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DISABILITY AND COLLEGE COMPOSITION: INVESTIGATING ACCESS, IDENTITY, AND RHETORICS OF ABLEISM

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DISABILITY AND COLLEGE COMPOSITION: INVESTIGATING ACCESS, IDENTITY, AND RHETORICS OF ABLEISM

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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Dedicated to my partner, my best friend, and the man who sees all of me and loves me anyway. I love you, Eric.

To my girls—Gracie, Layla, & Cadence—thank you for always inspiring me and giving me reasons to laugh, to stop writing, to start writing, to read, to think, and to play in the dirt. Mommy loves each of you.

To my brother, Micah—bearing witness to your struggles, your pain, and your moments of overcoming has been my life's assurance of the possibility of redemption. You'll never know how profoundly your life's journey has impacted my own. I love you, golden boy.

To my daddy—you are my backbone, my fists. Thank you for always teaching me self-worth, self-reliance, and accountability. I love you.

And to my beautiful mother, Patti Kathleen Land. If I am anything good, it is because of you. I will feel your love, your arms, your smile, your voice in my ear. Always.

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In a discussion about intended, implied, and ideal audiences, someone once told me that all writers usually have only two or three people in mind as their audience. People close to them. Chris Carter is easily my number one. Between all the time I spent writing these past five years and all the time he spent reading those words and writing back—he may well know my mind better than I do.

For you, C.

A Certain Kind of Eden
by Kay Ryan

It seems like you could, but
you can't go back and pull
the roots and runners and replant.
It's all too deep for that.
You've overprized intention,
have mistaken any bent you're given
for control. You thought you chose
the bean and the soil.
You even thought you abandoned
one or two gardens. But those things
keep growing where we put them—
if we put them at all.
A certain kind of Eden holds us thrall.
Even the one vine that tendrils out alone
in time turns on its own impulse,
twisting back down its upward course
a strong and then a stronger rope,
the greenest saddest strongest
kind of hope.

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the accessibility and accommodation experiences of students with disabilities in college writing classrooms at a Midwestern public research university. The study argues that writing teachers need to work more deliberately to increase access and that this can be achieved by *listening* to students' suggestions for enabling accessible pedagogies. Increasing access requires that disability awareness be integral to the design of a course, not simply adding accommodations as a retrofit for individual students. Drawing on the perspectives of students with disabilities, access-centered pedagogy is presented as an alternative to accommodation models. Access-centered pedagogy is an approach to teaching that considers access a central value and aims for sustained and reflective attention to ensuring its realization for all students. Finally, the dissertation investigates the rhetorics of ableism to which students with disabilities are subject and makes an argument for combating such discrimination, through pedagogy, administration, and increased attention to disability as both subject position and critical modality.

Keywords: college composition, rhetoric, disability, access, accommodation, identity, ableism, writing pedagogy, disclosure

Chapter One: Disability in Writing Studies

"Them" is actually "Us"... -Lennard Davis[1]

"Some of you have disabilities. Some of you do not. Most of you will someday."-Tobin Siebers[2]

All too often in discussions about disability, disabled people are considered a distant, minority Other, an anomaly. Among writing teachers, at least in my own experience, students with disabilities (hereafter SWD)[3] are often considered on a case-by-case basis: figuring out how to get captions for the first time, making one large print copy of the syllabus, or seeing a notetaker seated among your students. This notion of disability as the infrequent, individual experience of the unfortunate few is a persistent problem that allows teachers to remain committed to the mythical notion that we are teaching mostly "normal" students. The fact is that "people with disabilities make up the largest physical minority in our country" (Davis 4, *Bending*). For composition instructors, consideration of disability as "that one student" prevents innovative curricular design that promotes access for all our students and perpetuates the closeting of disability in our classrooms. As Jay Dolmage pointed out during his 2013 presentation at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, "Disability has become the Whack-a-Mole of higher education. When disability pops up, we slap it with a quick accommodation, and we just hope it doesn't pop up again" ("Disabling Economies" 4). This approach to disability in college composition classrooms is a problem. Because the most common accommodations in higher education are tied to testing and lecture-based classrooms (extended time, reduced-distraction environment, notetakers), compositionists must confront the question of

what accommodation means for students with disabilities in writing classrooms, which are quite frequently process- and discussion-based. To accommodate, by definition, means to make room for, to make fit, or to give consideration to; we must resist the assumption that supporting students with disabilities is a task designated to others as well as the assumption that we are unqualified to address access in our classrooms. Instead, we should apply our unique expertise as teachers of writing to accommodating not only our students, but our classrooms, our pedagogies, ourselves. This dissertation marks my own effort to articulate a pedagogical theory centered on access, drawing on the perspectives of students with disabilities, from literature in both Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy Studies (CRL) and Disability Studies (DS), and from my own experiences as a teacher of writing. I also aim to move both defensively and offensively in this project; the former will manifest as critiques of the ableist commonplaces at work in dominant theories and practices of writing pedagogy and the latter will be presented as strategies for improving accessibility and enhancing inclusive teaching practices. This opening chapter provides an introduction to the theoretical framework for the dissertation by discussing the rise of Disability Studies both as a discipline in its own right and as it interconnects with the discipline of CRL, focusing most specifically on the disability-focused literature in three of the major journals in CRL, namely *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *and Rhetoric Review*. In addition to this literature review, I describe the increased consideration of disability within the professional organizations in our discipline, specifically the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). This literature review functions not only as the theoretical and

scholarly background for this dissertation, it also serves to illustrate the need for increased attention to issues of disability and access in college composition pedagogy.

Introduction: Disability Studies

Disability Studies (DS) has emerged within the past few decades as a field dedicated to examining the ways in which normalcy is coded and enforced, especially upon the body-mind. The founding of the Society for Disability Studies (1982),[4] the Deaf President Now protests at Gallaudet University (1988), and the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) all serve as evidence that persons with disabilities (PWD) are forging not only their own civil rights movement but also a field of scholarship aimed at interrogating the ways in which the category of disability has functioned as an oppressive construction in culture, in the academy, and through our own bodies and practices. Scholars such as Simi Linton, Lennard Davis, Paul Longmore, and Tobin Siebers argue for theoretical examination of the hegemonic order of ablebodied collectives, for reclamation of disability that is focused on rights rather than care,[5] and for increased visibility of disability[6] as a critical modality in higher education. And while there is no denying that the field of DS has risen exponentially in the past 20 years or so, scholars working in this area still battle for recognition, acceptance, and credibility.[7]

Many scholars invested in DS focus not so much on disability itself as they do on concepts of normalcy. As Lennard Davis writes, "the 'problem' is not the person with the disability; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the 'problem' of the disabled person" (*The Disability Studies Reader 1*). Joseph Shapiro, in

his influential book *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement*, echoes Davis's point, stating that, "it is not so much the disabled individual who needs to change, but society" (19). Shapiro draws attention to the socio-political climate that served as both backdrop and catalyst for increased advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities, as well as for the emergence of DS.[8] He described his trip to Washington DC in 1988, during the weeks in which "an obscure government council were meeting to complete their version of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a bill to give disabled people the civil rights protection that had already been extended to blacks, women, and ethnic minorities" (8). While standing on a curb awaiting a taxi outside his hotel, Shapiro sees "a young man in a suit, pushing the wheels of his bright orange wheelchair" and watches as cabs speed away, avoiding the inconvenience of picking up a disabled passenger, not wanting to "be bothered helping to fold the man's chair" (10). The impact of watching this scene unfold with the Capitol looming in the background enabled Shapiro to consider transportation as a civil rights issue, and by extension, disability as a civil rights issue. Just a few weeks later, "students at Gallaudet University, the nation's only four-year liberal arts school for the deaf, demanded the selection of the first deaf president in the school's 124-year history" and subsequently protested when the "one hearing candidate was chosen instead" (10). These two anecdotes, taken together, illuminate several central tenets of disability scholarship: a resistance to understanding disability as a problem of the individual; attention to the social, material, and political contexts that deny basic access and civil rights to people with disabilities; and a resistance to the paternalistic, ableist ideologies that mediate disability experience.

Much of the research in DS investigates various models of disability, most particularly the medical model and the social model. Medical models of disability are rooted in the rise of science and medicine in the past century and are best understood as models of bodies that position illness and abnormality as both a problem of and the responsibility of the individual afflicted. Under this model, "medical professionals are best equipped to address disability, and they do so as they would illnesses and diseases" (Brewer et al. 2). In the humanities, DS is more often understood through the social model of disability, which sees disability as socially constructed. Under this model, disability is best addressed in ways that interrogate the social features that inhibit full access and participation for people with disabilities (Brewer et al. 3). Until the 1970s, disability as a subject of research had been primarily relegated to medical professionals.[9] Mike Oliver, a leading researcher/campaigner for the social model, identified two main problems with the medical model: "Firstly, it locates the 'problem' of disability within the individual and secondly it sees the causes of this problem as stemming from the functional limitations or psychological losses which are assumed to arise from disability" (3). This critique supplied the necessary fodder to understand disability as a socially constructed ideology that placed certain individuals in a socio-political position of lack. Medical paradigms rely exclusively on rhetorics of cure, a return to normalcy, thus forcefully producing and reproducing the cultural logic of a "natural" body. In this sense, normalcy is falsely posited as an ontological given, as though it preceded language, interpretation, and the circulation of power. Jay Dolmage and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson argued that not only were these cultural logics of the body maintained but also that the primacy of medical models "sustained historic

exclusions and founded new ones on scientific grounds, through the arrangement and discipline of abjected others around the rational subject-observer" (29). Dolmage and Lewiecki-Wilson go on to argue that DS "holds that disability is a complex political and cultural effect of one's interaction with an environment, not simply a medical condition to be eliminated" and that the latter epistemology pathologizes disabled subjects with "dehumanizing results" (30).

While the social and medical models are the most prominent models discussed in DS (often in opposition to one another), other models deserve consideration as well, such as the identity model, in which "disability is defined as a type of experience in the world—a social and political experience of the effects of a social system not designed with disabled people in mind" (Brewer et al. 5). Simi Linton's benchmark text, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*, is an example of investment in the identity model; she argues for a claiming of and appreciation for disability as a marker of positive identity (both individually and collectively). Shapiro also highlights this point in his observation that "like homosexuals in the 1970s, many disabled people are rejecting the 'stigma' that there is something sad or to be ashamed of in their condition. They are taking pride in their identity as disabled people, parading it instead of closeting it" (20).[10]

Intersections: Disability Studies & Writing Studies

In my own discipline of Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy Studies (CRL), scholars have noted the paucity of disability research specific to writing studies and have increasingly contributed to scholarship on issues of access, invisibility, and

representation. This next section will review the disability-focused literature in three of the major journals in CRL: *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *and Rhetoric Review*. I have selected these three journals because I see them as leading journals in my field and because they represent major CRL journals that are (and have been for at least one decade) publishing work on disability. After reviewing these three journals in detail, I will also briefly highlight additional publications that feature disability-focused scholarship as well as a number of journals that have put out special issues on disability. Finally, I describe the development of attention to disability in our professional organizations, namely the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). The purpose of this review is to illuminate the increasing presence of disability within our discipline and to identify the trends in scholarly production centered on disability, access, and inclusion.

Our discipline's flagship journal, *College Composition and Communication* (*CCC),* publishes "research and scholarship in rhetoric and composition studies that supports college teachers in reflecting on and improving their practices in teaching writing and that reflects the most current scholarship and theory in the field…draw[ing] on research and theories from a broad range of humanistic disciplines...and from within composition and rhetoric studies" ("About Us"). With the publication of "Becoming Visible: Lessons in Disability" in 2001, DS asserted its place among this wide range of humanistic disciplines. This piece, collaboratively written by Brenda Jo Brueggemann, Johnson Cheu, Patricia Dunn, Barbara Heifferon, and Linda Feldmeier White, called for increased attention to issues of disability within our discipline and within our classrooms. This collaborative effort arose from panels presented at the 1999 CCCC.[11]

In their conclusion, the authors make a powerful claim about the impact of recognizing the generative potential of regarding disability as difference[12] in composition classrooms:

> We see differences in abilities not in disabilities—like other differences of gender, race, ethnic backgrounds, and class—as generative in their place within writing classrooms. Yet even in their generative potential, we know that the most initially disruptive difference to composition teachers is likely to be the differing abilities of learners. These differences call into question the very notion of composition itself. (392)

This article challenged the deeply engrained disciplinary commonplace of the linkage between ability and normalcy as well as to invite increased attention to disability as a category of identity. The following year, Feldmeier White made good on this call for awareness, publishing "Learning Disability, Pedagogies, and Public Discourse," in which she examined the professional and public discourse of learning disability, critiquing the limited focus on remediation (705). After another two years, Barber-Fendley and Hamel published their article "A New Visibility: An Argument for Alternative Assistance Writing Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities." Like Feldmeier White's article, this piece focused primarily on students with learning disabilities, but also targeted the potential for programmatic change within writing programs and challenged the widely circulated metaphor of the "level playing field" that dominates much discussion of accommodations within higher education. After this trio of disability-centric articles, *CCC* would not focus again on disability until the publication of Margaret Price's "Accessing Disability: A Non-disabled Student Works the Hyphen" in 2007. This piece more purposefully integrated DS via an analysis of her classroom experience with the teaching and assessment of critical thinking (53). While her main argument critiqued the measurement of critical thinking through individual

written texts (i.e. product only), the piece reported on a case study of a course dedicated to disability discourse analysis. The presence of DS scholarship is much heavier in her works cited than in previous disability-focused publications in *CCC* (including citation of Eli Clare, Lennard Davis, Simi Linton, and Tobin Siebers). Taken together, these four pieces suggest CRL should be more aware of disability (as identity marker, as critical modality, and as programmatic responsibility) and that efforts to more fully take disability into account challenge some of our field's deeply held assumptions about normalcy, ability, and pedagogy.

In 2010, Marilyn Valentino's chair's address dedicated a section to discussing the issues that arise when communicating with new types of students[13] (366). Among those she profiled in this section are students with disabilities, including students with autism and student-veterans. Although her call to arms echoed Brueggemann et al.'s claims made nearly a decade prior, she added urgency to this attention by citing the growing enrollment numbers of this demographic. As students with disabilities were afforded increased opportunity for equal access to higher education, it became harder and harder for teachers and scholars to relegate DS as work applicable only to an unremarkable faction of the student population. Valentino pointed out that "Because we believe that texts construct knowledge, reflect social perspectives, and provide spaces for discussion…it's time we join with others to examine disabilities as well" (368). This (repeated) call for attention to disability within the field of CRL is itself, however, a sad reminder of the inattention to disability within the journal, as no articles focused explicitly on disability have appeared since the publication of Valentino's chair's address.

A recent article by Stephanie Kerschbaum, "Avoiding the Difference Fixation: Identity Categories, Markers of Difference, and the Teaching of Writing," while not explicitly framed as disability scholarship, offers hope for the continuation of scholarship on disability in *CCC*. While not explicitly about disability, the article argued that attention to "markers of difference" might help instructors and students alike to better understand difference as a "dynamic, relational and emergent construct" (616). Kerschbaum deftly combined analysis of classroom discourse as well as of her own deafness to illuminate a critique of the difference fixation, or the notion that "discourses of difference that fix individual writers or groups of writers in time and space can frustrate, rather than enable, the development of pedagogical resources that attend simultaneously to broad conceptual categories and to the highly individual encounters that occur within writing classrooms on a daily basis" (618). Her article innovates the interrogation of the disability-composition nexus in such a way that our understanding of interaction in writing classrooms is transformed, or enabled. In critiquing the "difference fixation," she argues for an understanding of difference as relational, "predicated upon [two individuals] separateness from one another" (623) in an effort to elucidate the ways in which certain identity markers are displayed, responded to, and/or suppressed (627). Kerschbaum encourages teachers to cultivate attention to markers of difference and offers several strategies for doing so, including (but not limited to) considering one's own identity and the portrayals of others, and perhaps to record and reflect upon actual moments of classroom discourse in which these markers emerge.

It is difficult to pinpoint the initial appearance of disability in *College English* (*CE*), and any attempt to do so must be qualified in terms of language. Jennifer Clary-Lemon's research on the appearance of identity-based scholarship in CRL provides useful distinctions for this type of review. She clarified between publications using terms such as "retarded," "remedial," and "disabled." Ray A. Maize's article "A Writing Laboratory for Retarded Students" (1954) might arguably be the first consideration of disability, under the guise of the unfortunate label of "retarded." Similarly, Ralph M. Williams's article "A Method for Teaching Spelling to a Group of Seriously Retarded Students" discussed students who could not pass standardized tests and were labeled "retarded" as a result. In analyzing these two early pieces, Clary-Lemon writes that "It is unclear whether the students' abilities in these articles are, indeed, disabilities. That is, although stigmatized terms like 'retarded,' 'slow,' and 'defects' are used to characterize students' aptitude for writing, it is hard to tell if these authors are teaching students with disabilities such as dyslexia, or if they are teaching basic writers and pathologizing students' abilities" (105).

Disability resurfaced again in *CE* in1981 in an article by Norman Lavers, which focused on a specific disability (or variant of dyslexia) called stephosymbolia. The piece recounted the writing professor's encounters with many "nice," "male" students struggling with stephosymbolia in his freshman classrooms. While the earlier pieces by Maize and Williams are clearly susceptible to critique (from a contemporary perspective on disability), Lavers's article is also is ripe for DS critique, although in less obvious ways. The article positions Lavers as the heroic super-teacher, capable of "fixing" the pathologies of his students; it identifies disability as the result of the

psychological dysfunction of specific individuals; it fails to account for the social construction of disability; it does not examine what such textual habits might reveal about the problematic nature of writing pedagogy's values. But for 1981, this type of attention to disability is to be expected. In 1989, Carolyn O'Hearn published "Recognizing the Learning Disabled College Writer" and, much like Lavers, she exhibited several rhetorical tactics that contemporary DS would find significantly problematic. O'Hearn identified learning disabilities as a problem of particular individuals (294), and the writing teacher is again positioned as the classroom hero, upon whose shoulders the responsibility for remedy relies. The article ultimately suggested a diagnostic essay test to help teachers expose the LD (learned disabled) students among their otherwise proficient student body (296-297). Although both Lavers's and O'Hearn's articles are clearly out of date, it is worth mentioning them here in order to identify several of the ableist trends that much DS work in the 1990s and beyond responded to, namely the impulse for diagnosis and the lack of account for the social contexts that construct disability.

In 1995, *CE* published "Deafness and Insight: The Deafened Moment as a Critical Modality" by Lennard Davis. This piece represented a dramatic departure from Lavers or O'Hearn, as it presented disability, specifically deafness, as an untapped theoretical modality that "rather than being a marginal and eccentric focus of study, goes to the very heart of issues of representation, communication, language, [and] ideology" (899). While one might hope that this departure marked a progressive direction for disability-focused scholarship in *CE*, the subsequent years offered sporadic publication of articles more and less glowingly received by those vested in the tenets of

DS. One year after Davis's piece, Jacqueline Rinaldi's article, "Rhetoric and Healing: Revising Narratives about Disability" took up the task of examining the relationships between disability, identity, and representation, recounting her experience leading a writing seminar for people with multiple sclerosis (MS). This workshop's stated goal was to assist writers to "mitigate feelings of inadequacy and to revise the meaning of our lives accordingly" (823). In her efforts to promote the healing properties of therapeutic rhetoric, Rinaldi followed a pattern of "Diagnose and Heal,"[14] similar to the impulse exhibited by Lavers and O'Hearn. Nearly ten years later, Ann Jurecic's article "Neurodiversity" would manifest this same desire for diagnosis and present the ablebodied author/teacher as the healing agent.

Disability narratives also found their way into the pages of *CE* with the publication of Brueggemann's "On (Almost) Passing" (1997), Mark Mossman's "Visible Disability in the College Classroom" (2002) and Andrea Freud Loewenstein's "My Learning Disability: A (Digressive) Essay" (2004). While all three essays offered (primarily) first-person narratives of life with a perceived disability, Brueggemann most purposefully tackled the complex in-between space of disability/ability (or in her case D/deaf/Hearing/hearing), while Mossmann's more directly explores DS scholarship (G. Thomas Couser, Lennard Davis, David T. Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson) via his autobiographical account of living/teaching as a visibly disabled person. That said, even though Mossman makes good work of many key DS theorists, he concludes his narrative by quoting Rinaldi, praising and echoing her assertion that autobiographical pedagogy can be powerfully useful for repositioning the (disabled) self (658). In echoing Rinaldi without any type of qualified critique of her

tendency for diagnosis (from an ablebodied positioning), he negates some of the DS credibility he worked to establish throughout his own essay. Moreover, while I agree with Mossman (and, by extension, Couser, upon whom Mossman heavily draws to make this point) about the power and necessity of autobiographical writing, it is also important to point out this trend of narrative in *CE* disallowed many of these pieces the opportunity to build on previous disability-centered pieces from prior years.

