure out what you h...", "I cant teach those" | 3, "It may take months" | 1, "There is no such thing as...", "As much as I would love t...", "Para athletes want to co...", "if they are laughing they ...", "A lot of it's time" | 1, "That to me is really the b...", "I got him out of the whee..."
- Concept | 2 (1156)**: Contains codes like "Marketing/promotion | 22...", "Website/Facebook/Soci...", "Print Media | 11", "Word of Mouth | 13", "School boards | 4", "Target Audience | 9", "Signage | 5", "Free Trial classes | 1", "Demos | 3", "Parade | 1", "Self-Promotion | 2", "Barriers | 1 (277)", "When COVID hit | 66", "Finance / Funding / mo...", "Knowledge Expertise | ...", "Environment / Physical ...", "commitment / time | 8", "Rent costs / overhead | ...", "Training | 6", "non profit as barrier Ca...", "Travel / location | 13", "Communication / langu...", "Egos / public perceptio..."
- Process | 1 (969)**: Contains codes like "Engaging with other dojos...", "other styles" | 8, "Engaging with Other orga...", "Competition / Tourname...", "International | 8", "In-vivo | 2 (59)", "Now | 8", "When Shintani was aliv...", "Instruction / teaching / le...", "travelling | 8", "Evaluation / grading / t...", "Competition/ tourname...", "Apprentichip/ mentors...", "Trial and error - take ri...", "Parents as assistance | 5", "Curriculum | 36 (37)", "Pedagogy | 36", "Teaching Style | 36", "Management | 2", "online / virtual / websit...", "Schedule | 16", "Adapting for physical | ..."

On the right side of the interface, there is a transcript window with the following text:

No problem, you have my consent to record

So the first set of questions, I will begin right away, what is the most beneficial thing to you about karate training?

The most beneficial thing to me personally about karate training is just a hole sense of wellness, physical, mental and if people care to go down that rout, spiritual wellness.

Very good, Yes, so when you hear the word accessibility what comes to mind?

To me the term accessibility means, equality of access for any person interested in pursuing the martial arts I guess in this context, but in a more general sense, outside of martial arts just the equality of access to services opportunities, things that might be

## Appendix L: Microsoft Excel Coding Level Two

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet titled "phd Analysis V3". The spreadsheet has a grid with columns labeled A through E and rows numbered 1 through 34. The data is organized into four main columns: Concept, AR, KK, and DL\*. The "Concept" column contains "Stigma / assumptions". The "AR" column contains text about mindset and physical ability. The "KK" column contains text about apprehension and student/observer roles. The "DL\*" column contains text about social fit and fixing issues. The "Accessibility" row (row 34) contains detailed text about physical and mental disabilities, system needs, and inclusivity.

	A	C	D	E
1	Concept	AR	KK	DL*
30	Stigma / assumptions			
31		It is and there is some that I do not think will have the mind set to do it, but I think there is a lot that will... Just move passed that deficiency model and work on the strengths and what the people can do right (Instructors mindset / attitude can be limiting)	There might be a bit of apprehension, you see a group, they re all dressed the same they all know each other and they are doing the same thing and you are this student or this observer that wants to maybe be involved and reach out but your kinda of staying back you are not sure, (Students mindset/ attitude can be limiting- Internalized ableism	if that person is not fit to be in the group with people, that is different, those people, like any other part of society, they are not able to, we find a place for them, we don't put them away we find what cause that to happen, let's fix it, lets make that person a good person, Deficincy mindset, tragedy, let's fix it- non disabled to fix disabled
32		Well yeah and like 15-20 years ago it was seen as such a physical, it is a physical sport and so you are mentally thinking they they have to have a certain body, or a certain ability to be able to do it, right, Stigma of what a karate guy is supposed to look like and be able to do		
33		I think that is a great question and I don't know for sure, it sure couldn't hurt, to realize and change that not stereotype, but yea really the stereo type that karate is only for that athletic physically able person right, and you break that stereotype image of what karate is and who can do it, Yeah, I think that would be awesome. Pictures of Para-Karate students would be great. stereotype		
34	Accessibility	physical mental, disabilities, you ability is: Open to anyone)	In a nut shell inclusivity, meaning sure that we give equal opportunity and equal access and availability to people regardless of their current abilities, current context, current dimension, domains environments, family, fiscal, physical mental like all the different five dimensions act we are made up of, things that we do and benefits that are involved in our association of karate should be open to everyone, there should be	Well that would be everything, I mean accessible should be everything as far as people that are special needs, people that are you know they have some physical concerns of such, we should be able, and am not sure if I am answering your question but, we should be able to be accessible to be to anybody as far as what they are able to what they are not able to do, what can we offer them, whether they are in a wheel cha