In more recent years, *CE* has presented scholarship more fully in accordance with the tenets of DS, specifically with the work of Amy Vidali, Jay Dolmage, Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, Melanie Yergeau, and Paul Heilker. Vidali's article "Performing the Rhetorical Freak Show: Disability, Student Writing, and College Admissions" (2007) also analyzes what might be considered disability narrative (college admissions essay) but does so by using DS theories of the freak show[15] "to comment on the textual disclosure of disability, which can be regarded as rhetorically risky and 'curious'" (616). Like Mossmann, Loewenstein, and Brueggemann, she takes up disability narrative for close analysis but wields her study results in order to reveal that "students can manipulate both existing and unexpected rhetorical tropes for their own ends" (616). Unlike Mossman, Loewenstein, and Brueggemann, Vidali focused her analysis not on her own experience but on how her analysis of students with disabilities composing practices might transform the ways in which we understand rhetorical production in and around stigmatized identities in institutional settings. Lewiecki-Wilson, Dolmage, and Heilker all wrote response comments to Jurecic's article "Neurodiversity" (noted previously for its tendency toward diagnosis). Dolmage and Lewiecki-Wilson forcefully critiqued Jurecic's claims, writing that "she [Jurecic]

remains rooted in a normate stance—from invoking a single monolithic form of the academic essay to assuming the central (invisible and normal) position that enables 'us' to diagnose others and make judgments about 'them'" (314). They concede that, yes, she draws attention to autistic writing, but she only does so in an attempt to diagnose. Lewiecki-Wilson and Dolmage suggest instead that "we might focus on the disabling impact of some teaching" (316). Paul Heilker echoes this sentiment in his own response to Jurecic, proposing that embracing the idea of autism as a diversity issue "would require a perhaps difficult reassessment and revision of what diversity and culture and community might mean, but it would allow us to understand the discourses of those on the autism spectrum as a matter of 'The Students' Right to Their Own Language'" (320). Heilker's invocation of SRTOL is significant in that it positions autism as an identity marker not as a pathological condition. While these responses are directly intended for Jurecic, they mark a shift in the discourse of disability in *CE* scholarship: an insistence on a move away from spotting and fixing disabled writers and toward identifying and examining ableist pedagogies that inhibit, degrade, and misunderstand the composing processes of students with disabilities. Yergeau and Heilker follow up on this marked shift in their 2011 article "Autism and Rhetoric." Arguing for recognizing the rhetorical nature of autism, they call for closer analysis of silence surrounding neurotypicality. In other words, not only do they want to push for increased attention to autism as a rhetoric, they also want to expose and examine the rhetorical assumptions that undergird the silence surrounding neurotypicality—a silence resulting from it "default" status. In other words, they aim to expose the reasons people avoid analyses of the centered position of neurotypical.

Like *CCC*, *Rhetoric Review's* (*RR*) first disability-focused essay was written by Brenda Brueggemann, clearly a forerunner of disability work in CRL. In 1996, she published "The Coming out of Deaf Culture and American Sign Language: An Exploration into Visual Rhetoric and Literacy," insisting upon increased awareness in our field of American Sign Language, Deaf culture, and Deaf literacies. Though her article was nothing short of groundbreaking (in that it marks the first appearance of DS-centric scholarship in the journal), *RR* would not publish DS work again until 2003[16], when it offered up a symposium of scholars working within the interdisciplinary nexus of disability and rhetorical studies. In the introduction to the symposium, Tracy Ann Morse offers a direct and powerful opening line, stating that "Disability Studies is an underrepresented area in the discourse of rhetoric" (154). The symposium, made up of Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, Kenneth Lindblom, Patricia Dunn, Brenda Brueggemann, Georgina Kleege, Tonya Stremlau, and James C. Wilson, set about to encourage discussion of disability among *RR* readers. Taken together, the symposium contributors tackled such disability issues as the rhetoricity of persons with disabilities,[17] the constraints of current definitions for accommodations and normalcy, their own personal experiences with mainstreaming, and the metaphors that inform gene science. Examining the collective labels and the impact of "awareness," Scott Lunsford continued the conversational thread of the symposium with his piece "Seeking a Rhetoric of the Rhetoric of Dis/abilities," which appeared in the 2005 Burkean Parlor.

During the late 2000s, scholars such as Amy Vidali, Julie Jung, and Jay Dolmage moved beyond calls for awareness and published articles devoted to engaging disability as a critical modality in rhetorical scholarship. Jung, for example, argued that

the mainstreaming of disability narratives in composition anthologies "when articulated with a theory of individual subjectivity, legitimize[d] the belief that accommodation is an individualized process" (161), thereby obscuring the responsibility for change within the social and political institutions that construct disability as abnormal, as a problem of the individual. Vidali, in a piece methodologically similar to her *CCC's* piece, examines disability disclosure in letters of recommendation, laying bare the problematic assumptions that underlie faculty beliefs and values. Dolmage, in his two *RR* publications (2006 and 2009) "exhumes" disability in rhetorical history, looking to the mythical figure of Hephaestus the Greek goddess Metis in an effort to argue for the "rhetorical power of the body, specifically of those bodies that challenge rhetorical norms" ("Metis" 1). No doubt as a result of his fine work in rhetorical history, Dolmage was invited (by Lois Agnew) to contribute to the third Octalog,[18] in which he once again asserted his belief in the power of rhetorical studies of the body. He writes that "whenever we find the body rhetorically contested, and wherever we find rhetorical contestation about the body's role in meaning-making, we see intensely fraught negotiations" (113), and he cites his own efforts to uncover disability in rhetorical history as testament to that fact. Peter Wayne Moe's article "Revealing rather Than Concealing Disability: The Rhetoric of Parkinson's Advocate Michael J. Fox" marks the most recent disability-focused article in *RR*. In this piece, Moe first asserts that not enough attention has been paid to the "disabled rhetor" and then argues that Fox's decision to reveal rather than conceal his Parkinson's (during an address to Congress) disrupts conventionally accepted notions of both disability and rhetor. Revealing Parkinson's during public oratory, according to Moe, establishes Fox as a rhetorical

agent demanding revaluation of "whether the disabled body necessarily obstructs rhetorical efficacy" (445). Moe's work brings attention to disability identity in the public sphere and draws on disability scholarship to disentangle rhetorical acumen from its ablebodied (and ableist) roots.

Among *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, and *Rhetoric Review*, several interesting trends for disability-focused scholarship are important to note. Both *CCC* and *RR* have early articles that represent calls for awareness and inclusion of disability amongst teachers and scholars working within CRL (Brueggemann et al 2001; Feldmeier White; Brueggemann 1995; the disability symposium in *RR* 2003). *CE* is a bit different on this note in that the early disability articles in *CE* are more calls for effective diagnoses of disability, rather than dignity-affirming calls for awareness and cultural sensitivity (Lavers 1981; O'Hearn 1989). *CCC* and *RR* differ in that disability scholarship in *CCC* moves more toward a pedagogical focus (Price 2007; Barber-Fendley and Hamel 2004) than does *RR*, which—in its more contemporary publications—works more pointedly toward uncovering the ableist thread in our own discipline and toward uncovering disability in rhetorical history (Jung 2007; Vidali 2009; Dolmage 2006; Dolmage 2009; Agnew 2010). Like *CCC*, *CE* moved from calls for diagnoses into calls for increased awareness (Davis 1995) and like *RR* has recently moved toward exposing the ableist thread in our own discipline's discourse (Vidali 2007; Lewiecki-Wilson and Dolmage 2008; Heilker 2008; Yergeau and Heilker 2011). Tracing and comparing the publication trends in these three major CRL journals reveals much about the history and current state of disability research within CRL.

Although slow to progress (and at times intermittent), scholarship focused on disability (and that is grounded in the work of DS) has steadily increased throughout the last 20 years (give or take). Additionally, all three of the journals I examine here exhibit early articles that make the case for increased attention to disability and increased awareness of disability as an identity marker worthy of pedagogical investigation and rhetorical analysis. Finally, this literature review indicates that the work of scholars who situate themselves in the interdisciplinary crossroads of DS/CRL are committed to engaging disability (and DS) as a means of challenging ableist pedagogies and institutional practice.

While I have selected *CE*, *CCC*, and *RR* as three major journals worth examining in order to get a handle on the trends of research on disability in CRL, they are by no means the only sites worth investigating. There are many other journals, including some with special issues on disability, and peripheral genres (both within and outside *CE*, *CCC*, and *RR*) that deal with issues of disability, as well as many articles that might not be engaging disability as the focus of a piece but mention disability in interesting (and not so interesting) ways. *JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Culture, and Politics*, for example, has published a great deal of work focused on disability, ranging from the pedagogical (Weaver 1996; Brueggemann 2001) to interrogations of disability discourse in public circulation (Barton 2001; Lewiecki-Wilson 2001; Dunn 2011) to highlighting powerful interdisciplinary convergences with other fields of study such as Queer Studies and Trauma Studies (McRuer 2004; Berger 2004, respectively). Likewise, *Teaching English in the Two-year College (TETYC)* has published many articles that focus on disability, though a great deal of those seem fixated on dyslexia

(Adams 1985; Franke 1986; Corrigan 1997). Many of the pieces in *TETYC* are not in line with the tenets of DS and are not versed (or at least not citing) work in DS. One notable exception to this is the article "What We Talked about When We Talked about Disability" published in 2008 by Kathleen Gould, in which she chronicled her experiences teaching a literature course focused on illness and disability, citing such DS work as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Paul Longmore, and Lucy Grealy.[19] *Composition Studies* (Carmichael and Alden), *Writing Program Administration* (McLeod and Garretson; Valentino 2012), and *Pedagogy* (Brueggemann 2002) have all published at least one disability-focused essay. Many special issues on disability have emerged within the last decade, including *English Journal*, *Open Words: Access and English Studies*, *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, and *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* dedicated an issue (2002) to disability "demonstrated and mediated through technology."[20] In 2010, *English Journal* dedicated an issue to "Re-Seeing Disability" with editor Kenneth Lindblom and guest editor Patricia Dunn, and *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* devoted a special issue to "Neurorhetorics" in 2010. In 2011, *Open Words: Access and English Studies*, with special editor Jay Dolmage, dedicated an issue to disability, focusing on issues of inclusion, equality, and access. Starting in November 2013, *English Journal*, with editor Patricia Dunn, will develop a new column dedicated to bringing a disability perspective to teachers of secondary English.

In addition to the inclusion of disability in various journals and through special issues, disability manifests in CRL scholarship via some interesting peripheral genres, including review essays of disability books (such as a review of *Embodied Rhetorics* in

CCC), through Chair's addresses (*CCC*), through responses (*Pedagogy*, *CE*), through discussion-based genres (particularly in *RR* with the Burkean Parlor and with the symposium), and through columns (Patricia Dunn's new *English Journal* column "Disabling Assumptions").

In addition to the growing presence of disability within CRL journals, many disability-focused books and edited collections have appeared within this particular nexus of scholarship. Three main edited collections have shaped the engagement of disability in composition and rhetoric, namely *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language* (Lewiecki-Wilson and Wilson 2001), *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities* (Snyder, Brueggemann, Garland-Thomson 2002), and *Disability and the Teaching of Writing* (Lewiecki-Wilson, Brueggemann, and Dolmage 2007). Content- and focus-wise, these publications mirror the three CRL journals I selected for detailed review in this chapter: *Embodied Rhetorics* with *RR*, *Enabling the Humanities* with *CE*, and *Disability and the Teaching of Writing* with CCC. This might suggest that there are three identifiable veins of DS scholarship in the greater field of English Studies: rhetoric-focused, literary/cultural studies-focused, and composition/literacy/pedagogy-focused. While I don't mean to suggest rigid categories of research on disability within English departments, I do hope that I'm demonstrating clear lines of focus that have sustained patterns of inquiry and research among major journals and presses in our discipline. This is relevant because it shows that disability research, though often characterized as invisible (a characterization with which I tend to agree) has emerged with the past 10-15 years as a trend of scholarly investigation. Clary-Lemon's analysis of disability in her research on identity-based publications from 1939-2004 affirms this

trend with a qualifier that speaks to the seeming contradiction of disability research as persistently invisible yet more and more present. She writes: "While it cannot be said that substantial numbers of scholars are writing about the subject of dis/ability, either now or in the past 30 years, it can be said that compared to the decades of the 40s, 50s, 60, and 70s, dis/ability has been gaining some visibility in scholarly discussions" (162). I would add that since 2004 (Clary-Lemon's stop-point for her review), this visibility has been steadily increasing. Moreover, the seeming stability of these threads (as I currently identify them) elucidate where the needs are for interweaving foci and for breaking open and apart these pathways into new and innovative work.

In addition to these three key edited collections, essays on disability have appeared in a number of variously-focused edited collections. While it might be a valid point to argue that the inclusion of these pieces tokenize disability and/or disabled students, I think that a sampling of these essays demonstrate the powerful versatility and variability of DS within CRL. For example, in the edited collection *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*, Dolmage and Lewiecki-Wilson tap into the interdisciplinary linkage between feminist approaches and DS in order to outline methodological approaches typical of disability research. Margaret Price also outlines disability methodology in her article "Disability Studies Methodology: Explaining Ourselves to Ourselves," published in the recent edited collection *Practicing Research in Writing Studies: Reflexive and Ethically Responsible Research*. Price describes her use of four contact zones (access, activism, identification, and representation) in DS methodology for analysis of a qualitative case study she conducted as a teacher-researcher in a thematic course titled "Exploring Normalcy."

Lory Hawkes's essay "When Compassion Isn't Enough," published in the *Writing Center Director's Resource Book*, discussed students with disabilities in relation to writing centers and writing center pedagogy. These are but a sampling of the diverse angles DS has taken in CRL research collections. Calls for submission to such collections (and conferences for that matter) are including disability among their areas of investigation at an increasing rate.[21] Many of the scholars I've already mentioned have published groundbreaking books that focus on disability rhetoric, representation, pedagogy, and identity. Patricia Dunn and Brenda Brueggemann led the way, publishing (respectively) *Learning Re-Abled: The Learning Disability Controversy and Composition Studies* in 1995 and *Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness* in 1996; both books are highly influential and often cited in contemporary DS/CRL scholarship. Dunn published *Talking, Sketching, Moving: Multiple Literacies in the Teaching of Writing* as a follow-up, looking toward the potentials of multimodal pedagogies to effectively capitalize on the vast array of learning styles and capabilities that composition instructors encounter in the classroom. Brueggemann published several more books, continuing to develop her research on Deaf issues in CRL.[22] More recently, Margaret Price published *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (2011), and its enormous impact and influence are confirmed by the Conference on College Composition and Communication, which recently named Price's work the Outstanding Book of the Year for 2012. *Mad at School* is part of a publication series from University of Michigan Press titled *Corporealities: Discourses of Disability*. This series consists of some of the most groundbreaking and benchmark publications in DS, including Siebers's *Disability Theory*, Mitchell and Snyder's *Narrative Prosthesis:*

Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse, and Couser's *Signifying Bodies: Disability in Contemporary Life Writing*. Price's place on this series' roster not only marks her as a leading Disability Studies scholar, it also positions CRL as among those disciplinary voices having these important conversations about disability and the disabled subject. In the forthcoming publication of *Disability Rhetoric: Critical Perspectives on Disability,* Jay Dolmage argues that rhetorical studies have ignored the body. To remedy this disregard, Dolmage investigates the body in rhetorical history, looking at sites ranging from Greek mythology to contemporary film.

Yet another sign of the rise of DS and disability awareness within the greater discipline of English Studies is the creation and development of professional organizations and committees dedicated to issues of disability, access, and inclusion. The MLA created the Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession (CDI) in 1996. The initial committee, the first of its kind according to Michael Bérubé in a 2012 MLA newsletter, was comprised of several well-known and respected DS scholars, including Brenda Brueggemann, Sharon Snyder, David Mitchell, Lennard Davis, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. Among its several charges, the CDI endeavored to increase access for MLA scholars with disabilities, increase access at the MLA convention and throughout the MLA's job process, as well as to advance DS within the MLA (Brueggemann, "Getting In/It" 4-5).

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) also began paying attention to disability in the late 1990s. At the 1997 CCCC Business Meeting, Cynthia Selfe asked that the organization begin to consider disability among its other diversity considerations, leading to the creation of Disability Issues Task Force (DITF). In 1999,

Chair Keith Gilyard worked to make the convention more accessible, and invited Simi Linton, a leading figure in DS, as a featured speaker. Also in 1999, attendance at the CCCC DS-SIG "Teaching About/with Disability" quadrupled as compared to previous years (1997 & 1998). The 1998-1999 CCCC Secretary's Notes documented the acceptance of the report of the ad hoc committee of Disability Issues with thanks and asked staff to present a budget for items that have cost implications by the March 1999 meeting. These notes also requested that the incoming program chair work with the committee to develop a statement about the accessibility of conference sessions and designate a physically handicapped member to the Local Arrangement Committee (LAC) to explore the hotel for barriers and to gauge accessibility (1998-99 Secretary's Report 325).[23] In 2000, Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson served on the Executive Committee of CCCC and, with the help of Victor Villanueva, got disability added as a category of emphasis for conference submissions. By 2003, the Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition (CDICC) was officially created, with Brenda Brueggemann as chair (Lewiecki-Wilson became co-chair in 2004 and designated that all CDICC meetings be open to all). In 2006, the CDICC published the "Policy Statement on Disability Issues" (which was re-affirmed in 2011). In 2011, the CDICC appointed a Local Accessibility Advocate to the Local Arrangements Committee and since 2012, have also procured funding from the Executive Committee for an ADA consultant.[24] Recent years have also seen the CDICC delivering bulletins on accessibility to all CCCC participants and establishing an on-site accessibility booth at CCCC locations. Currently the committee is developing an interactive web site and blog for linking,

presenting, and sharing curricular sources as well as for discussing disability issues in teaching and research and in the lives of faculty, students, and staff.[25]

Disability & Higher Education

While the presence of previously mentioned scholarship is certainly one way to take the pulse of disability in higher education, assessing the presence and status of the students themselves is paramount to any research endeavor that seeks to better understand the educational opportunities for success for students with disabilities. In recent decades, people with disabilities have been the latest demographic of the American population designated for full and equal opportunity for participation in higher education. Two historical, legislative breakthroughs paved the way for this inclusion. First is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which "prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities in any program or activity receiving federal funds, including education" (Wolanin and Steele xii). In 1975, Congress passed the Education for all Handicapped Children (later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), which "mandates a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities" (Wolanin and Steele xii). These two important legislative moments provided increased educational opportunity for students with disabilities, a group that has long been marginalized from the schools their ablebodied peers attended. However, this increase did not automatically translate into equal enrollment and opportunity for SWD in postsecondary education. The 2001 Harris Poll Survey of Americans with Disabilities indicates that high school completion rates for SWD had improved, but the gap between disabled and nondisabled educational

achievement is still substantial (Wolanin and Steele 5). That said, the National Center for Education Statistics reports that "between 1996-1997 and 2005-2006, the percentage of SWD exiting school with a regular high school diploma increased from 43 to 57" ("Indicator 22"). The NCES further reports that in 1980-1981, 4.1 million children and youth received special education services and that number jumped to 6.7 million by 2004-2005. All of this data basically boils down to four main points that provide the exigency for this dissertation:

1) People with disabilities (PWD) have historically been marginalized from full and equal participation in higher education
2) The full inclusion of PWD is improving but still has a long way to go
3) The number of SWD graduating from high school is increasing (and many of these students, if not most, have received special education services)[26]
4) Colleges and universities need to better prepare to meet the educational needs[27] of this increasingly enrolling demographic

Thomas R. Wolanin and Patricia E. Steele, on behalf of The Institute for Higher Education Policy, wrote the report "Higher Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities: A Primer for Policy Makers." This primer, published in 2004, makes the powerful point that "In higher education, the student is protected against discrimination and provided an equal opportunity, but *there is no process aimed at achieving success*" (Wolanin and Steele viii, emphasis added). In other words, important legislative action has worked to get students to the ivory tower, but higher education has failed to effectively prepare these students, their educators, and their academic programs to ensure success. Wolanin and Steele go on to make the provocative statement that

"faculty attitudes and the academic culture are the major barriers to the successful implementation of accommodations for students with disabilities" (ix). Education scholars Allison R. Lombardi and Christopher Murray's research on faculty attitudes toward disability corroborate Wolanin and Steele's assertion. Lombardi and Murray found that faculty with prior disability-related training or experience were far more likely to "understand and carry out legal responsibilities affiliated with disability, minimize barriers, know about available campus resources, and invest extra time helping students" (51). However, with a lack of disability-awareness training, faculty attitudes toward disability remained ill-informed, thus inhibiting the "crucial role" that faculty attitudes play in "ensuring students with disabilities receive a quality higher education experience" (51).

Wolanin and Steele's report offers a condensed list of specific recommendations for their primer's target audience ("higher education leaders, government policy makers, advocacy groups, and the media"[28]), and while I won't review them in full here, I would like to highlight one in particular that is of key significance to my dissertation. The authors of the primer recommend that "in-service training and professional development opportunities for faculty members and graduate students devoted to the education of students with disabilities should be strengthened and expanded" (xi).[29] While I fully intend to take up this recommendation as part of my research's purpose, I'd like to point out two noteworthy rhetorical components of this recommendation as well. First, the primer's creators do not mention faculty or graduate students as part of their key audience for this primer, yet the document fully recognizes that faculty attitudes need to change and that faculty training on these issues needs to be increased.

The recommendation assumes, however, a top-down mechanism for such improvements; they do not provide the space for these transformations to happen ground-up within departments and even (dare I say it) from the work of graduate students. Second, they recommend training for those particular teachers who are devoted to the education of SWD. The structure of this sentence seems to assume that this group of devotees is one particular segment of faculty, as opposed to all faculty. This tacit assumption that only some instructors or faculty members would be devoted to the education of SWD indicates that even those dedicated to fostering increased inclusivity for SWD in higher education (i.e. the creators of the primer) fall prey to type of marginalizing they condemn. To assume that the education of SWD belongs to one department, organization, or discipline further contributes to the kind of marginalizing attitudes that excuse faculty members, graduate students, and department heads from fully recognizing their full responsibility and implication in actively contributing to the academic achievement levels of SWD.

In addition to the challenges involved for promoting administrative action and faculty training, SWD experience a range of obstacles transitioning to higher education including (but certainly not limited to) substandard content, lack of expectations, lack of qualified teachers, standards-based curricula, standardized testing, and lack of self-advocacy skills (Webman and Yasuda 14-17). In secondary settings where SWD are separated from students without disabilities, "more emphasis is placed on providing students with specialized services and supports that are focused specifically on remedial learning or behavior problems" (15). Moreover, SWD are all too often subject to the low expectations of teachers and are not actively involved in the decision-making

processes regarding their own supports, resulting in a lack of self-advocacy skills, which are a crucial criteria of success in post-secondary education (15-17). Once SWD reach the college setting, disability support services will be one of the most important resources available to them, but several factors influence the full use of these services. First of all, under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), students must undergo a re-evaluation every three years and this re-evaluation is crucial for providing proper documentation to ensure registration with college disability service centers. An Individuals Education Program (IEP) is not sufficient evidence for providing documentation. "Many students therefore have to arrange and pay for their own evaluations to prove that they qualify to receive supports" (Thoma and Wehmeyer 61). In addition to the manner in which material conditions mediate access to support services, students own attitudes toward disability identity may play a role. SWD are often happy to shed the disability label that has followed them throughout primary and/or secondary school and are therefore reluctant to disclose (Thoma and Wehmeyer 61).

Chapter Overview

Administrative expectations, faculty attitudes, and student preparation all impact the experiences of SWD entering the college setting and must all be taken into consideration when forwarding any pedagogical study aimed at improving achievement outcomes for this demographic. This dissertation is my own effort to contribute to the academic achievement levels of SWD within my home discipline of CRL, to transform attitudes about disability among my colleagues (and for myself), to provide a

pedagogical framework aimed at inclusivity and access for SWD, and to challenge the ableist rhetorics that all too often mediate disability experience. This work builds on previous research on disability in writing studies, but offers two distinct contributions to existing scholarship. First, while several case studies have been published that seek to examine the experience of disability in writing classrooms, my presentation of qualitative data from 35 interviews represents deeper saturation of experiences reported from students with a wide range of reported disabilities. Second, this dissertation focuses explicitly on critiquing an *exclusive* reliance on the accommodations systems upon which so many aspects of access are dependent. Additionally, I focus on the rhetorical dimensions of the disclosure process, looking specifically to the student-teacher communicative relationship.

Chapter two explicates the methodology for a qualitative research project that informs the central arguments of this project and articulates the importance of narrative in DS as well as the importance of grounding my pedagogical approach in the perspectives of students themselves. This study involved interviewing 35 students with disabilities at the University of Oklahoma, inquiring as to their experiences with writing classrooms, accommodations, and access in higher education. A department-wide faculty survey supplements this primary data set and will likewise be discussed, particularly in terms of the implications of faculty attitudes toward and knowledge of processes of accommodations specific to writing classrooms. This chapter discusses methodological approaches in constructivist grounded theory, describes the process of categorizing the data, and presents a summary of findings. The major emergent themes from the research data are analyzed in depth in the following chapters.

In chapter three, I first demonstrate that conventional accommodations such as notetakers, extended time on exams, and reduced-distraction testing environments are (usually) moot in composition classrooms. Moreover, findings reveal that impairment-specific, pedagogical approaches to accommodating SWD in writing classrooms are ineffective. With this in mind, I argue that access must be envisioned as a shared responsibility and that "conventional" accommodations should evolve into common pedagogical practice. Drawing on the perspectives of my research participants, I argue that enacting access-centered pedagogy additionally requires that writing instructors address and reflect upon anxiety as an access issue, increase intimacy through affirming student ability, and cultivate an awareness of students' material realities.

Chapter four provides in-depth analysis of two of the most prominent concepts in the data set: time and presence. Combining student experience with disability theory and composition theory, I argue that access-centered pedagogy relies on cripping time, valuing silence, and reconsidering the terms of participation in classrooms. The students in my study had considerable experiences to share that focused on their relationship to time and their ability/willingness to maintain presence in the writing classroom. If time is considered to be the *progression* of existence and presence is defined as the *state* of existence, then the relationship between these two themes might be understood as the ways in which students advance and subsist in the space of a classroom. This chapter argues that composition instructors need to consider how normative constructions of both time and presence may negatively impact students with disabilities.

After discussing the pedagogical implications of my study, chapter five moves toward an analysis of the identity-work that SWD experience in college writing

classrooms and beyond. The identity-work that SWD report indicates support for a common claim in CRL about understanding identity not as static, but as in-flux. I argue that we need to provide opportunities for disclosure while also remaining sensitive to the ethical problems that arise when disclosure is forced and/or coerced. Additionally, I examine study participants' conceptualizations of disability identity, both for themselves and for others. Stigma and shame play dominant roles in the choices that students make regarding whether to resist, embrace, or challenge their identity as "disabled." The chapter also presents several rhetorics of ableism, which I define as communicative practices, exchanges, and patterns that engage in social and/or cultural prejudice against persons with disabilities. Finally, I examine the strategies students employ to negotiate disclosure, including strategic genericism, risk management, and selective disclosure. I conclude the dissertation by exploring faculty attitudes and providing rationale for professional development centered on inclusive teaching practices and awareness of disability as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

Chapter Two: Methodology

In my own thinking about access and teaching writing, I initially assumed that my duty began and ended with making sure that I adhered to whatever stock accommodations the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at my university prescribed for the SWD that found themselves sitting in my composition classrooms. After working directly with several students with disabilities in my first-year writing classrooms, however, I began to question the applicability of these accommodations to my classroom practices and to my pedagogical values. Most of the accommodations for SWD in higher education are heavily tied to test taking: extended time on exams and reduced-distraction environments (typically only applicable to exams), for example. If not directly tied to test taking, common accommodations are designed for lecture-based classrooms: notetakers, carbon copy paper, etc. It didn't seem right that most of the accommodations that are in place to increase access for SWD don't really apply to writing classrooms (at least not discussion- and process-based writing classrooms). So this begs the question: do SWD just not need to be accommodated in writing classrooms or is there a lack of information regarding what types of accommodations might be envisioned and applied for ensuring fair access to academic achievement for SWD in writing classrooms and in writing-intensive courses[30]? This question seems to ask for a research project aimed at delineating accommodations that might be useful for SWD in composition coursework. While my thinking initially started in that vein, as I progressed through my project design, it occurred to me that inventing "new" accommodations for writing classrooms only served to uphold an accommodation system that is heavily informed by the medical model of disability: individual-based fix-

its that are applied to specific students in specific situations. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) challenges this model of accommodations and asks that instructors design classrooms that are accessible to the widest range of bodies, minds, and learning styles. To wit, UDL asks for an overhaul in the accommodations system, a re-structuring that calls into question the individualized process for providing SWD with accommodations. UDL asks for teachers not just to think about how to enhance access by accommodating individual students but rather to adapt their pedagogies so that accommodations become less and less necessary[31].

The problem I have identified is that SWD are subject to an accommodation model that is too heavily individualized and that the stock accommodations in this system are not typically applicable to writing classrooms. In order to begin addressing this problem, I designed a qualitative study that solicits the perspectives of SWD regarding the benefits and/or limitations of conventional accommodations in writing and writing-intensive courses. I chose to do a qualitative study for several reasons, but most importantly, I wanted the perspectives of the students themselves to inform any argument I intended to make regarding the improvement of access for SWD in writing classrooms and in writing-intensive courses in higher education.

In this chapter, I begin by providing descriptive overviews of systems of accommodations and Universal Design for Learning. After providing this framework for understanding the utility of accommodations in writing classrooms and the pedagogical potentials of UDL, I describe why it is vital to solicit the perspectives of SWD on these issues, drawing on the work of scholars whose work bridges both Writing Studies and DS. The chapter then moves through a methodological description

and concludes with on overview of findings, which are then analyzed and discussed in chapters three and four.

Universal Design for Learning & Systems of Accommodations: Opposing Models?

By definition, accommodations are "changes in instruction or assessment practices that reduce the impact of an individual's disability on his or her interaction with the material" (Ketterlin-Geller and Johnstone 164). Typically, these "changes" present themselves along five variables: setting, time, presentation, mode of response, and materials/equipment (Ketterlin-Geller and Johnstone 164). The most frequently used support services are testing accommodations, followed by note taking, counseling, and advocacy (Tagayana et al.). Accommodations should reduce the impact of a student's disability but should also be "reasonable," avoiding an "undue administrative burden or cost on the institution" (Ketterlin-Geller and Johnstone 165).[32] Classroom accommodations include preferential seating, tape recorder use, notetakers, availability of course materials, and early availability of syllabus and textbooks (Souma, Rickerson, and Burgstahler 5).[33] Examination accommodations include exams in alternate formats (from essay to multiple choice, for example), use of adaptive software (such as speech-dictation software), extended time, and reduced-distraction environments (Souma, Rickerson, and Burgstahler 5).[34] Assignment accommodations may include advance notice, substitute assignments, permission to submit handwritten in lieu of typed papers, and extended time (Souma, Rickerson, and Burgstahler 5).[35]

The above accommodations all exist within an accommodation model, which is grounded in the notion that individual students will request specific accommodations

for specific classes. Universal Design for Learning offers a model of pedagogical design aimed not at accommodating individual students, but at modifying the entire classroom environment in such a way that all students benefit.[36] While the concept of Universal Design began in the 1950s, it really began to catch on due to the passing of several significant legislative acts, namely the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1975 (later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) (Roberts et al. 5). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is especially important because it "mandated physical access in buildings for any U.S. program receiving federal funding" (Roberts et al. 6). Ron Mace, an architect with a disability and founder of the Center for Universal Design in North Carolina, developed the seven principles of UD:

1. Equitable Use
2. Flexibility in Use
3. Simple and Institutive Use
4. Perceptible Information
5. Tolerance for Error
6. Low Physical Effort
7. Size and Space in Approach and Use

Each of these principles has been applied to the classroom setting, hence Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Universal Design for Instruction (UDI).[37] UDI is "designed to support faculty in the challenging process of planning and delivering instruction that is responsive to diverse learning needs and offers an alternative to retrofitting changes that accommodate only those students with documented

disabilities" (Scott and McGuire 122). In addition to the seven principles of UD listed above, UDI adds principle 8, "A Community of Learners" and principle 9 "Instructional Climate" (Scott and McGuire 125; Roberts et al. 6-7). These last two principles ask that the "instructional environment promotes interaction and communication between students and faculty" and also that instructional design is "welcoming and inclusive" with high expectations for all students (Scott and McGuire 125). It is absolutely vital that UD be recognized as a process, as methodological, rather than as an end-game of sorts. The aspiration toward universal benefit does not presume that it can anticipate all needs and situations. Rather, UD is an ever-continuing, ever-emergent process through which instructors plan, react, design, and implement pedagogical approaches aimed at inclusivity. Dismissals of UD that are grounded in critiques of any attempt at "universality" are demonstrative of a reductive understanding of UD principles. UD is not a ready-made solution to all barriers to access; rather it offers a methodological approach to instructors for increasing accessibility in their classrooms.

In a systematic literature review of empirically based articles on UD, Roberts et al. identified and discussed seven major qualitative studies. They ultimately report that there is very little research on UDI's effectiveness for desired student outcomes (13). However, the studies they review suggest that students and faculty alike perceive benefits arising from UDI (see Scott and McGuire; Parker et al.). Roberts et al.'s final recommendations include operationalizing UDI principles for specific activities (e.g. writing assignments in first-year composition) and investigating this application in terms of student outcomes (i.e. an assessment project in a UDI pilot study) (13-14).

In CRL, scholars such as Shannon Walters and Jay Dolmage have tapped into the pedagogical potentials of UD for the instruction of writing. Dolmage's article "Mapping Composition: Inviting Disability in the Front Door," posited three spatial metaphors (steep steps, the retrofit, and Universal Design) in an effort to bring UD to bear on the writing classroom. Drawing on the work of such noted CRL scholars as Min-Zhan Lu, Bruce Horner, and Tom Fox, Dolmage describes the "steep steps" as the survival of the fittest academic gauntlet that leads to the ivory tower; "the university is the place for the very *able*" (17, emphasis his own). The retrofit underscores the accommodations system itself; it is the idea that a product or environment (think classroom) needs an added component or accessory in order to make it accessible for a small few (think accommodation). Dolmage argues that the retrofit is all too often a part of composition pedagogy (as the disability statement on a syllabus, or even as the inclusion of a week's reading on gender as justification that a curriculum has been diversified). He offers Universal Design as an alternative to the steep steps and retrofitting, arguing that UD "as praxis is a matter of social justice" (25) while also acknowledging the challenges of successfully implementing the liberatory vision of access it promises.

Walters's article reports on her experiences as a teacher-researcher in the technical communication classroom investigating the use of multimodality and UD in order to "more comprehensively address disability and accessibility in the classroom and to revise traditional impairment-specific approaches to disability" (427). While she acknowledged the potential of multimodality to address diverse learning styles (visual, oral, etc.), her findings suggest that a multimodal framework in and of itself is

insufficient for addressing overall accessibility (433). Working in tandem with her students, Walters explores issues that UD might serve to challenge, such as the practices of exclusion that often result with impairment-specific accommodations.

Accommodation models and UD models are often positioned dichotomously, but it may be more productive to view them relationally. In an accommodation model, access is seen as a problem of the individual whereas UD sees the problem as arising from the environment itself. In this sense, UD is much more aligned with social perspectives arising from DS in that DS concerns itself with systems of oppression rather than with the "problems" of individuals. The purpose of accommodations is to achieve access through applying a retrofit while the purpose of UD is to reimagine the environment in such a way that it is usable by all. In an accommodations model, access is retroactive, specialized, and consumable. In UD, access is proactive, inclusive, and sustainable (AHEAD Universal Design Initiative Team qtd. in Mole). As is often the case, understanding these models in opposition does very little in terms of forwarding understanding of access in higher education. A better solution is to consider these models in relation to one another: how might accommodations models be reconceived in such a way that they complement (rather than retrofit) curricula that have been universally designed? While I'm certainly critical of accommodations or impairment-specific approaches, especially given that they are often futile in writing classrooms, I do want to emphasize the importance of accommodations and of disability services. In this study, I hope to illuminate student perspectives on both these models, although certainly they'll be more familiar with an accommodation model.[38] Obtaining student perspectives on these issues is absolutely critical if writing teachers want to improve

access in our pedagogical approaches. Not only that, these perspectives must come from the students themselves, as they are best positioned to offer advice on what strategies might work best. Once these perspectives are gathered and analyzed, it becomes the writing teacher's objective to imagine and construct creative modes of implementing such pedagogical models (preferably in tandem with students, disabled and TAB[39] alike). Although some case studies of students with disabilities have been published (see Dunn 1995 for an example), I hope to provide deeper saturation of these perspectives as well as to present cross-disability perspectives. Furthermore, I focus specifically on their experiences with disclosure and the benefits (or limitations) of accommodations, which I believe allows for a richer understanding of the ways in which medical models of disability inhibit access.

Nothing about Us without Us

After analyzing research conducted at Gallaudet University, Brenda Brueggemann experienced a "crisis of representation" as she struggled toward publishing her findings, efforts she chronicled in the article "Still-Life: Representations and Silence." She discussed her own "silence, stasis, and absence" (20) that resulted from occupying the participant-observer role. Brueggemann's insights provide a cautionary tale for the fallout of the choices we make as we begin to speak or write about students. She writes, "they [deaf students] have usually not owned any knowledge; their messages—and thus their very lives—have often been misunderstood; and they have been silenced—more by the dominant 'hearing world' ideologies than by their own physical incapacities to verbalize" (21). Brueggemann offers an emotional

account of her relationship with two main subjects in her research, attempting to think through the different moments of silence she experienced with both of them. She reflects on the student's right to silence and her own inevitable silences, all of which not only humanize student representation (for me as a reader), but also question the purposes and impact of representation from the perspective of the student (and/or subject). In her later article "An Enabling Pedagogy: Meditations on Writing and Disability," published five years after "Still-Life," Brueggemann observed "What we say and do and believe about disability suddenly begins to be what we say and do and believe about ourselves" (794). Like Brueggemann, Catherine Luna, in her article "Learning from Diverse Learners: (Re)writing Academic Literacies and Learning Disabilities in College," reflects on the need for deliberate reflection on the silencing of student voice. Luna describes Kate, a college writing student who received a learning disability (LD) diagnosis in high school. Luna describes how Kate's negative perceptions of her abilities as a writer were shaped by the manner in which her LD report represented her as a learner. In accounting for the insights of the LD students represented in her article, she writes that "According to HEAL[40] group members, the single most important strategy for remediating contexts is listening to learners" (603). In other words, if teachers want answers for how to "remediate," they need to ask the students themselves.[41] Paul Heilker also emphasizes this point (specifically in terms of students with autism spectrum disorders), writing that "the most important voices and perspectives that we need to bring into this conversation are those of people themselves on the autism spectrum" (320, in response to Jurecic with Lewiecki-Wilson and Dolmage). He reflects on the crisis of representation stating that "we are all guilty here

of speaking for, about, and through the people on the spectrum rather than with them" (320).

In the recent publication of *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*, Margaret Price offers an extended examination of the challenges teachers face when prompted with the task of listening to voices that have traditionally been suppressed or silenced. Price discusses the article, "On the Rhetorics of Mental Disability," in which Catherine Prendergast argues that a diagnosis of being mentally ill "necessarily supplants one's position as rhetor" (191). Price extends Prendergast by stating that "We [people with mental disabilities] speak from positions that are assumed to be subhuman, even non-human; and therefore, when we speak, our words go unheeded…persons with mental disabilities are presumed not to be competent, nor understandable, nor valuable, nor whole" (26). Both Prendergast and Price make the point that students marked mentally ill (whether institutionally or individually disclosed) have no rhetoricity; they are rhetorically disabled (Prendergast 202; Price 26). Working with concepts of listening offered by such composition theorists as Amy Lee and Krista Ratcliffe, Price argues that although these efforts for "understanding" (Ratcliffe qtd. in Price, *Mad at School* 44) are applaudable, when the disabled subject is taken into account, a conundrum remains: "What happens to the rhetor who cannot be 'listened' to—because ze [*sic*] is not present, or fails to participate in discussions, or fails to 'make sense' on a neurotypical scale?" (44). She follows her discussion of listening with an entire chapter dedicated to practice, which she titles "Ways to Move: Presence, Participation, and Resistance in Kairotic Space." Relying heavily on perspectives from individuals with disabilities, Price offers innovative commentary on

accommodating classrooms, rather than merely accommodating individuals. She concludes the chapter by describing the way in which a hearing-impaired student helped her understand that "True accommodations are not *added on* to a classroom environment; they are *built into* the infrastructure" (102, emphasis her own). The key point here is that Price puts concepts of listening to work through seeking pedagogical direction from the disabled students in her classrooms.

Following Price's methodology, I too am hopeful that the research project presented in this dissertation likewise engages and enacts rhetorical listening, which Ratcliffe defined as "a trope for interpretive invention and as a code of cross-cultural conduct…[which] signified a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture (1). Drawing on the work of Kenneth Burke, Ratcliffe offers a framework for understanding identification in a manner that is particularly applicable to research on pedagogical design aimed at inclusivity. She draws attention to the ways in which identification might occur through both commonalities *and* differences. That is to say, the identification of shared difference might prove useful in an effort toward common and productive understanding between people or groups of people. In the context of my study, this suggests that there is power in the identification of differences, between bodies, assumptions, values, and processes.

It may seem contradictory that answers to the pedagogical dilemmas we face are to be found in the students we aim to teach. After all, as Marguerite Helmers demonstrates in her work on student representations, teachers— as the heroes and heroines of the Writing story[42]—must have something to offer; it's a fundamental assumption of the teacher-student dynamic. However, in this contradiction, DS/CRL

scholars forcefully argue that in the reverberations of these "disabled" voices lies (an at least partial) resolution to the inaccessibility of classrooms and curricula. When students are given agency in determining what types of learning environments are most hospitable, the challenge of representation is shifted, moving from a reliance on retrofitting and impairment-specific accommodations for individuals to a dynamic, ground-up, contextual conversation that acknowledges and advocates the students' right to their own experiences[43].

For scholar-researchers such as Brueggemann, Heilker, and Luna, methodological approaches in any study on disability must be keenly sensitive to student representation. "Nothing about Us without Us"[44] is one of the powerful messages of the disability rights movement. Therefore, there must be an insistence that the perspectives of SWDs be foregrounded in all discussions of pedagogies aimed at improving access and inclusion. My own study attempts to ground my findings in the voices of the students I interview, drawing from their experiences, perspectives, and suggestions in order to offer innovative pedagogical approaches in composition classrooms that both acknowledge the need for accommodations and attempt to reimagine access in ways that benefit all students.

It is important to point out that as a researcher, while I might ground my conclusions in the voices of the students I interview; their voices are nonetheless subject to my interpretation. In the article "Notions of Validity in Qualitative Research Methodology," Ratcliffe reminds readers that "data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter, or a translator" (149). In *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, Sharan Merriam points out that because qualitative

research acknowledges the social construction of reality, validity "must be assessed in terms of something other than reality itself (which can never be grasped)" (213). Drawing on Lincoln and Guba's research on renaming concepts in qualitative methodology to account for postmodern frameworks, Merriam suggests that qualitative researchers aim for credibility. To ensure credibility, one must question whether the findings are credible, given the data presented. To establish my own credibility, I first demonstrate a theoretical stance in Disability Studies, a discipline devoted to cultivating greater awareness of the lived experiences of people with disabilities. I also aim for sustained attention to the ways in which the conclusions I posit are informed not only by the data but also by my background as a writing teacher. Finally, I also attempt to establish credibility by including extensive direct quotation from research participants, allowing readers to examine both participants' words and my own interpretation of those words. Furthermore, because of the infinite variation of human meaning-making, qualitative studies are not necessarily replicable. Lincoln and Guba suggest that researchers instead aim for consistency, questioning whether the results are consistent with the data collected. With these two re-conceptions in mind (validity to credibility and reliability to consistency), I aim to ethically represent the perspectives in my data.

Methodological Approach: Grounded Theory

Qualitative research is most appropriate for ascertaining these perspectives from SWD in that this type of research aims to understand experience and how people interpret their experiences. Conventional techniques employed by qualitative researchers, techniques such as semi-structured interviewing and observation-in-

context, aim to obtain this understanding through direct engagement with the subjects of research. Merriam writes that "qualitative researchers are interested in *understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (13, emphasis her own). Translated to my own research, this means that I am interested in understanding how SWD make sense or meaning of their experiences as writers, as persons with a disability, and as college students in writing classrooms and in writing-intensive coursework. Because qualitative research acknowledges that reality is socially constructed, it is congruous with my theoretical approach of DS, which likewise acknowledges the constructed nature of human experiences, values, and cultural knowledge.

While there are several types of qualitative approaches from which to choose, I have selected a combination of grounded theory and critical qualitative research. Sociologists Glaser and Strauss introduced grounded theory in 1967 with their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. The defining tenet of grounded theory is the creation of theory that emerges from the data; researchers desire not only to understand but also to build a substantive theory about the phenomenon of interest (Merriam 30-31). Substantive theory, as opposed to the creation of a "grand" theory, "has as its referent specific, everyday-world situations… [it] has a specificity and hence usefulness to practice often lacking in theories that cover more global concerns" (30). Merriam goes on to write that grounded theory "is particularly useful for addressing questions about process, that is, how something changes over time" (30). Again, grounded theory is desirable as a qualitative approach for my study in that not only is my own instructional approach grounded in process-based pedagogy but writing itself is a process and the

classroom space itself is a process of learning, of developing as a writer. Moreover, the notion of the emergent theory being grounded in the data itself is what initially attracted me to grounded theory. The very notion of emergence draws attention to the ways in which the perspectives of people with disabilities have long been suppressed and silenced. I fully recognize that the pedagogical theory I present here is not *theory from nowhere*, birthed spontaneously via the onset of my study. Rather, I see it as emerging from the voices of the students I interview and moving through my own inevitable filters (a white, female, married, Midwestern, first generation, PhD student, mother of three, and teacher of writing). If theory is understood to be a system of ideas intent on explaining some process or phenomenon, my theory of access-centered pedagogy draws on SWD perspectives in order to better explain a process of inclusive, anti-discriminatory, disability-informed approaches to teaching writing. Because it is very important to me that the students themselves provide the insights that guide the development of any pedagogical theory, grounded theory serves to uphold this value both methodologically and theoretically.

In addition to grounded theory, I also felt compelled by Merriam's discussion of critical qualitative research, which focuses on societal critique in order to raise consciousness and empower people to bring about change (34-36). Part of my interest in critical qualitative research stems from my investment in critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire and bell hooks, particularly their works *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Any study that claims DS as the theoretical framework must necessarily be concerned with power dynamics, as "disabled" so often represents a less powerful or even powerless subject position due

to oppressive constructions of normalcy and ablebodiedness. Critical qualitative research places the investigation of power dynamics at the heart of any study design. In an effort to enact a critical stance, I opened every interview conversation with a quick introductory remark about how my goal in interviewing was to learn from their experiences. This opening remark attempted to establish my researcher-ethos as receptive (as opposed to evaluative). In the analysis phase, I paid close attention to the ways in which the power dynamic of teacher/student influenced the accessibility process.

Research Questions for the Study

- What are the benefits and/or limitations of conventional accommodations for students with disabilities in college writing classrooms?
- What are the experiences of students with disabilities in writing classrooms and/or writing-intensive courses?
- How do teacher and peer conceptions of disability identity impact the experiences of SWD in writing classrooms and/or writing-intensive classes?
- Are the values and processes expressed in writing classrooms and by writing teachers congruent with students with disabilities own values and processes of writing? How do these values manifest and/or conflict?
- According to students with disabilities, how might the current *system of accommodations* be improved in such a way that accessibility is increased?
- According to students with disabilities, how might *writing pedagogy* be improved in such a way that accessibility is increased?

Sample Selection

The initial design of the study called for interviews with 20 students with registered disabilities who are currently enrolled at the University of Oklahoma. Ideal candidates for the study would not only be registered with the campus Disability Resource Center (DRC), they would also be currently enrolled in one of the two courses in our first-year composition sequence: Principles of English Composition 1113 or 1213. This sample selection process is purposive, or "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore just select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam 77). Patton writes that "the logic and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling" (230, emphasis his own).[45] While there are many types of purposive sampling, I used a combination of three types: maximum variation purposive sampling, convenience purposive sampling, and on-going purposive sampling. Glaser and Strauss first identified maximum variation sampling as ideal for grounded theory research because data could be more grounded with "widely varying instances of the phenomenon" (Merriam 79). For my study, widely varying instances means procuring cross-disability perspectives (as opposed to having all research participants identify as having the same disability) on the phenomenon of interest in my study (the experiences of SWD in writing classrooms and in writing-intensive coursework). Convenience sampling occurs when researchers base sample selection decisions on issues such as time, money, location, and so on. My own convenience issues included the amount of

people that followed through on the interview process following recruitment, the amount of money I could afford for participant compensation, and the amount of time I could afford to spend in the interview stage of my study (during my one-year dissertation research fellowship). Finally, my sample selection type should also be considered on-going because my total sample size changed during the course of the study; I initially wanted to conduct 20 interviews, but later increased my sample size to 35 participants.[46]

My recruitment process began in the fall 2012 semester when I approached the Director of the DRC, asking that she send out my recruitment flyer to an email list of enrolled students registered with the DRC. Before sending my recruitment flyer, the Director asked to see my interview questions, and we engaged in an email exchange in which she expressed discomfort due to my explicit analysis of the accommodation system, a system in which she herself was very much invested. I had expected some friction with the DRC due to some previous tense interactions.[47] After some rhetorical maneuvering on my part, she agreed to send out my recruitment flyer. During this initial recruitment period, I had numerous responses to my email; however, only a small handful resulted in confirmed, conducted interviews. I realized that if I wanted to increase my study population, I needed to offer compensation for study participants' time. In the spring 2013 semester, I revised my recruitment flyer to indicate compensation for participation. When I again contacted the DRC to send out my recruitment flyer, the center had hired a new director. Excited by the prospect, I emailed her directly requesting her assistance with my project. Alas, she too expressed some resistance to aiding in my recruitment process. She refused to send the recruitment flyer

via email, stating that the email list should only be used for DRC communications. When I responded by saying that surely she could understand the benefits of electronic recruitment (both in terms of my own purposes to increase population size and in terms of accessible communication), she still refused to send the recruitment flyer via email but did agree to accept some hard copy recruitment flyers that would be made available at the DRC. Because I was less than satisfied with this recruitment procedure, I decided two things:

1. I would recruit via campus mass mail, sending my recruitment flyer to the entire student body at OU.
2. I would open potential study candidacy to students with disabilities who chose NOT to register with the DRC (in addition to registered SWD).

During this point of the recruitment process, I was flooded with interest (most likely thanks to the included compensation, which came out of my own pocket). In regards to their registration status, several factors complicated my initial understanding of registration; it was not quite as black and white as I originally assumed. I came to understand that in addition to choosing to register their disability with the campus DRC, some of my participants were registered with the State of Oklahoma's Department of Rehabilitation Services. Some of my participants registered with the DRC but chose not to use accommodations. Some of my participants had documented disabilities but chose not to register. Some of my participants had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) but chose not to register their disability at the college level. Some of my participants had only recently been diagnosed and were in the middle of the DRC registration process.

Participant Demographics

***complete participant profiles are included in Appendix C**

- 35 Participants total[48]
- Age range 19-52
- 19 females / 16 males
- 9 graduate students / 26 undergraduate students
- 3 student veterans (all male)
- Disabilities represented in the study[49]
    - Physical Disabilities: Neuromuscular Degenerative Disease (Frederick's Ataxia), Epilepsy, Amputation, Stickler's Syndrome, Traumatic Brain Injury, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Cubital Tunnel Syndrome, Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Sleep Apnea, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Urinary & Bowel Incontinence, Poly-cystic Ovarian Syndrome, Severe Migraines
    - Vision Disabilities: Blindness, Vision Impairment, Partial Blindness, Usher's Syndrome
    - Mental Disabilities: Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Attention-Deficit Disorder (ADD), Bipolar Disorder, Anxiety-Not Otherwise Specified (NOS), Depression, Major Depressive Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety/Panic Attacks, Tourette Syndrome, Chronic Motor Tick, Orthorexia, Anorexia

- Learning Disabilities (LD): LD-not specified, Dysgraphia, Dyslexia, math LD, Reading LD
- Communication/Speech Disabilities: lisp (speech impediment)
- Hearing Disabilities: Usher's Syndrome, Hearing Impairment

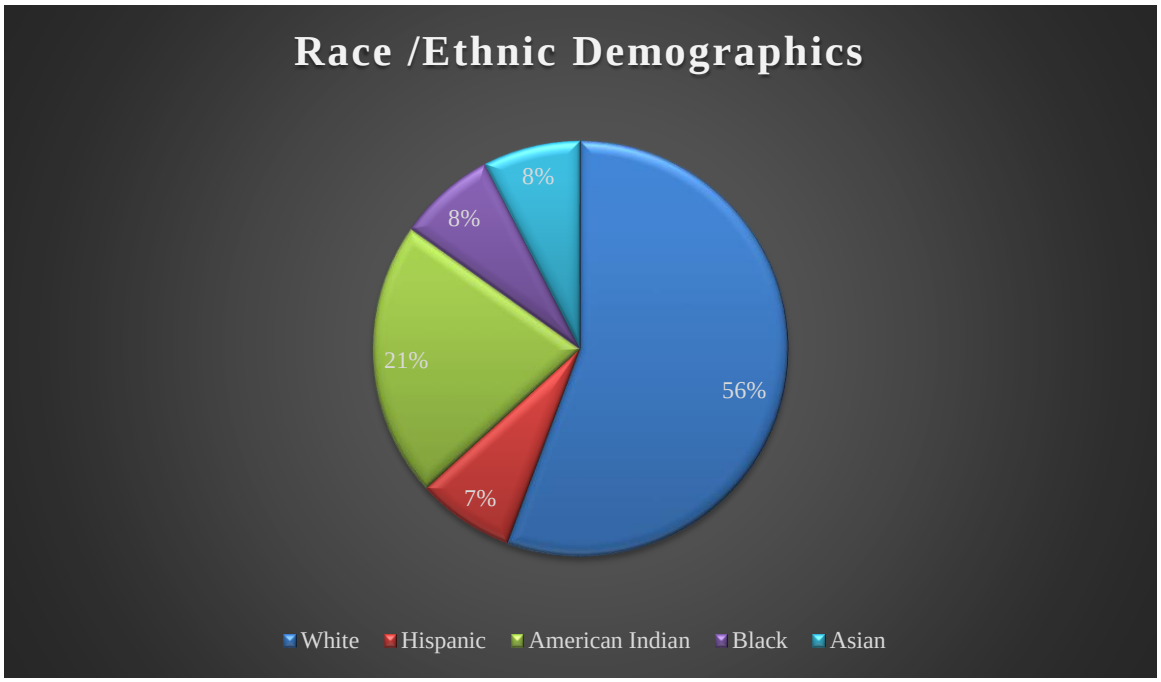

Figure 1.1 Race/Ethic Demographics

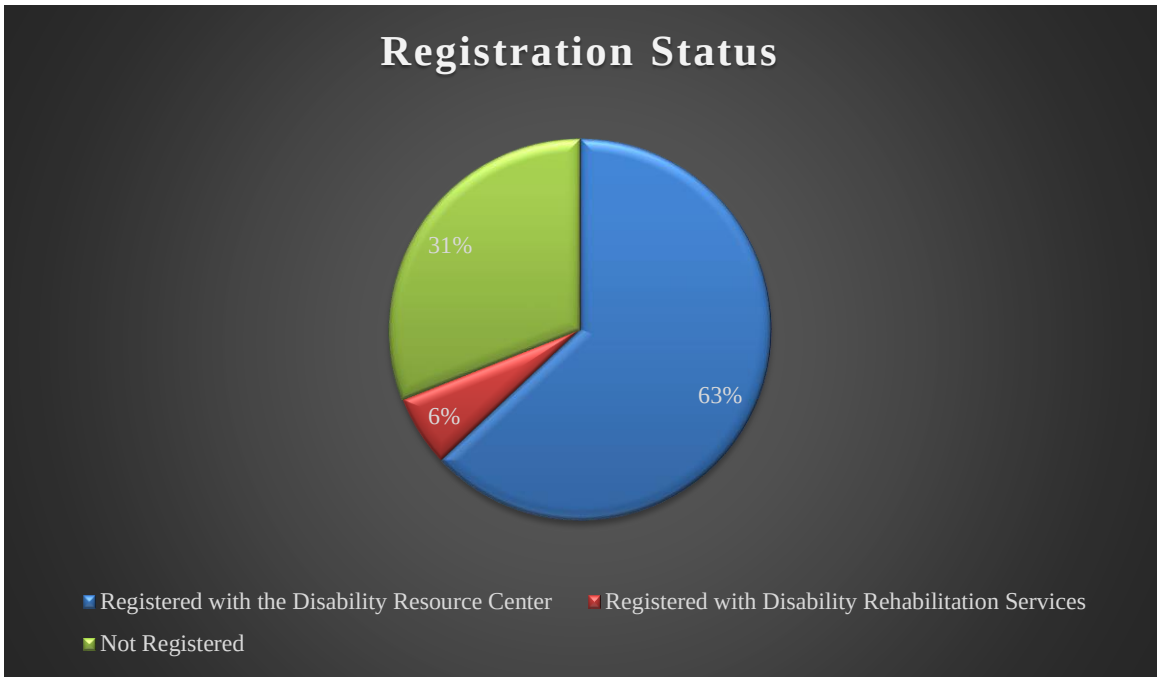

Figure 1.2 Registration Status

Data Collection

After a potential candidate had been identified, I scheduled an interview to take place in my own office, which I am lucky enough not to have to share with other graduate students. I had to schedule some of the interviews in our department's conference room for various reasons (such my own office door width being inaccessible to SWD who use wheelchairs). I used an audio-recorder on my personal laptop to record the interviews. Each participant selected their own pseudonym at the onset of the interview.[50]

My interview was semi-structured. I had a list of 24 standard questions, but I also allowed room for the conversations to flow organically and to allow for probing and follow-up questions that were specific to individuals. For some participants, I asked every question of the standard 24; for others, I only asked a portion of the standard

questions (sometimes due to relevancy and sometimes due to time constraints). The interviews lasted no longer than 60 minutes, only going over time when the participant expressed a willingness to continue or suggested they had more to say. The shortest interview was 22 minutes and the longest was 120 minutes.

A small percentage (11%, or 4/35) of my interviews was conducted electronically, in lieu of face-to-face for varying reasons, including participant preference and participant location. For example, one participant, although enrolled in OU, was located at a residential treatment facility in another state during the time of the interview. For the electronic interviews, I sent the standard 24 interview questions via email and then offered participants the choice of whether they would like me to send them a self-addressed envelope (so that they could send me their responses hard copy) or whether they would prefer to answer electronically. I advised that hard-copy mail provided more security. Two of the four participants who chose not to do face-to-face interviews elected snail mail, two elected email correspondence. I stipulated that I may request follow-up questions after receiving their initial responses to the standard 24 interview questions.

My interview questions, which can be read in full in Appendix A, were made up of three background questions, four feeling questions, five opinion/values questions, and 13 experience or behavior questions. Background questions gather information about demographics, feeling questions attempt to solicit affective dimensions of human experience, and opinion/values questions attempt to understand how an interviewee thinks about something. Experience or behavior questions gather information regarding a person's activities, what a person does or did, his or her behaviors (Merriam 96).

Because many of my research questions are grounded in ascertaining what the solicitation of SWD experiences can tell writing teachers about access and pedagogy, these last types of questions dominate my standardized interview questions in order to enhance the likelihood that my data set will address the research questions laid out in the study design.

After an interview was complete, I transcribed the audio track in full. During the months of conducting the interviews, I was simultaneously transcribing and beginning my open, or initial, coding stage, as is consistent with grounded theory methodology.

Data Analysis

Following advice from Johnny Saldana in his book *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, I decided on manually coding my data. Saldana advises that learning a coding software program such as Computer-Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) might result in the novice researcher exerting more energy learning the complexities of the program rather than analyzing the data (26). I will refer to my first process of coding as "initial coding" (Saldana 100) although others have referred to it as "open coding" (Merriam 178). Initial coding is "breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences" (Saldana 100). My own process for initial coding involved three steps:

1. Opening an electronic word document during the interview itself and making in-the-moment notes to myself, noting things I wanted to remember or thoughts that occurred to me as the participant was speaking.[51]

2. Making electronic comments using the comment function in Microsoft Word during the initial process of transcribing.
3. Printing out hard copies of completed transcripts and marking up the transcript with marginal comments.

This method of initial coding is harmonious with grounded theory in that it allows researchers "to remain open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by your readings of the data" (Charmaz 46). While I certainly wanted to remain as open as possible, I did have several codes in mind as I began. These codes emerged from my research questions and from my interview questions themselves. They include "access," "accommodations," "identity," "writing process," and "participation," among others.

During the third step of my initial coding (working with the hard copy transcripts), I worked recursively, reading and commenting on three to four transcripts at a time and then re-reading, re-marking those transcripts a second time. As I did my initial coding, I began a coding list, also referred to as a coding dictionary by some, that was constantly evolving.[52] As I wrote down codes, I immediately began attempting to construct categories, constantly thinking through various conceptual arrangements. Saldana refers to this as the beginning of a second cycle of the coding process, specifically "focused coding" (similar to what Merriam refers to as "axial" coding—axial implies rotations around a given axis, or in this case, theme) in which the researcher "categorizes coded data based on thematic or conceptual similarities" (209). During my process of categorizing coded data, I developed the following four core categories: pedagogy, disability identity, disclosure, and rhetorics of ableism. Figure 1.3 demonstrates the conceptual arrangement of my data following my process of focused

coding. The core category of pedagogy holds seven categories: shared responsibility, accommodations as common pedagogical practice, anxiety reduction, increasing intimacy/affirming ability, increasing awareness of materiality, cripping time, and rethinking presence. Each of the categories under pedagogy represent moves a teacher might make in efforts to increase accessibility and inclusivity in their pedagogical practice. Chapters three and four present analysis of these categories and comprise the bulk of the major theory I posit: access-centered pedagogy. The core category of disability identity holds three categories: shame, stigma, and resistance. The core category of disclosure holds four categories: strategic genericism, selective disclosure, risk management, and written disclosure. The core category of rhetorics of ableism contains three categories: advantage rhetorics, overcoming rhetorics, and rhetorics of pity. The later three core categories (identity, disclosure, rhetorics of ableism) are all discussed in chapter five and each accounts for the major trends of disability experience that emerged from the data. In some ways, chapter five (and the three core categories it analyzes) might be understood as an examination of identity management, as well as a critical examination of the conditions of ableism and in-access that students encounter. My intent is that the heavy emphasis on practice will be productively informed by my later attention to the ways in which students with disabilities are able (or unable) to *exist* in classroom spaces, exposed or passing, accommodated or not. Put another way, I hope that teachers consider not only their practices, but also their vital role in shaping the rhetorical dynamics to which students with disabilities are subject.

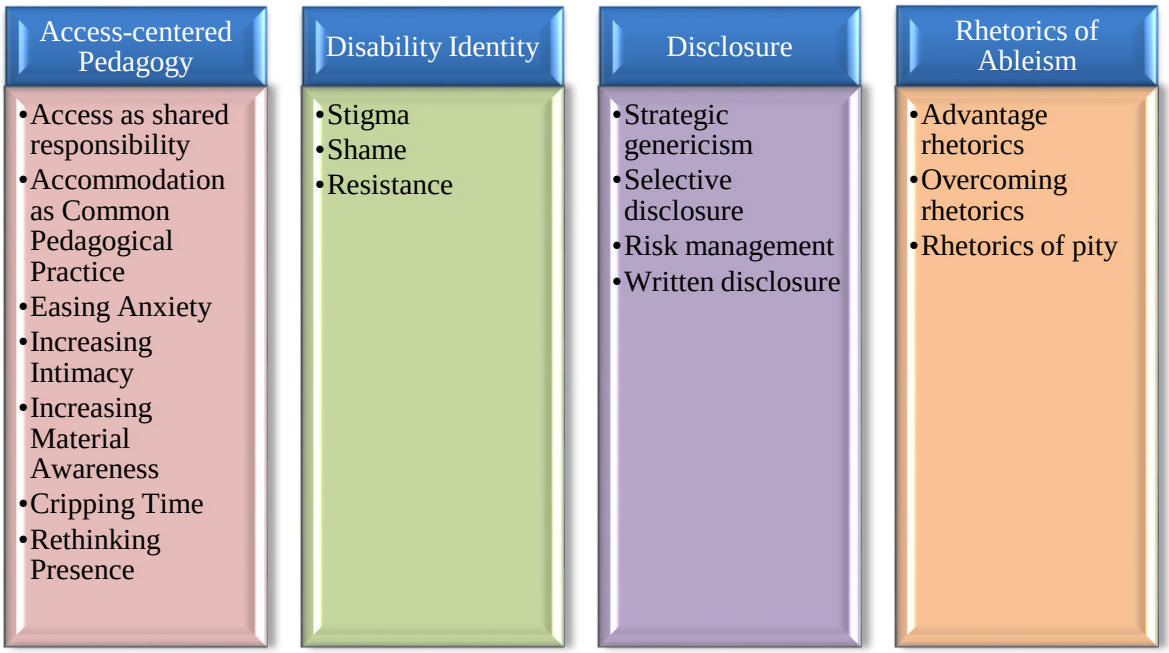

Figure 1.3 Conceptual Arrangement of Categories

Instructor/Faculty Survey: Design & Results

As a supplement to the interviews conducted in this qualitative study, I also surveyed all of the instructors in the English department. This survey should not be interpreted as a move toward triangulation (using multiple sources of data to ensure the validity of a study), as it does not measure the same experiences as the interview questions. The interview questions in the qualitative study seek to understand the experiences of SWDs with writing in higher education. The survey questions seek to understand the perspectives of writing teachers on issues of accommodation, access, and pedagogical practice. I designed the instructor/faculty survey with 26 questions, seeking out answers as to whether teachers are aware of the DRC, how likely they would be to provide non-conventional accommodations, whether or not they allow laptops in their classes, and more. Answers to such questions allowed me to get a sense

of typical pedagogical practice at my institution. For example, one component of my problem statement is the notion that many accommodations are not applicable or relevant to writing classrooms. One such accommodation is the use of a word processor in the classroom setting. When I began developing my study design, I suspected that most instructors allow the use of laptops (or tablets or other computing devices) in their classrooms. Soliciting the perspectives of teachers in my department helped to confirm this suspicion (at least in my own institutional/departmental context). Again, the survey questions are designed to supplement the data collected from the interviews, not to triangulate. The survey can be read in full in Appendix B.

The survey was distributed electronically to all instructors and faculty in the Department of English at my institution. I received 54 responses (54/roughly 100 faculty/instructors in my department). Fifty-three percent of respondents reported their rank as GTA, 26% as professor, 17% as adjunct, and 4% as Other.

Findings Overview: Interview Data

Analysis of the data reveals several important findings regarding the experiences of students with disabilities in writing and/or writing-intensive classes in higher education.

Students report that they experience negative, isolating feelings when they are held solely responsible for procuring accommodations. Not only does this individualized approach to accommodations isolate the students from their peers, it also has the potential to create tense relations between student and teacher. Many students reported feeling as though teachers viewed accommodations as burdensome.

Many students reported the benefits of some conventional accommodations, such as the use of a word processor or laptop in their writing classrooms. Some students, however, were denied the accommodation of using a laptop because disability services asserted that students need "real time" practice with grammar and spelling in writing classrooms. Participants also commented on other conventional accommodations, such as electronic access to course materials and multimodal content delivery, and suggested how they might benefit if said accommodations were common practice, rather than something they consistently needed to request.

Many students reported intense and often debilitating feelings of anxiety in writing and writing-intensive classrooms. They reported several suggestions for alleviating this anxiety, such as lowering the stakes of initial assignments and increasing curricular flexibility.

Students reported positive and productive experiences in writing classrooms when the teacher-student relationship is characterized by intimacy (defined as one-on-one interaction) and affirmation (defined as positive regard for their ability to be successful).

Students reported a number of material factors that profoundly influence their ability to be successful in writing and writing-intensive classrooms. These factors include both environmental (location in the classroom, lighting, navigating campus) and bodily conditions (physical strain/pain, impact of medication).

A consideration of time is a top concern for disability services; extended time is one of the most frequently used accommodations. However, extended time, as it is most often conceived in accommodation models, is associated with exams. Extended time on

assignments is far less common. Many of the students I interviewed expressed a desire for flexibility with deadlines and with processes of writing, along with a resistance to timed writing, thus raising the question of whether or not writing teachers inhibit access when they assign timed writing prompts in their classrooms.

Analysis of the data also reveals that in addition to experiencing constraint with the ways in which they progress through writing classrooms (time), they also experience barriers to access in their state of *being* in the writing classrooms (presence). Students report inaccessible course design in terms of whole-class discussion, attendance policies, and collaborative work. They also reflect on the ways in which lack of access and/or circumstances of their disability result in their departure from the course (through dropping, incompletes, and/or withdraw from university).

Finally, considerations of identity management emerged as a dominant trend throughout all of the data. Conversations about disability identity exhibited three major trends: shame, stigma, and resistance. Conversations about disclosure revealed four major strategies for the process of disclosing disability: strategic genericism, selective disclosure, risk management, and written disclosure. These strategies are by no means exclusive of one another; many students reported using various strategies or combined strategies dependent on the context. The data also exposed three rhetorical trends that many students explained. By far the most dominant is a rhetoric of accommodation-as-advantage, or the idea that students who use accommodations or request accommodations are taking advantage of the teacher, the system, and/or the university setting itself. Some students in the study resisted this rhetoric while others employed it. Rhetorics of overcoming and rhetorics of pity also emerged frequently in the data set

and will be analyzed in chapter five. It's important to note that not one of my participants ever mentioned the word ableism; in some ways, this final category represents my most forceful insertion of researcher-informed interpretation.

Findings Overview: Survey Data

Instructor Knowledge and Attitude toward Accommodations

The instructor/faculty survey revealed that 100% of respondents are aware of the disability services center on campus. A significant[53] majority reported that they would willingly accommodate without documentation (69%). A significant majority reported that they do not discuss issues of accessibility/ADA compliance apart from their disability syllabus statement (65%). A majority of respondents have not had any disability awareness training and of those that answered Other (21%) one third mentioned having children with disabilities (thus regarding parenting children with disabilities as "training").

Experience with Disclosure

A vast majority reported that students have disclosed disability to them (81%). A significant majority of instructors reported that students disclosed either via DRC correspondence (generic email about accommodations) or face-to-face, with a minority of instructors reported other means of disclosure, such as in office hours, parental disclosure, and disclosure through class writing assignment.

Perspectives on Participation

The ways in which instructors assess participation varied widely, from quantity-based approaches (how many times students speak up in class), to quality-based

approaches (content/quality of verbal contributions to class discussion), to more holistic approaches (combining verbal and written participation, active listening, online participation). However, the majority of responses indicated a heavy emphasis on verbal participation.

A slight majority (58%) reported that they call on students directly by name, and of those that reported Other (19%), many wrote that it depends on the dynamics of individual classes and individual discussions.

Classroom Conduct

A vast majority of instructors reported assigning in-class writing prompts (81%) while assigning timed writing split respondents 45% yes and 45% no. Though a majority said they do not administer essay exams, 28% affirmed they do include essay exams in their course design. Quizzes were likewise split with 50% of respondents reported they do not use quizzes and 44% stating they do.

A significant majority of respondents allow students to use laptops in class (69%) and only a small minority responded that they do not allow laptop use in class (8%). Of the 23% that responded Other, many wrote that they allow laptop use on certain days and for certain activities only (e.g. peer review day). A significant majority reported that they are willing to let students audio-record their classes (65%) and of the 27% that answered Other, many stated that they would allow it if students asked.

Of the episodes they were asked to rank (discussion, lecture, small-group work. individual work, other), discussion was by far ranked first (84% of respondents ranked it as their most preferred method of classroom episode). Lecture and small-group work came in close second and third respectively and individual work came last.

A significant majority of respondents reported that they assign reflective writing in their classes (71%).

Flexibility with Deadlines

A slight majority of respondents reported flexible approaches to deadlines: 43% answered yes, 45% answered other and explained the conditions for flexibility (e.g. requesting extension prior to deadline).

Interaction with Students

A slight majority reported that they meet at least once a semester with ALL of their students face-to-face (56%). A significant majority reported that they do not hold online office hours (75%).

Limitation of this Study

Two limitations of this study might be the small sample size and that it is context-specific. However, this study is not designed to make claims across contexts, but rather to offer perspectives from students with disabilities that enrich the existing scholarship on accommodations, access, and inclusion in composition classrooms. The process of procuring accommodations through institutionalized disability services is a recognizable phenomenon that occurs across all university contexts, and the students in this study represent a localized analysis of the benefits, limitations, and student-perceived experiences of said system. Therefore, readers of this research should consider this a localized study of a system that occurs across contexts.[54]

Reflecting upon the study design, another limitation might be the shift in trajectory: while the study initiated to uncover limitations of conventional accommodations, the data revealed a much more complex consideration of access was

in order—one that examined identity, disclosure, materiality, etc. Finally, the study was designed to collect data from students about their experiences in first-year composition courses. However, due to the limitations of the recruitment process, participants offered perspectives of their experiences in a wide range of classes. The context widened then from students with disabilities in first year composition courses to students' experiences in writing-intensive courses across the disciplines.

Chapter Three: Access-Centered Pedagogy

In discussing the reality of disability culture's reliance on community, Tobin Siebers writes that "This is why it is so alarming when we see the solitary woman in a wheelchair in the middle of town fighting repeatedly to get her chair to jump a curb. This is why we wonder at the common sense of a blind man who goes to the shopping mall alone on a busy weekend. The sighting of these creatures is the equivalent of seeing a giraffe in a parking garage" ("Tender Organs" 53). When a student with a disability enters the college setting, they are (at times) this giraffe, for as Jay Dolmage points out "The university is the place for the very *able*" ("Mapping" 17, emphasis his own). In the following pages, I look into the classroom and across my own campus in order to make sense of barriers (both material and psychological) that exist for students with disabilities in my own institutional context. The conversations that emerged from my study did not produce a check list of strategies based on disability. They did, however, profoundly impact the ways in which I think about my identity as a teacher of writing; the role I play in shaping, valuing, and responding to the identities of the students in my classrooms; and the manner of privilege that I construct for particular composing and learning practices in my pedagogy. To extend Siebers's metaphor, this research looks at the writing classroom as the parking garage and examines the conditions which may or may not position the disabled student as belonging to that space or as a startling and unexpected intruder. To that end, this chapter examines student perspectives on access and pedagogy for the composition classroom and for college writing more generally. Drawing on themes that emerged from the perspectives of my participants, I present five tenets of a theory of access-centered pedagogy. Access

(or lack thereof) is manifest in every site, episode, and space of our classrooms and our pedagogies, from the manner in which we facilitate class to our assignments, even to the ways in which our students arrive, depart, and exist in the spaces and locations of our classrooms. Grounding pedagogical theory in the voices of students with disabilities is crucial to the ethos of any pedagogy aimed at enabling access, and this approach is a common methodological tactic among composition researchers vested in disability. Patricia Dunn's *Learning Re-Abled: The Learning Disability Controversy and Composition Studies* (1995) focused chapter four on what she terms "experts not often consulted in this controversy," namely LD students themselves. She presents case studies from three students and offers their suggestions for ways in which writing teachers might re-think composition pedagogy with LD in mind. Brenda Brueggemann's *Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness* (1999) likewise devoted a chapter to a case study on the experiences of Anna, a student working her way through a Basic English course at Gallaudet University, a private, federally chartered university for Deaf/deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Brueggemann describes Anna as "chart[ing] the border territory of one who stands—sometimes firmly, sometimes precariously—between 'deaf' and 'hearing,' between English and American Sign Language literacy" (13).

In her subsequent article "An Enabling Pedagogy: Meditations on Writing and Disability," Brueggemann articulated her definition of an enabling pedagogy:

> [D]isability enables insight—critical, experiential, cognitive, sensory, and pedagogical insight. And it is this enabling, this insight, that I am after in all my classrooms, whether disability is the 'subject' or not. My (fairly recent) entry into disability studies; my use of disability memoir and documentary alongside representations of disability in literature, film, and popular culture in many of my courses now; and my self-identification as disabled (only in the last ten years

> of my life) have led to what I call 'an enabling pedagogy,' a theory and practice of teaching that posits disability as insight. (795)

Margaret Price's 2007 article, "Accessing Disability: A Non-Disabled Student Works the Hyphen" presented a case study of a class that incorporated Disability Studies, and although she focused primary on a "non-disabled" student, she argued that "disability as insight" challenges "current assumptions about the teaching and assessment of critical thinking" (53). Using critical discourse analysis, Price examined the ways in which one student's pronoun choices illuminate moments of critical thinking, particularly traceable in the texts *surrounding* the final product (e.g. quick writes, discussions with the teacher) (63). The student's choice of pronoun is significant because it revealed when the student occupied variant stances in relation to the disabled subject (us/them; able/disabled; self/other; normal/abnormal). Dunn, Brueggemann, and Price all demonstrate that enabling pedagogy requires grounding theory in student voice and attending to disability as insight. Most of the research that presents student perspectives on disability in college writing is presented as case study or as anecdotal evidence within a larger argument. The research that emerges from my own qualitative study grounds theory in student perspectives and works to both confirm and extend the arguments that emerged from the work of scholars I've sampled above. In presenting interview data from 35 students (over 2,000 minutes of audio, over 200,000 words worth of transcript), I hope for deeper saturation of the perspectives of what I will call access-centered pedagogy. Like Brueggemann, I find power in the term enabling, but I am cautious about employing a term that suggests giving someone the means or authority to do something. Moreover, my approach to access-centered pedagogy places heavier emphasis on pedagogy rather than on disability as course content (i.e. disability

memoirs, films, literature). Put another way, I am interested in students with disabilities in writing classrooms, not students encountering disability as a critical modality, although both are important. I define access-centered pedagogy as an approach to teaching that considers access a central value and aims for sustained and reflective attention to ensuring its realization for all students. In presenting analyses of 35 student interview transcripts, I am not attempting to generalize the emergent perspectives as reliable across contexts and campuses. In fact, I agree with methods scholars who suggest that qualitative research, unlike more quantitative studies, is based on a different set of philosophical assumptions regarding reliability, objectivity, and validity (see Lincoln and Guba; Cho and Trent; Richardson and St. Pierre). This different set of assumptions resists definitions of validity based on discovering some ultimate Truth and is likewise suspicious of researcher claims to objectivity. Qualitative research acknowledges the backgrounds, values, and underlying assumptions and beliefs that each researcher brings to a project. While this "baggage" might be purposefully tempered, most qualitative researchers agree that complete objectivity is a fantasy.

Some such scholars examine qualitative research in response to postmodern, post-structural, and constructivist perspectives, arguing that evaluating qualitative research "involves a serious rethinking of such terms as validity, generalizability, and reliability" (Denzin and Lincoln 17). Cresswell argues that in ethnographic research, one criterion of evaluation should be "detailed description" (218) and Wolcott argues that rather than focusing on validity, qualitative researchers must seek "something else, a quality that points more to identifying critical elements and wringing plausible interpretations from them, something one can pursue without becoming obsessed with

finding the right or ultimate answer" (366-367). The theory presented in the following chapters should be understood not as the "right" answer for addressing the pedagogical needs of SWD (indeed, such an undertaking would be not only misguided but also implausible) but rather as my own attempt—an attempt indebted to my research participants—to "wring out" interpretation of student experiences that inform teachers as to the ways in which they might adapt their pedagogies to increase accessibility.

To wit, I extrapolate five tenets of a theory of access-centered pedagogy in the following chapter (additional tenets will be discussed at length in chapter four). The first tenet I discuss is the notion of *access as shared responsibility*, calling for a resistance to conceiving access as the sole responsibility of an individual student. Rather, ensuring access should be the responsibility of *all* students, their teachers, disability service administrators, parents, writing program administrators, and others. As Jay Dolmage has so eloquently pointed out, "Access can only be fully realized as a circuit of interchange borne of interdependency" ("Mapping" 15). Ensuring access in writing pedagogy also requires that many *conventional accommodations become common pedagogical practice*, not simply requirements that arise out of obligation and result in retrofit. Of all the principles I discuss in this chapter, this one most closely resembles Universal Design for Learning in that it draws attention to the ways in which designing courses with multiple points of access increases usability for all. The common example among disability theorists is the curb cut metaphor: curbs cut into sidewalks to allow wheelchair access benefited many members of society, including parents with strollers, children on bicycles, and so on. The third and fourth tenets suggest ways that instructors might attend *anxiety reduction* as an issue of access and

consider the import of the teacher-student relationship, particularly in terms of *intimacy and affirmation*. By intimacy, I mean to suggest that when intimacy is established in the teacher-student relationship, access seems to increase. In positing affirmation as a pedagogical strategy, I mean to suggest a possible correlation between faith in a student's ability to do well, or providing purposeful praise to student writing, and positive outcomes for student performance. The final tenet discussed is the need to better *understand the material conditions* experienced by students with disabilities and how such conditions impact their performance, motivation, and participation. Looking holistically at these pedagogical tenets, it becomes clear that the needs of students with disabilities both enhance and challenge many of our most commonplace assumptions about what it means to be a "good" college student. Unfortunately (but not unexpectedly), many of these assumptions are grounded in notions of normalcy and ablebodiedness. The primary goal of analyzing this data is to enable access so that students with disabilities might be positively impacted through transforming pedagogy.

Access as Shared Responsibility: Assessing, Negotiating, & Implementing Accessible Pedagogies

The students I interviewed had a number of suggestions for how writing teachers (and teachers in general) can/should facilitate their classrooms in ways that enhance access for all students. A concern for responsibility undergirds most of their recommendations: who is responsible for accommodations and access? The teacher? The student? All students? An analysis of student suggestions for improving student

access to class discussion and course content reveals the need for a consideration of access as a shared responsibility among all members of the classroom community.

Teachers are responsible for making themselves accessible: their voices, their words, their directions. The ways in which the teacher leads the classroom have enormous impact on student's abilities to follow discussions and access classroom content. Tyler[55] talked with me about the importance of line of sight and voice volume. She said:

> If I sit in the back, I tend to check out because I can't see their face very well. And unless they're speaking very loudly and clearly then I just won't really know what's going on, especially if there's no slide show to go with it. But if I sit in the fifth row or whatever, I can see their face. I use a combination of what I actually hear and what I see. But if the professor is turned away from me or facing the board, which I have been in that situation before, and at that point, I would not do very well.[56]

Tyler's description of her own experience offers several suggestions for writing teachers to consider for improving access via classroom facilitation. Instructors should be attentive to line of sight, meaning how visible their faces are for students in their classrooms. Tyler later remarked that one of the only times she discloses to her peers is if they don't face her when they talk or if they cover their mouths when they talk. Thus, not only should teachers be mindful of their own visibility but they should also encourage their students to be mindful of the line of sight during interactions and conversations in the classroom. This suggestion for access is paramount in a composition classroom, as dialogic classroom interaction is typically a cornerstone pedagogical value in writing instruction. Considering line of sight as a shared responsibility of the classroom community ensures that all students can access the words and ideas of their peers, notably a shared benefit for all students (in line with the aims of Universal Design for Learning). It is also noteworthy that in the passage above,

Tyler seems to put the entire burden of access on herself: combining what she can see and hear, hoping for a slide show, choosing the right seat, etc. This suggests that in addition to the necessity for mindfulness suggested by this passage, there is a great need for instructors to be a more proactive agent in the accessibility process. That is to say, instructors must work deliberately to avoid positioning students as the sole architect of access. Moreover, the necessity of clear line of sight might not be a conventional accommodation that students can (or even would) request, but data from my interviews makes clear that it is a subtle yet vital component for ensuring access.

In addition to being mindful of visibility and lines of sight in their classroom, instructors and students should also be aware of the volume of their voices, as Tyler makes clear. Elliot also emphasized the importance of voice volume. When he recounted feeling "taken care of" by instructors, he recalled that, "They knew to talk loud and try and stand closer to me." Like Tyler, he too reported the use of lip reading as a strategy for access to class discussion, thereby again affirming the need for line of sight. This strategy marks a compensatory effort that could be minimized if teachers worked to increase volume in an effort to eliminate reliance on lip-reading for those students with non-normative hearing. Talking louder might seem a simple suggestion, but when this suggestion is framed as an issue of access, its significance becomes all the more clear. Elliot also told me about an interaction he experienced with a professor who he had trouble hearing. Elliot approached the professor, asking him to please speak louder. The professor agreed to speak louder, but Elliot still couldn't hear. This professor, however, didn't just leave it at that. He and Elliot worked together to develop a strategy to enable access: "He usually just lets me go up after class and lets me take a

picture of his sheet." Presumably, the "sheet" contains information from the professor's lecture or classroom presentation notes. If volume is an issue, this would be an example of negotiated efforts toward access. In any case where efforts fail in one area (in this case, the ability to speak loudly enough), instructors should be prepared to try alternate methods of message delivery. These negotiations once again demonstrate the productive strategizing that results when access is considered a shared responsibility. In Elliot's case, he was responsible for letting his instructor know that he couldn't hear (both times),[57] as well as for agreeing that the picture-taking was sufficient for him, and his instructor was responsible for initiating alternative means for Elliot to access presentation material.[58] While Elliot's exclusion from content during real-time class activity is still a problem, his story nevertheless marks an example of shared responsibility that is important to consider. This example is also unique because the shared responsibility between Elliot and his instructor did not include the disability services center. Many students do not seek out disability services for one reason or another, and this instructor's willingness to accommodate without documentation enabled Elliot to be successful in the course. This is also not to say that the instructor shouldn't encourage Elliot to seek out accommodations from disability services (such as real-time captioning), but I am making an argument that *exclusive* reliance on a sanctioned accommodation is not the best (or only) means for obtaining access. The reality is, many students do not register (or even if they do, they may not request a particular accommodation in time—something like Communication Access Real-time Transcription, or CART, requires planned staffing), and falling back on the excuse of, "Well, the student really needs to take responsibility for their accommodations" is not

enough. This notion of the student bearing the full weight of responsibility creates avoidable barriers to access; barriers that might be prevented if access is considered a shared responsibility.

Moreover, if teachers abdicate responsibility for accessible classroom facilitation on the grounds of having no SWD in their classrooms, they run the risk of allowing assumptions of normalcy to create barriers to access. Neither Tyler nor Elliot was registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) on campus and neither typically discloses their disabilities. While these recommendations (e.g. speaking up, keeping one's mouth visible) for improving access in classroom facilitation may seem like moves a teacher might make if, *and only if,* she had a student with a hearing or vision impairment, this study reveals the danger in assuming a class full of students with "normal" hearing and vision. Lack of disclosure and assumptions of normalcy coalesce to create barriers to access, at times unbeknownst to instructors. This is a perfect example of how important it is not to assume a normal student population. Furthermore, increased visibility and volume along with well-paced delivery is likely to improve uptake for all students in the class, not just students with disabilities, once again demonstrating classroom practice in line with UDL.

Accessibility is also increased when *all* classroom members practice question-and-answer response, or the habit of repeating questions and responses as the discussion unfolds. I asked Elliot about whether or not he had ever asked a fellow classmate to speak up. He told me, "If they were close, like sitting next to me or something, I have from time to time. But if it's someone sitting across the room, I just wait for the response because a lot of teachers will re-say the response." When teachers restate

questions or comments posed by students, not only do they keep the discussion on track and make sure they heard the speaking student correctly, they also increase access for students who didn't quite catch what was said. In doing so, they also model for all students the expectations for accessible classroom dialogue, therefore encouraging students to help facilitate discussion in such a way that all students are able to successfully track and understand the content.

Many of the students with whom I spoke also noted the negative impact of distractions on their class participation and on their writing processes, thus indicating that teachers must actively work to reduce distractions for all students. Blair told me, "Trying to write in class is really hard. Whenever we have class periods that are writing time, it's really hard because people are talking, or our teacher is having conferences with other students. And it's just kind of hard to concentrate." James also expressed a need for reduced-distraction environments, stating that, "If there's talking going on, I can't focus, I can't think…I need silence for me. So that's what definitely helps me, not having any distractions around me that will get me off topic." Jessica too said she "definitely need[s] a quiet environment" for maintaining focus while writing, and John said, "I usually have to have it almost dead silent." When I asked Elliot what types of things don't work well for him, he reported that noise inhibits his ability to focus. Mike mentioned that he prefers quiet for his writing process: "I cannot stand any noise from anywhere." Mr. C said that he "gets distracted easily" and that "impulsiveness makes focusing for long period of time difficult." While reduced-distraction environments are a common accommodation for test taking, distraction—as it occurs during episodes of in-class writing, collaborative work, or even discussion—is less theorized/examined.

Writing teachers need to consider what distractions might be eliminated in order to enhance the composing and learning experiences of SWDs in writing classrooms. Distractions in a writing classroom might include an open door, other students talking, students browsing the internet, a ticking clock, and so on. In addition to being mindful of the distractions that exist in classroom spaces, it could also be useful to poll students about their classroom environment. Talking with all students about what they find distracting in the environment and working to reduce such distractions can serve to enhance productivity and comfort and represents yet another benefit of considering access a shared responsibility in a classroom community.[59]

There are some SWDs that do not prefer a reduced-distraction environment, however. Lillie said, "I had a pretty noisy house growing up so I prefer the booths in the student center just because I'm enclosed and can't get distracted but there's still stuff going on…my mind wanders like no other when it's silent. I cannot concentrate." For Lillie, the dead silence that Mike might prefer is unhelpful. So what should teachers do when conflicts of access arise (as they inevitably will)? It's probably best to combat these contradictory needs within each context as it emerges. For example, if a teacher had both Lillie and Mike in one class and both communicated their environmental preferences to her/him, the teacher might allow Mike to use noise-cancelling headphones or allow Lillie to pop in her ear buds when it's time to do some in-class writing. This is just one example of how a teacher might assess her student's needs and respond in such a way that students are able to co-construct (alongside the teacher) the most accessible and advantageous writing/learning environment.

Assessing one's class population becomes paramount to understanding accessibility needs in a given class. Adjusting each class for accessibility needs, re-inventing the wheel for each section, each semester is not the goal here; teachers should proactively design their pedagogies in ways that allow for continual adaptation and flexibility. Universal design is a process, not an end-game. Teachers should consider asking students what types of classrooms, processes, and interaction styles work for them, *not only at the beginning* of the semester, but throughout, as students (especially first-year students) are in the process of discovering and understanding their learning and interaction styles. Many of the students I interviewed talked about the benefits of being afforded the opportunity to communicate such needs and preferences to their teacher. When I asked Diane what advice she had for writing teachers, she told me, "Make a survey at the beginning of the class and see what they want. Like if we had a writing time, what would you want to have? I know some college kids might just bullshit their answers but…some might not." She went on to add, "It's really good when a teacher is interested in what you want and doesn't blow you off." Jake also mentioned this type of student survey:

> If it's a class situation where the teacher seems to want to have information about me, like if there's something they do, they kind of fill out a notecard with your name and anything I should know about you. I've had a few teachers do that. And if they do that, my protocol is just to say I have dyslexia and that's it. Just to say I'm not entitled to any sort of treatment based on the university, so don't worry about it. It's just something you should know. Academically, as your student, you should know that I'm dyslexic.

While Jake doesn't request an explicit action of the teacher, he nevertheless expresses a desire for the teacher to understand something "academically" about him. This notion of surveying students (assessing your student population's needs continually throughout the semester) is all the more critical when considering that a significant majority of

respondents to the instructor/faculty survey reported that they do not discuss issues of accessibility/ADA compliance apart from their disability syllabus statement (65%). Creating this type of dialogue is also important because it enables a more nuanced and informed approach for instructors to productively walk the line between challenging students intellectually and creatively while also ensuring accessibility.

When facilitating classrooms—whether it be a peer review workshop, a lecture, a discussion—there are many moves that teachers can make to enhance access. Moves such as attending to verbal performance, managing distractions, and continually assessing students' classroom needs all represent strategies and suggestions that my interviewees offer for writing teachers to consider. These strategies also illuminate the benefits reaped by all students when access is considered a shared responsibility of the group, rather than a responsibility of one student and/or the disability service center.

Conventional Accommodations as Common Pedagogical Practice

Many "conventional" accommodations can and should be adopted in composition classrooms as common pedagogical practice. By "conventional," I mean accommodations that are commonly sanctioned by disability service centers, such as the use of a word processor or laptop in the classroom. Adjusting classroom facilitation to incorporate these types of conventional accommodations can serve to increase access for students with disabilities, and often serves to benefit all students as well. By "common pedagogical practice," I mean to suggest that instructors adopt certain practices (such as allowing the use of a laptop) as commonly accepted behaviors in and characteristics of college-level writing classrooms. This suggestion in no way attempts

to deny the need for conventional accommodations (for these are vitally important, legally required, and ethically obligated components for SWD success in higher education and beyond), but rather to eliminate *exclusive* reliance on conventional accommodations for access. This exclusivity only serves to fortify barriers to access that exist due to the intensely complex experience of disability identity in the college setting.

The use of a laptop might seem the most obvious accommodation to request for a writing class; however, the need for requesting such an accommodation is often moot because most writing teachers are perfectly fine with student use of computing devices such as laptops or tablets. A significant majority of respondents to the instructor/faculty survey allow students to use laptops in class (69%) and only a small minority responded that they do not allow laptop use in class (8%). Of the 23% that responded "Other," many wrote that they allow laptop use on certain days and for certain activities only (e.g. peer review day). It's no surprise that when asked what tools they use to write, every single student I interviewed listed a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer.

The use of a laptop in a writing classroom can be advantageous in a number of ways for SWDs, but the benefits most commonly reported in my study were spell check, editing/arrangement, and avoiding the physicality of handwriting. When asked what types of help work for her, April said, "definitely having a laptop. Without spell check, I feel like a little college student. My spelling, I will sit there and start a word and second guess where the 'I' goes for like 10 minutes." She elaborated, "Sometimes when I write, I'll be trying to get stuff on paper so quickly, and I will miss the first letters of the words, leave off letters. I'll leave off periods. So my laptop is my best

friend." Blair also noted the benefits of laptop use: "I really like writing, but I prefer to write on a computer where I have spell check because often times when I have to write in class, I leave a lot of letters off of words, and it gets really frustrating." Diane, Jake, John, and Veronica all emphasized the benefits of having laptop-use in classrooms due to the affordances of spell check and grammar check.

In addition to finding it helpful to use spell check, several students I interviewed mentioned that using a laptop allowed them more success with editing and arranging their writing. Andy reported the importance of laptop use: "I write a lot better with a laptop. I can go back and edit my work or rearrange things easily. Writing on paper is just…I don't do it so well." Jake also said it was useful to be able to copy, paste, and delete "things quickly without having to erase or scribble out or whatever. I didn't need things to slow me down." Veronica said:

> I think the hardest thing is like, I've always described it when people ask me as I have everything organized in my head, I know exactly what I want to say, but then when I go to speak it or to write it, it is just garbled. And I, for the life of me, just can't…it takes me so long to organize. So that's one of the reasons I had to have the word processor because that I think helped me know that I could always erase it or like re-arrange things if I needed to…I can move it around, and it's that flexibility that I think releases a lot of tension. Because I think I have a, for some reason there's a lot of pressure of like I have to write it down in pen, it's kind of permanent and I can't move it or change my mind.

Jessica illuminated several access affordances of her laptop, including speed and for arranging her research. She said:

> The biggest thing for me is having access to a computer…it's more conducive instead of just writing everything out, especially because my short term memory is so poor, if I have thoughts, I can just quickly write it down. Be in the middle of a sentence and be like, oh what was I going to say? I completely forgot. I have a lot of those moments where I have to stop in the middle of a sentence because I've just forgotten and I can't remember what I was writing about.

She also attributed the memory issue to the medication she takes for epilepsy; she reported short term memory loss as a side effect. She also uses several technologically based tools in her writing process such as the sticky note function on her lap top and a software program called Notability. The use of a laptop in class accommodates students' cognitive pace (as with Jake and Jessica) as well as their process structure (non-linear, recursive, as with both Veronica and Andy).

Instructors should also consider the ways in which allowing a laptop in class may prevent unnecessary strain that often accompanies handwriting. The physicality of writing with a pen or pencil can pose a problem for many students. Jessica, for example, said that due to hand tremors associated with medication she takes for epilepsy, typing is easier than handwriting. Mr. C also emphasized the benefits of typing over handwriting, stating that his dyslexia and "spatial issues" that resulted from a traumatic brain injury make paper-and-pen production difficult.

Sometimes, SWD are denied access to a computer for their writing classrooms, and this denial only further demonstrates the need for adopting many conventional accommodations as common pedagogical practice. Blair told me that she "didn't get approved to use spell check on in-class writing." When I asked Blair to clarify, she informed me that (according to her official accommodations from campus disability services) she can use her laptop for notes but not for in-class writing prompts. When I expressed that, in my opinion, this made no sense, Blair said, "Yeah, it came from the DRC, and they said like a comp class, they want us to learn how to use correct spelling and grammar so I can't have spell check. That is so bizarre." While spelling and grammar are undeniably key components in a writing classroom, their level of

emphasis—particularly when conceptualized within a skill-and-drill model—is far less than higher-order concerns such as assessing the rhetorical situation and identifying effective means of communicating a given message to a particular audience. The grounds for the denial of Blair's accommodation request clash with the pedagogical values of the discipline of composition and rhetoric, thus again demonstrating the need for instructors to stake out their unique and vital role in understanding and negotiating accommodations and access in college writing classrooms. In the article "Learning Disability, Pedagogies, and Public Discourse," Linda Feldmeier White points out the import of writing instructors staking this claim:

> [M]ost composition specialists see LD as the province of experts whose special training enables them to diagnose and treat the condition and whose judgments should not be questioned. I find this deference to medical constructions of learning problematic: If we think that students with LD are beyond our expertise, then we marginalize them as essentially different from 'normal' students. The current public discourse on LD offers only two positions: either LD is a neurological condition that only experts understand, or LD is a myth, a euphemism for lack of intelligence. Questioning the first view allies one with the second. 706-707

Resisting the impulse to rely exclusively on recommendations from disability services allows instructors to become a participant in the access endeavor and disallows perpetuation of the medical disorder/myth binary that Feldmeier White critiques. Moreover, Blair's experiences also suggest that writing program administrators might develop productive relationships with disability service professionals, reaching out and having conversations and/or collaboratively designed professional development workshops aimed at merging common accommodation practices with best practices in writing pedagogy.

Not only did Blair's narrative illuminate the fissures between the way writing instruction is conceptualized by disability services verses (most) instructors of writing, she also indicated that seeking accommodations provides an opportunity for her to develop deeper relationships with her professors. However, because the accommodation she requested for the composition class was denied, she never approached her writing teacher. I asked Blair to describe the effectiveness of her accommodations, and she told me, "I think I've started getting better test scores since I've gotten extended time, and I've always gotten to know my professors. Because of [accommodations] it's a way to go and talk to my teachers. So I think that helps. I think if I didn't have them I might not go talk to my teachers." I asked, "Like with your writing teacher?" And we both let out small, sad laughs as she nodded her head and said, "Yeah." When I asked Blair what advice she might have for writing teachers, she reiterated how laptop use could benefit *all* students and offered insight about different learning styles: "Just being more knowledgeable about what works best for each student, or using a laptop for in-class writing, because each student in the class works differently." Her last point here once again emphasizes an earlier point about the value of continually assessing students' needs (surveying students) throughout the course of a semester.

I do not mean to suggest that every student *has* to use a laptop; some students I interviewed reported a preference for handwriting in their invention stages, and others viewed spell check as inhibitive to learning. John pointed out that "I feel better when I'm handwriting. I don't know why but it feels better. So usually I'll handwrite an essay and then type it up." Lillie also expressed a preference for handwriting. She said, "I need to write it out. I need to go through multiple drafts, outlines…and I will work

handwritten until I'm like forced to type something…when I'm typing, I'm just typing. When I'm writing, I'm thinking." Bob told me that he prefers to handwrite because he is a "hunt and pecker," and that he also prefers pencil due to his military background. Chesty, also a student-veteran, expressed resistance to both typing and handwriting, preferring instead to communicate orally. He attributed this communicative preference to his own military background: "As an artillery guy, I'm more on the radio," and he said he didn't want to carry a computer because he already has to walk with a cane. Hilary told me she prefers handwriting, explaining, "I tried to type it or put notes on a word doc, but I have to write it…I think if you write something, it sticks in your brain…and I think it's easier to look over; there has to be that physical component for me." Teachers should avoid stipulating pen, pencil, typing, or handwriting and instead allow students to make the choices that feel right for them. Sarah Sloane's article, "The Haunting Story of J: Genealogy as a Critical Category in Understanding How a Writer Composes" recounts her study of an undergraduate student writer whose resistance to composing with a computer was deeply connected to his own personal history and past experiences, including his parents' opinions about computers. In offering students choices in their means of production, teachers acknowledge and value the variant backgrounds and personal preferences for composing, as well as increase the access in a given writing course.

Another conventional accommodation that should be adopted as common pedagogical practice is electronic access to course materials.[60] Students should be able to access course content such as readings or assignment sheets quickly and efficiently. Tyler stated, "As far as the material goes, I think it should be accessible online." Many

of the students I interviewed reported the necessity of electronic access to course materials. Gavin relies on instructors posting materials *prior* to class. For Tom, having access to a laptop both within and outside a writing classroom reduces the need for using a magnifier to read hard-copy content. With his laptop, he is able to quickly increase font size or zoom for pdfs (rather than relying on a dome-shaped magnifier that he uses to access smaller, hard-copy print materials). Tom also reported that when teachers post materials such as readings or slide shows to course managements systems (e.g. Desire-to-Learn or Blackboard), he is able to take notes more efficiently. Because he has a visual disability, electronic access to materials allows him to make his own adjustments to texts in order to make them more accessible. While Tom could go through disability services and request that professors make materials accessible, if the teacher simply posts materials online for all students, the need for this request is no longer necessary. This eradication of the need for accommodation is one of the defining goals of universal design. Justin also emphasized the benefits of electronic access. She said, "I learned that I read a lot better on electronic devices….and I read a lot better and retain information better than reading from a [hard copy] textbook." Justin pointed out that her preference for reading electronically may be more related to her status as a digital native than to her status as a student with a disability. She said, "It's the technology age and everything around me is technology that I'm used to paying attention to." Posting course materials online is another way to enact access-centered pedagogy, as it allows all students to interact with the texts in their own particular ways. Some might prefer to print out the document and write directly on it. Some may prefer to use highlight functions in Adobe in order to annotate. Electronic access to course

content, much like the curb cut, is useful for all students, not just those with visual disabilities. Furthermore, instructors should consider explicit explanation of these access efforts in syllabi, thereby drawing purposeful attention to the value of accessibility in the course.

Audio-recording class lectures and discussion is yet another conventional accommodation that registered SWDs may request from disability service centers. A significant majority of instructor/faculty survey respondents reported that they are willing to let students audio-record their classes (65%) and of the 27% that answered "Other," many stated that they would allow it if students asked. This qualifier might represent an opportunity for instructors to incorporate such permissions as a part of their boilerplate syllabus, thus negating the demand for disclosure to obtain this accommodation. Such a statement might also be crafted in such a way that any concerns over intellectual property are protected.[61] Interview subjects had much to say on the topic of audio-recording classroom discussion and lectures. Marie indicated that she doesn't feel she needs a notetaker because she is able to audio-record her lecture classes. Bob told me that he asked a professor's graduate assistant "Does he mind if his classes are audiotaped?", and the GTA went up to the professor to ask on Bob's behalf. Bob said, "She went up and asked him, and he was like [shakes head no]. And then when she pointed over at me, he was like [shakes head yes], that one's ok." The professor was unwilling to allow audio-recording for just any student, but when the GTA indicated that Bob was making the request, the professor granted permission. It's important to point out that Bob is visibly disabled (an amputee). Did the professor grant the request because he felt legally obligated? Why did the professor see audio-recording

as something to which only disabled students should have access? Allowing all students to audio-record would eliminate the need for audio-recording to be an individualized, case-by-case accommodation, thus further situating access as a central value of the course applicable to all students in the class community.

Ensuring audio and/or electronic access to textbooks is yet another strategy that writing teachers (and the writing program administrators that often select and submit book orders) should consider. Jake, for example, told me that he finds audiobooks preferable to reading hard copy books (1-2). While such access might be relegated as a responsibility of disability services (or the students themselves), reinterpreting such provision as common practice serves to increase accessibility, both pedagogically and programmatically. Teachers should inquire to publishers about electronic versions of their selected course materials or request that their writing program administrators look into such options. Some students prefer electronic e-books and e-readers to increase their access. Maria (who did not qualify as low vision and therefore was ineligible for accommodations through disability services) said, "I really think e-books would have helped me read. Ideally though audiobooks or some kind of reading software would have helped me read a lot more of the class material." She went on to say:

> If I could have had access to something audible or reading software, I would not hate school as much as I do! It was extremely frustrating to find out I was excluded from these types of services. It just meant I had to try twice as hard. I am not low vision, but I have scars on my retina that severely impact my ability to read, scarring on the retina means that no information can be seen in that part of my vision, so there are little blue/black dots that will appear on the page, blocking some of the content.. The only thing that can help is larger font, because if font is small a dot can cover a whole letter, but if it's large, it will only cover part of the letter, making it easier to distinguish between letters.

Again, access to electronic materials could increase access for Maria and teachers and writing program administrators should attend to issues of diverse content delivery.[62]

In addition to electronic access to course materials, the use of slide shows in college classrooms (writing and otherwise) is pretty common practice, and as such, came up frequently in many of my interviews. While slide shows are more typical of a lecture-based class than a discussion-based writing class, it is important to note the many students reported concerns about slide show accessibility. Tyler expressed the utility of a slide show when reflecting on her ability to stay engaged in classroom discussion when she is experiencing difficulty hearing. She cautioned against using a bland color palette for slide shows, however, as that might cause her to experience visual difficulties. Tom expressed the importance of having access to the slide show *prior* to the class meeting in which it was to be presented, thus reinforcing the previous point about making sure classroom materials are available online. Like Tyler, Tom had specific preferences for the slide show color palette, pointing out that darker colors were easier for him to see. When I asked Tom about whether or not he ever expressed this preference to a professor, his response was quite revelatory:

> Actually, last semester I told one of my professors and he changed that week's slides. But you could tell that was part of his flair for making his lectures interesting was changing up his color schemes and doing that so for me to ask him to change that and make it more generic or tone it down or whatever, I think he felt like that was taking away from the other students and from his lectures.

While the teacher accommodated Tom's request for one week, he elected to ignore it in subsequent class meetings. When I asked Tom about whether or not he followed up with the professor again, Tom stated that he "didn't bring it up again because it wasn't worth the argument." While I'm trying to make a point about making slide shows accessible to SWDs, this exchange with Tom reveals a great deal about the relationship between technology and access, namely that while many may assume that the technology itself creates or inhibits access, this anecdote reveals that, at times, the

teacher is the agent of access; it's teacher *use* of technology that creates the conditions of accessibility. In this case, the teacher (in Tom's perception) refused to design the technology in an accessible way because he thought his style was best for *most* students and disregarded how his style might impact a *few* students. The teacher's choice to ignore Tom's request is disheartening as is Tom's acquiescence, but both suggest a need for increased attention to the teacher's role in providing access (as opposed to the existing attention on the role of disability services and the role of student as self-advocate). Trying to execute a technique that aims to suit everyone (i.e. is accessible) is more desirable and more important than providing some students with the "optimal" experience.[63] In this sense, access-centered pedagogy aligns with the underlying values of critical pedagogy, particularly the emphasis on democratic engagement in the classroom.

When asked about what types of classroom environments in which he felt most comfortable, Elliot indicated that lecture with slide show was most preferable. He was very specific about how the professor interacted with the slide show:

> You have a lot of professors that have a slide show but what they talk about is completely irrelevant to the slide show. I can't stand that. But because I usually read and then just kind of go back and reteach everything to myself when I study, because I don't pick up much accuracy in class, so whenever they go with the slide show, it helps.

A teacher that uses a slide presentation effectively and disallows tangential meanderings makes the lecture's content more accessible for students. In looking at the above quote, it's also interesting to note that Elliot has developed his own independent strategies for accessing course content. Rather than relying on classroom lecture or discussion to learn, he envisioned his learning taking place outside the classroom and of his own

volition. This is not to suggest that students don't typically learn outside the classroom. Of course, they do. But in Elliot's experience, he is denied access to moments of development and learning inside the classroom not because of his hearing loss, but because of inaccessible classroom design. This point also echoes my earlier claim that students suffer when access is considered an individual student's responsibility, rather than a shared goal in a community of learners.

While I'm suggesting that several of the previously mentioned accommodations be adopted as common pedagogical practice, it doesn't mean that all conventional accommodations make for good pedagogical practice. Many of the students I interviewed reported significant issues, for example, with speech-to-text software, such as Dragon. Speech-to-text software is most certainly a conventional accommodation and many disability service centers have such programs on-site.[64] Teachers may assume that this accommodation fills an accessibility need and thus equalizes the writing experiences of some students with disabilities to that of their ablebodied peers. The students I interviewed, however, reported several challenges with speech-to-text software as a strategy for assisting writing production. Jason talked to me about the benefits of using a scribe, but when I asked him why he didn't use speech-to-text software, he explained that his disability often causes his speech to slur, especially if he is fatigued, thus making speech-to-text an ineffective tool for composing. Rachel also talked with me a great deal about speech-to-text software. She told me, "I can go over [to disability services] and use the speech-dictation software on their computer but since you can only go over there from 8:00am to 5:00pm…I haven't really gotten much from them." She spoke to the software's limitations, stating:

> It's awkward too kind of because when you're trying to be in a room with other people doing work, you don't really want to be talking out loud…I use it for like little everyday things, if I'm sending an email but I have to read it through twice as carefully because it will get certain things wrong. So there's always that paranoia I can't rely on it as well as I do my own hand…It's not very time effective. It takes about three times as long to get anything done on the dictation software. And having to use the mouse and stuff to make corrections to save time is even not that great for my hand either. I took a test using the dictation software, and I walked out of the room feeling like my hands were about to fall off.

Rachel's description of her experience with speech-to-text software elucidates several issues with this accommodation. She points out the difficulty of accessing the software itself, attempting to negotiate the operating hours of the disability services center and her own work schedule, and she draws attention to the affordances and constraints of composing in tandem with a computer software program. Taking the experiences of Jason and Rachel into account helps teachers to better comprehend the dangers of assuming that conventional accommodations (such as speech-to-text software) eliminate the need for teacher intervention as well as the consequences of assuming that such accommodations equalize the experiences of disabled students to their temporarily ablebodied peers.

Adopting conventional accommodations such as audio-recording and in-class laptop use is one way to enhance opportunities for access in composition classrooms, as is mindfulness to the ways in which teachers and students *use* particular technologies for various aims. When instructors adopt conventional accommodations as common pedagogical practice, accessibility is built into the infrastructure of the course, not simply added as a retrofit for individual students as they happen to disclose, register, or struggle with a given assignment or classroom episode.

Obtaining Access/Addressing Anxiety

The subject of anxiety emerged frequently throughout and across all my interviews, resulting in part from one of my structured interview questions (asking whether or not writing invoked feelings of excitement or anxiety) yet also in response to questions about their own processes, their advice for writing teachers, and their experiences with particular writing assignments over the course of their academic careers. Scholars in rhetoric and composition have discussed the issue of writing anxiety throughout our discipline's history, with claims offered from numerous angles. John Daly's work on writing apprehension argued that writing with high apprehension would produce lower-quality writing (see Daly; Faigley, Daly, and Witte). Drawing on Daly's work, researchers such as Eric Bell and Alan Price conducted studies to assess whether or not grade delay (withholding grades until the end of a semester) would reduce anxiety and findings revealed the opposite: anxiety increased with grade delay.[65] The connections between disability and anxiety are complex and must be considered contextually; for some students, anxiety *is* their disability, for others it might be a symptom, and for still others it might just be anxiety (unrelated to a diagnosed disability).[66] Scholars often point out the negative effects of anxiety, but some have pointed out that anxiety can be useful. Susan McLeod, for example, writes, "emotions can be enabling as well as crippling" (428). Her unfortunate use of language reveals the association that researchers often take as a given: the connection between anxiety and being "crippled" in some way— between anxiety and *dis*-ability. Mike Rose's article "Rigid Rules, Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language: A Cognitivist Analysis of Writer's Block" concludes with a "note on treatment," suggesting that the anxiety

associated with writer's block is—like a disease or illness—something that teachers must "treat."[67] Continued research on writing apprehension needs to account for the complexity of disability, investigating anxiety as it is experienced by students with disabilities, and, most importantly, how students' experience of anxiety might (or might not) be an issue of access. The data from my study suggests that students' anxiety might be alleviated through increased flexibility, avoiding rigidity, and lowering the stakes of writing (particularly in the beginning stages of a course). It's important to note that this suggestion echoes work by scholars such as Rose, but what's crucial here is that when anxiety is connected with disability, reducing said anxiety becomes a matter of access, not only a goal but an ethical (and sometimes legal) responsibility.

Scholars working in basic writing and in English language learning offer many productive insights for thinking through the ways in which anxiety is also politically mediated. Min-Zhan Lu's influential piece "Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone" targets student anxiety as one of the two major concerns guiding her inquiry. She writes:

> Because [the teacher] recognizes the burden on those at the fringe of having to 'prove' themselves to those at the center by meeting the standards set by the latter, she cannot but take seriously students' anxiety to master 'correct' usage. Nevertheless, she is aware that instead of helping them to overcome such an anxiety, her teaching strategies risk increasing it, as they may reinforce students' sense of the discrepancy between their inability to produce 'error-free' prose and their ability to come up with 'good ideas…' 443

There are several claims in Lu's statement that are useful for the argument I'd like to make in this section: first, that "fringe" students experience an anxiety-inducing burden to produce Standard Written English; second, that teachers should help students "overcome" anxiety; and third that some teaching strategies exacerbate anxiety. The students in my study did in fact report the type of burden to which Lu refers, and

although she might equate fringe with multicultural, I would argue that fringe could just as easily apply to SWD. I don't mean to competitively position multicultural against disabled, but drawing on research in one often productively informs the other. In her article "Discourses of Disability and Basic Writing," Amy Vidali notes that "In the face of scant institutional resources" competition among fringe populations of marginalized groups "is to be expected, but in another sense it is surprising given that the low-income and/or students of color who traditionally fill basic writing classrooms have a longer and more productive history of gaining access to colleges and universities than do students with disabilities" (50). As Lu suggests in her discussion of multicultural student experiences, data from my interview also confirms that certain pedagogical approaches increase anxiety. I might depart a bit from Lu, however, in her assumption that overcoming anxiety is a goal that teachers should assist students in accomplishing. This is problematic when considered from the angle of disability in that, for some, anxiety is not something they *overcome*; it is something they *experience*. As Vidali points out in her analysis of the relational discourses surrounding basic writers and SWD, Disability Studies "emphasizes that people with disabilities accomplish their goals with their disabilities, rather than by overcoming or conquering them" (46). That said, there might be an important distinction to be made between reducing and overcoming: reduction provides opportunity for success in a particular context that demands a certain type of performance (academic writing) whereas overcoming might suggest some type of normalizing needs to take place. In some ways, even reducing anxiety might be interpreted as tending toward some norm, but in the context of a classroom space defined by performance, consideration of reduction rather than

overcoming provides students with a strategy for success without demanding the "ready-made ableist narrative" of overcoming (Price, "Accessing" 53). I also want to make clear that I'm not suggesting that the able-body exists in some anxiety-free state. Anxiety itself is something that everyone experiences, disabled and non-disabled alike. When anxiety prohibits performance or becomes unmanageable, this marks a point of intervention for the writing teacher. Because "conventional" anxiety accommodations are exclusively associated with test performance, the relationship between anxiety, writing performance, and access is grossly under-examined.

With these cautions in mind, I'll now move toward offering three strategies for anxiety reduction that emerged from my data: increasing flexibility with topic choice, avoiding rigidity in assignment structure, and lowering the stakes of writing. Many students asserted that teacher flexibility with topic and/or assignment choice eased the anxiety they experienced in writing classrooms and with writing in general. When asked whether she associated writing with anxiety or excitement, Amber said, "Anxiety, well, unless it's over something that I like, that I want to write about. Then I could be pretty excited about that." Tom also reported anxiety with writing on topics that didn't interest him, and, like Amber, associated excitement with writing about topics that he can put his "own thoughts into." Jessica said, "I do like writing. I enjoy it, especially if it's a topic I can relate to," and "I'm really excited to write about a thing I'm interested in, but if it's a topic I'm unfamiliar with, I will experience some anxiety." Students also reported varying degrees of anxiety depending on their familiarity with the topic for the assignment. James said, "Anxiety kicks in but also for me it kind of depends on what I am writing about. If I'm writing about something I'm interested in, then I feel a lot

more comfortable doing that. But if it's a topic that I have no knowledge about it, then I get really anxious about that." Michelle told me that when she is able to select a topic that interests her, "as I'm thinking it and writing it for some reason, it's easier for me to form sentences. And sometimes when I'm really into it and I'm reading it, I catch my mistakes easier. And if it's something I'm not that interested in, then I just kinda say, 'Oh well, it's probably good enough.'" Later in the interview she also said:

> I would go to my room and just write it because I was so happy and excited to do it. If the subject matter is something I'm interested in, it's not that difficult. It just kind of flows. Some of the papers I don't really want to write, I get more anxiety over it, just because I know I'm not interested, and I don't want the teacher to know I'm not interested. And so then I start immediately picking apart my writing. That's stupid or this isn't any good. So when I'm not really interested or invested in it, it makes it more difficult.

Michelle's tendency to focus on error when she feels more anxiety echoes Lu's point about the unfortunate discrepancy between error-free writing and good ideas that students on the "fringe" often experience. I am not suggesting that teachers allow complete freedom of topic choice for all students, but the students in my study do make clear that there is a connection between reduced anxiety and topic flexibility. One strategy teachers of writing might employ is allowing for flexibility of topic choice under a large topical issue that binds the classroom community and/or curricular unit.

In addition to providing flexibility in topic choice, students also suggested that teachers avoid rigidity in their assignment structure. George told me that prompts that are highly specific cause anxiety for him: "When [essay prompts] gets specific, that's when I get really nervous." He feels that he does much better when the prompts are more open-ended and can be taken in a number of different directions. Jake also advised teachers to provide looser criteria on assignments:

> I had a professor recently tell me, he gave us really loose terms on an essay we had to write and somebody asked him a question about what he wanted because so much of our writing in college is worried about hitting it on the head. If I'm hitting the mark, then I'm gonna get an A, and I want to get an A. But if I don't hit the mark on what you want me to write about or what you want the content to be then I'm afraid I'll get a bad grade even if it's good writing. What he said was don't worry about that; don't worry about hitting the mark. Write about what you care about within these guidelines, within this to this, write about what you care about.

Jake went on to say, "And that's just what I would suggest for writing teachers. I'm no hippie and I believe in structure, in everything and in writing, but I would say that if you can't, you need to give your students a lot of leeway to get really good writing out of them." Like Jake and George, Mr. C also said, "When too much structure exists, I feel pressured and unable to write."

When I talked with many of my interviewees about writing anxiety, they continually argued that lowering the stakes of writing could significantly improve their performance. Andy expressed that having a low-stakes writing assignment would be helpful. He stated that it would be useful "especially if you get feedback like you would with a real paper…That would be a huge advantage or for a way for them to get to know you better or for you to get to know them better, that first paper, you're kind of in the dark, how you need to write." Justin expressed a desire for increased practice with writing, and she stipulated that the best way for this practice to be effective (for her, at least) is to lower the stakes of writing. She said:

> I think writing classes should be more they make you do prompts and make you write and you have more hands-on experience writing and you write a lot. And so you can understand what you're bad at writing and what you're good at doing. And so the professor can tell you what you need to work on and what you excel at in writing. But it shouldn't be where every paper you turn in is graded. Because that makes me really anxious. When it's like I have to write a paper and it's gonna be graded because I'm scared to make mistakes or say things the way I want to because the professor might not like it. And so I think if a writing class

> just had you write and it was like a completion grade and then look at it and then made you do some graded papers that would be a good way to sculpt writing.

Later in the interview when I asked her to offer some advice to writing teachers, she reiterated this point:

> Have students write without the pressure of it being graded, because I think that would allow students to write the way they actually write and that would help students with and without disabilities. I mean, sure, there'd be some students who would blow it off and wouldn't write as well as they could. But that's inevitable with every type of classroom.

At the end of the interview, when I asked if there was anything else she wanted to tell me, she relayed a positive example of such low-stakes writing. One of her writing teachers often assigned 250-word, low-stakes assignments as an initial scaffolding move before longer papers. She said, "I don't think I learned how to write well until I did that …he didn't make them a big deal…They don't have to be like stellar writing, I just need to know your thoughts on something." Like Justin, Jake also emphasized that students should get practice with writing.

> I would say if I had any advice to give a teacher about teaching writing, it would be to do every single thing possible to get your students to write because similar to reading and anything else, you cannot, you will not get better at it, no matter how many lessons about grammar, no matter how many lessons you give about spelling, the students will never ever get better at it unless they practice it. And they have to practice it forever. So encouraging them to get into a habit of writing and making them find a way that they enjoy it whether it's making it mandatory that your students get some sort of online writing ability or keep a journal or something that requires them to write every day or at least weekly. That's the only thing that I would suggest, especially for kids with disabilities who like me will just avoid it and will master it to the point that they can do it to the level they need to when they need to but they will not practice it other times. They'll just avoid it.

Drawing on research from Daly and Miller, Donald Daiker contends the "problem for highly apprehensive writers is circular. Because they anticipate negative consequences,

they avoid writing. Yet the avoidance of writing—the lack of practice—leads to further negative consequences" (106). Andy, Justin, and Jake all indicate a desire for writing (and feedback on writing) and practice with writing in a lower-stakes environment.

George reported that his anxiety is reduced as the semester progresses, but the first paper poses a significant level of anxiety: "As it goes on throughout the semester, and I get the feel for what the teacher's structure is, my writing abilities do generally improve. But it's just like that first paper get the vast majority of my anxiety." John mentioned an initial, low-stakes essay that served to set the stage for the student's development over the course of the semester. He said:

> Well, like what we talked about, the one-on-one. I know it's hard at a huge university like this but if there's any way you could have a starter essay at the beginning of the class to kind of get a perspective of where their strengths and weaknesses are and then maybe have a one-on-one, I don't know what you call but I always call it a tutorial, like an office hour. Maybe just like 20 or 30 minutes, show them something that you saw that was huge that they could work on. I think that would help on several areas like start off your relationship good. Build that trust and maybe help their, something big in their writing, maybe at the beginning of the semester that they could focus on.

He is offering several smart suggestions here for writing instructors: lower the stakes, focus on a global issue, articulate a goal early in the semester. John's suggestion also indicates a potential connection between anxiety reduction and a strong, trusting teacher-student relationship (this will be discussed further in the next section).

The narratives of anxiety that emerged from my data are refrains common to studies of student writing, student apprehension, and anxiety about performance. What makes these experiences significant is that they suggest researchers and teachers must consider what anxiety means for students with disabilities and how certain practices that exacerbate anxiety might be yet another brick laid in the all-too-common barriers to

access that SWD experience in college writing classrooms. What the students in my data bring to light is that reducing anxiety might be a pedagogical tactic in accessible pedagogies.

Increasing Intimacy & Affirming Ability: Access & the Teacher-Student Relationship

Many of my conversations with SWDs about feedback ring true for all students, not just those that identify as disabled. The students in my study often spoke of their desire to meet one-on-one with their writing teachers and expressed the benefits of experiencing a teacher's affirmation of their abilities. Enacting access-centered pedagogy means increasing intimacy and positivity in the teacher-student relationship, the latter of which is arguably crucial for students who have often been characterized in terms of their deficiencies. This affirming ethos is a component of access-centered pedagogy that might be accomplished through a particular approach to response, either via one-on-one conferencing or even in manner and tone of response to student's written work.

Research in rhetoric and composition studies has thoroughly documented the utility of in-process conferencing. Beth Kaufka, for example, reported that students engaged in required, one-on-one conferencing with composition instructors "very clearly perceived the conferences as helpful for their learning and overall experience" (25). Neal Lerner's article, "The Teacher-Student Writing Conference and the Desire for Intimacy," traced the literature on conferencing as it emerged during "four tension points in higher-education enrollments" (187). He argued that the writing conference (or

at least scholarship endorsing its merits) offers a "window into the structural impediments to effective teaching of writing" and functions as a "veritable 'Rosebud' that keeps us going despite overwhelming working conditions" (187). While Lerner examines this desire for intimacy from the perspectives of teachers in the field, in the context of my study, this desire may emanate from students as a result of negative perceptions of themselves as writers and/or as a result of their stigmatized identities as persons with disabilities.

One such example of the connection between a desire for intimacy and a pathological perception of one's own ability is present in my conversation with Tyler. Tyler expressed the benefits of meeting with the teacher one-on-one for an in-process conference, saying it was helpful even though you're hit with "the harsh reality that your paper's not that great," but she reported that face-to-face conferencing was "awesome" and "really beneficial." Embedded in Tyler's comment on the benefits of conferencing is her own self-doubt. Other students I interviewed focused more intently on the benefits of positive feedback and face-to-face explanation of revision suggestions. John told a story about the positive impact of one-on-one interaction, describing a former English teacher who helped him improve his writing. He said:

> Grammar is something that's always kicked me in the butt…she started teaching me stuff and that one-on-one actually helped me so much. I learned so much in that setting…they never really taught me. They just gave me workbook pages and then say write an essay and then they grade you and I see if pages like filled with red and I'm like whatever. I don't care. But she actually took the time and sat down and explained to me.

John's experience with skill-and-drill is contrasted with his experience of having aspects of his writing "explained" and his resistance to learning from traditional, error-based commenting ("pages filled with red") might also be understood as an act of

isolation. In other words, John perceived his teacher's face-to-face explanation as more beneficial than working alone on his workbook. Chesty also indicated that he benefits from face-to-face explanation. When I asked him what types of support he receives from writing teachers, he described his writing teacher's merits:

> He's encouraging. Aside from being encouraging, when he is critical, he explains as to why. That's a big deal to me. I'm used to criticism after being in the marine core. You don't like criticism; you're in the wrong place. You gotta let it roll off you. But when he explains it and he goes through it, that's when I'm like, ok. That's where I messed up and I need to fix this because of this. If I know why, I'm gonna do it.

Like Chesty, Rose also emphasized the value of "explanation" in teacher conferencing, but she spoke specifically in terms of teacher response to student writing. She said:

> Going face-to-face with my comp teacher was really helpful especially when I asked her about her comments. She would always explain really clearly…I feel like it's really beneficial for students to go to their teachers after they get their comments and ask them, I don't personally do this enough myself I really should, go and ask them what you can do to improve your paper, what you can do next time, go and ask them about their comments. I feel like that would really help.

Mike also mentioned the benefits of in-process, one-on-one help, stating, "If I can get it in early then they can read it and tell me what I'm doing wrong." Michelle also said, "[My teacher and I] met one-on-one quite a bit. I would go to her with whatever I had. I would try to get my assignment done early and be like what's wrong with this? Can you help me? She was always really helpful with that, just talking with me." Like John, Michelle's comment focuses on the spoken interaction between her and the teacher. Like Mike, Michelle's approach to conferencing is to fix what's "wrong." The association of conferencing as a moment of diagnosis and treatment makes it all the more paramount for writing instructors to couple increased intimacy with positive

feedback (affirmation of ability), asserting what the student-writer is doing well and valuing the literacies and composing processes the student brings into the class. Deborah Mutnick and Steve Lamos emphasize this affirming ethos when they articulate the key principles of basic writing pedagogy. They assert that instructors of basic writing should "assume students can learn and deserve to be engaged in serious intellectual activities and curricula, not skill-and-drill based 'remediation'" (21). Furthermore, they draw on Geneva Smitherman's *Talkin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America* to suggest that instructors should "value the inevitable tension between acknowledging what students '*already* know' and trying to move them to what they *need* to know' (qtd. in Mutnick and Lamos 21, emphasis their own).

While some of my participants (for example, John) emphasized the value of "explanation" in conferencing (a monologic approach to conferencing), others viewed the dialogic benefits to be reaped from teacher-student conferencing. Rose said that meeting one-on-one could help students figure out what they "need to expand on and how certain things can help, and she pointed out that teachers could take an active role and "maybe suggest alternative writing strategies if something's not working…and helping if they have an idea about something, throwing out other things that relate to that can help them think more in-depth about their topic." When I asked Veronica if she had any advice for writing teachers, she said, "just maybe being there in order to help bounce ideas off of someone. Just like I said, I usually have to talk through my idea, so helping with that." While extolling the benefits of teacher-student conferencing is certainly far from novel, considering the value of such conferences for students with disabilities allows for enriched understanding of how the teacher-student relationship

impacts student perception of ability and identity, thus offering yet another tool for teachers as they enact access-centered pedagogies.

As I mentioned earlier, increasing intimacy in the teacher-student relationship must be coupled with a demonstrated affirmation of students' abilities to succeed; responding to student writing is perhaps the most obvious site for such demonstration.[68] In her benchmark article "Responding to Student Writing," Nancy Sommers remarked that "We comment on student writing to dramatize the presence of a reader, to help our students become the questioning reader themselves" (148). She also pointed out that "Written comments need to be an extension of the teacher's voice—an extension of the teacher as reader" (155). The tone and manner of teacher response to student writing impacts student performance and attitude toward the writing task. Donald Daiker reported on research in writing regarding the "distrust of praise " that is prevalent among composition instructors (103), but notable scholars in our field such as Mina Shaughnessy (85) and Ken Macrorie emphasized the importance of encouragement (688). This distrust is connected to a value of *critical* engagement with academic discourse, a discourse in which many academics are deeply vested. Many students with disabilities, however, have experienced a range of "critique," much of which is informed by medical models of disability (e.g. "that's not normal behavior in the classroom") and may benefit tremendously from being affirmed. Amber, for example, made a point about how useful positive feedback can be. She stated "positive reinforcement was good. My English 1, she was so nice, and I always thought I was a bad writer but like all my papers, she'd always put positive things, not like you did this wrong, you did this wrong. It was positive things. And that helped me." The "help"

Amber mentions has as much to do with her perception of herself ("bad writer") as it does with her writing itself. Veronica told me that in high school she was drilled repeatedly on passive voice and then in her freshman year of college, she had to write about storms and her writing instructor walked in and wrote her name on the board. Veronica said she was like, "Oh my god, oh my god," but the teacher said, "She's the only one who didn't use passive voice…And she's the only one who got an A." While the teacher's overzealous excitement over a grammar skill might irk some writing teachers, it's telling that this memory stuck with Veronica as a moment of victory resulting from positive feedback from a teacher. Daiker argues that "praise may be especially important for students who have known little encouragement and, in part for that reason, suffer from writing apprehension" (105). He points out that one way to reduce writer apprehension is to "allow students to experience success with writing" (106). His essay should not be understood as an argument for grade inflation; it would be a reductive reading to view his claim as our discipline's recitation of the "Let's give everybody a trophy!" cultural narrative. Rather, Daiker's argument expresses explicit resistance to the distrust of praise that may impact SWDs in significantly damaging ways, potentially calcifying the stigmatization of disability identities. Praise may also be associated with acceptance, as Greg pointed out to me. He said, "When I hear how well I've done, that just makes me want to keep hearing that and just keep on doing as good as I can do so I can hear that. I love that praise and I guarantee you that other disabled students, that's one thing they're looking for too. To feel like they're accepted."

Understanding Materiality: The Role of Spaces, Locations, & the Body

The material realities of SWDs impact their experiences as students and as writers. Too often SWDs experience a number of barriers to academic achievement due to their material conditions: the materiality of their classrooms, of campus, and of their own bodies. Instructors (in writing and across campus) should be aware of and sensitive to the material realities that students with disabilities experience. Why is it important for teachers to understand the role that materials conditions play in students' lives? In *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique,* Bruce Horner critiques representations of students that are grounded in the deficit model—the idea that students, especially "basic" students, come into the classroom with a deficit that teachers must fill. In this model, students are viewed by what they lack: lack of finesse with academic discourse, lack of basic grammar skills, lack of analytical or critical abilities, and so on. Arguing from a materialist perspective, Horner points to the lack(s) "rarely addressed or even acknowledged, despite the ongoing, profound, and quite immediate effects they have on what students can accomplish in our classes," such as "lack of financial support, lack of access to computers or paper or printers, lack of time, lack of health and health insurance, lack of child care, lack of sleep, lack of quiet, lack of housing" (35-36). The absence of focus on the social materiality of students and student writing significantly limits the ability to understand the utility of particular representations.[69] A uni-focal examination of a student with disabilities who lacks the "skills" to spell correctly or to demonstrate abstract reasoning might serve to obscure focus on providing institutional resources to accommodate (with or without the sanction of documentation). Horner argues for accountability of social materiality; when writing

classroom and writing students are viewed in a reductive production-consumption model, this "occludes the full material social process of production" ("Redefining" 180). In other words, when the social materiality of disability experience are invisible, students with disabilities may be positioned and/or represented as remedial, lazy, late, and otherwise defunct. Accounting for the materiality of SWD fosters more dynamic understanding of how they are able or unable to participate and produce in the context of the writing classroom. In the following section, I summarize the dominant strains referencing materiality that emerged from the data, first discussing spaces and locations (seating, environmental conditions of the classroom, navigating campus) followed by a discussion of students' embodied experiences in writing classrooms and beyond (fatigue, pain, strain, medication). This discussion aims to elucidate the complexities of materiality and should encourage faculty and instructors to reconsider the origins and repetitions of challenges to access for students with disabilities in higher education.

One of the most common themes I heard from interviewees involved their physical location in the classroom. Tom expressed that he would often need to sit close to the front of the classroom in order to see the material on the board. He also mentioned, however, that the need to sit close was eliminated when teachers were mindful enough to provide him with accessible, large-print materials prior to class: "If they were nice, if not, then I just had to sit close and do my best." Sarah, too, expressed a need to sit in the front of the classroom, specifically on the left side. Due to blindness in her left eye, she has increased visibility if she can look toward the right. Tyler remarked that if she sits in the back of a classroom, she tends to "check out" because she can't hear very well. Tyler emphasized that a U-shaped seating arrangement

improved her ability to interact with her peers, thus enhancing her classroom experience. She asserted that seating is something within the teacher's control: "If there's just straight rows, they can change that." Chesty also expressed a desire for a particular seat in his classes. He said, "The things I need are not available [from disability services]. For example, my anxiety in my government class is off the charts. There are, I don't know how many students are in there. It's a huge room and there are so many people in that room, I almost go nuts. I'm in the back corner by the door because honestly there's nowhere else I will sit." When I asked Chesty why he preferred to sit by the door, he said:

> It's about knowing who's around you and what they're doing…like this door right here [points to my own office door], if this door was to open and a gunman came through, I'm the first one to handle it. I'm able to take care of the situation without having to worry about being across the room, behind a bunch of people, not able to do anything. I think that's the most frustrating thing to any veteran: not being able to do something.

When I followed up by asking if it was better in his writing class, which was smaller, he said, "Oh, it's just as bad in there. First of all, it's a small room. That in itself, I'm not claustrophobic but that definitely adds to it." He later pointed out that it wasn't really the room size that bothered him, but rather the number of people in the room. He said, "It could be the biggest classroom you have on campus, but with five people in there, that would be perfect for me." Bob, also a student-veteran, told me that even though one of his large classes required him to walk down a large set of stairs, he still does it because "I'm not there to just try and get a class done, sit in the back and leave. I want to actually learn this stuff so I want to be near the teacher. I want to be able to ask questions." And even though he was willing, in this particular class, to walk those stairs in order to get to his preferred seating, he did tell me that he would avoid taking classes

in rooms designed in that particular manner: “Lesson learned. I probably won’t take any more of those types of classrooms.” Gavin told me that his most important accommodation is reduced distraction. When I asked him “why’s that?” he told me:

> That’s what scares me in tests sometimes. For most lectures, I sit front-and-center or back-and-center, the most viewable spot, or most attentive spot I can find for lectures. But when it comes to test time, and I get stuck at the front of the room, I get the feeling that a lot of people could be looking at me, whereas they’re probably not. They’re probably most focused on their exams. It’s kind of an odd issue. But I hate having the feeling of people looking at me during the exam. It skyrockets my anxiety. I don’t know. I can’t perform as I should be able to.

George reported that he has to sit near the front because if he can see other people he “starts observing their behaviors,” which is very distracting for him. Mr. C said “I have been allowed to sit in a seat that is at the front of the room near the door. This minimizes distractions I have developed trouble with. It also allows me to physically have an easier time getting in and out of the classroom.” As the above examples illustrate, whether preferences for seating location are determined by a desire for proximity for visual access (Tom, Sarah, Tyler) or by anxiety associated with military or medical background (Chesty, Gavin, Mr. C), instructors should consider allowing students to determine their own locations within the classroom setting. Making such allowances may work to significantly alter the engagement and ease with which students enter and exist in the classroom space—thereby (presumably) impacting their potential to succeed and learn.[70] When teachers are cognizant of the dramatic impact of location on students’ access to the social spaces and practices of the classroom, this attention to materiality can significantly increase accessibility. Moreover, when teachers understand how something as simple as seating arrangement may account for lack of student engagement in class activities, they resist reductive and potentially ableist

representations of student performance. In other words, increasing material awareness enables instructors to understand that it's the student's seat causing the problem, not the student's ability.

Many SWDs are not only impacted by their locations but also by the materiality of many environmental factors in the classroom, such as lighting, acoustics, and temperature. Sarah reported that she "didn't like when the teacher would use overheads and turn off the lights. The light was just awful." Tyler too expressed difficulty with lighting issues. She said that she "can't see well when there's low light" and that she "can't really distinguish things." Tyler related a story about the impact of low lighting on her experience in a class:

> There's one class where we watch a lot of videos, and it's always dark. I wouldn't be able to make my way from my seat to the computer to show my video for example. And again, that's another thing where I should have told her that at the beginning, and I didn't realize that would be a situation that would come up until it happened and I was like, well, I don't want to just like tell her, 'Oh, I can't see on my way up there.'

In this instance, because no one in Tyler's class knew about her visual disability, she experienced a situation where sharing her work in class created a moment of forced disclosure due to low lighting. She couldn't see her way to the front of the class. Leah also reported intense light and noise sensitivity associated with her chronic migraines. Jessica experiences debilitating migraines that are exacerbated by florescent lighting. Elliot pointed out that some rooms were constructed in ways that make hearing more difficult. He said, "The way the room is designed you have to project your voice in there much more without yelling." Maria reported that the temperature of a room makes a significant impact on her ability to focus. She stated, "It is hard to concentrate sometimes when I just want to curl up and get warm... if a classroom is really cold, I'm

miserable. It really messes with the arthritis. I end up spending most of my time trying to get my fingers and feet warm and not paying attention."

Existing scholarship in our field offers many useful strategies for rethinking spaces; one is particular works especially well for thinking through how to transform environmental factors in productive ways. "Hacking Spaces: Place as Interface," by Douglas M. Walls, Scott Schopieray, and Nicole DeVoss offer *hacking* as a strategic tool for examining the ways in which certain issues of space—"restricted movement, impaired ability to collaborate, sensory disruption"—might be negotiated or disrupted (269). While this article is not necessarily focused on disability, the authors nonetheless offer valuable strategies for inviting students to negotiate and revise the spaces in which they learn. In my earlier discussion of access as shared responsibility, I discussed participants' suggestions regarding surveying or polling students on the environmental factors that influence their performance in class. In considering conditions such as seating, lighting, acoustics and the like—tapping into students' needs is a useful way in which to examine materiality in terms of both social conditions and accessibility.[71]

In addition to material factors within the classroom, students offered many stories about their experiences navigating campus, highlighting such issues as stairs, elevators, room numbers, parking, and their "other" academic space: the disability services center[72]. Factors such as weather can significantly impact a student's ability to navigate campus. Bob told me that rain and snow impact his ability to arrive on time for class. He said, "If it's ever really bad outside, I'm either going to leave early so that I can make it on time, which I do make it on time. But I'm going to take every avenue to not walk on or around ice or snow because if I go down, I'm not stopping myself. If the

prosthetic slips, or if the real one goes, there's nothing that's gonna stop me from hitting the ground…There's a lot of safety issues in the back of my head now that weren't there before, before injury…and I'm not gonna put myself in a position of re-injury or injury just to have a couple minutes off." He emphasized that most professors are very understanding and that he prides himself on his ability to avoid tardiness: "I try to accommodate them because I'm there for them and they're there for me. It's mutual."

Chesty has trouble with stairs due to chronic reoccurrence of pilonidal cysts. He said, "It will always be a fragile heal. It will heal up, and I'll go down to pick up my two year old and it will open up. I will tie my shoes, and it will open up. Anything. Going up the stairs too fast. It's awful. It's painful, extremely painful." Like Chesty, Maria struggles with stairs. She mentioned that due to her disability, she tries to remember to use the elevators because "stairs are terrible for [her] knees." She complained that "elevators are annoyingly slow." Mike said that stairs are difficult, as is kneeling down. When I asked Mike about how his disabilities impact his ability to navigate campus, he said, "definitely to get from one building to another, carrying this heavy backpack around. My doctors tell me not to but I have to carry these books. There's no way around it. I actually asked the VA [Veteran's Affairs] if they could buy me a handheld backpack and they're like no, we can't do that. Buy that your damn self."

Jason, who uses a motorized scooter, talked with me about his experiences navigating campus. When I asked him his opinion of campus accessibility, he told me, "It's not great." In fact, we had to schedule our interview in a room other than my office because my doorway was inaccessible for his scooter. Prior to our interview, I walked

around my department building with a tape measure. Eventually my department's conference room doorway met the measurements, but it was very tight. To be clear, I'm not suggesting that teachers get sledgehammers and engage in full-on reconstruction projects. What I am suggesting is that instructors *purposefully develop* their awareness of the material conditions that so often impede access for SWD.

Tom expressed frustration with lack of adequate visibility of room numbers stating that:

> At the beginning of the semester, before classes start, I always go find my classes because like in this building, the numbers are so small above the door and Dale Hall is even worse. So I go and find all my classes before, that way I'm not trying to get to class and fight all the people and look for my class.

Tom has a very different experience locating his classes; he must work just to get in the door.

Parking is also an issue. Chesty said, "I have a handicap pass for my car. Just having the parking is insane." He went on to explain how even with the pass, he struggles to find parking on campus and that this could be a very big problem not only in terms of navigating campus (he uses a cane) and avoiding tardiness, but also in terms of his incontinence and Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), which cause him to need a restroom at a moment's notice. However, when I asked Mike, who is also a student-veteran like Chesty, whether or not a parking pass would help him navigate campus more easily, he was resistant to the idea, stating, "I'm too much of a man to get one of those. I'm not gonna park with the old ladies." Mike's aversion to accessible parking is clearly tied up with his resistance to disability identity—an identity he perceives as weak and unmanly.

What Bob, Chesty, Maria, Jason, Tom, and Mike make clear is that instructors should be attuned to the challenges that students may experience as they attempt to make it to class. Such awareness might be as simple as viewing (and posting!) campus accessibility maps to course web pages and/or taping a large-print sheet of paper ensuring your class or office number is clearly visible. Yet another tactic might be to advocate for disability rights on campus, talking with your department chair about ways in which to increase access to your building.

While I've been discussing the ways in which students' material environments impact their ability to arrive, participate, and succeed in college writing classrooms, their own embodied realities have profound effects on their level of access as well. Students reported a wide variety of embodied variables, ranging from fatigue, pain, and strain to the impact of access (or lack of access) to medication and medication management. Sarah reported eye strain with her reading process. Maria reported that she "really, really, really hate[s] reading." She said that "it's very tedious with my eyes, which tire easily. It's not that I don't like learning about new things, but the reading is very difficult." The eye strain she experiences significantly impacts her ability (and enthusiasm) for digesting new knowledge. As mentioned previously in the section of adopting conventional accommodations as common pedagogical practice, access to screen readers or even audio books might improve Maria's ability to absorb content.

Bob expressed the ways in which pain impacts his ability to attend class. He said, "I have an ingrown hair sore on the back of my leg, came on Monday. When I put the leg on, it's right at the ridge of the back of the prosthetic…It's like a hot poker in my leg. I took my leg off and I was like I don't know if I can put my leg on today. I

ended up just fighting through it." Jason too spoke at length about how his experience with pain impacted his performance in writing classrooms, stating bluntly, "The physical act of writing, I am terrible at it. I hate writing period." He told me a story from his childhood that revealed a lifelong relationship between pain and writing.

> One of the stories I remember from this is like way back, I don't know, first grade or something like that, just learning to write or whatever. But like I say my writing's always been really messy, and I got in trouble for writing really bad or whatever the problem…and they called my parents and this way before we knew that I had the disease and they thought I was just being lazy or whatever. They didn't realize that there was a problem, so they basically said if you don't start doing better, I think it was on spelling tests or something simple like that, and the teacher couldn't make out my writing. And she said, if you don't start doing better on these tests then my parents were gonna punish me and make me write my alphabet like ten times, which is a whole lot to a little kid… So basically, it didn't get any better obviously because it couldn't. And so they made me do that, and I remember it hurt so bad and my parents mainly my mom, I guess my mom and my dad would make me sit in the living room and write out the alphabet in capital and small letters ten times each and after every spelling test. And I think that's probably when I started to, obviously they didn't know anything was wrong, but I think that's pretty much when I started not only to hate English and writing.

Jason's story offers a deeply compelling anecdote about the detrimental consequences of associating physical pain with the act of writing. For Jason, writing became an exercise in physical agony from an early age; couple that with a disappointment from parents and teachers alike, and it's no surprise at all when he concludes his narrative with an assertion of his utter disdain for the act of writing.

Others too reported the ways in which pain mediates their experiences in classroom settings. Maria emphasized that, due to disability, she experiences a great deal of pain, which impacts her performance and mood. She explained, "I have to remind people that my joints have no lubrication, so I can't do high-impact physical activity. I am also in pain every day of my life so I find myself frequently apologizing

for that. Mainly the joints and pain affect my overall well-being and mood. It is hard to concentrate." Rachel, a professional writing major, expressed that she experiences a great deal of bodily pain in her arms. She said:

> Well I'm a writing major so I do a lot of typing. I have about 3,000 words a week due for my novel class. It was 4,000 words a week last semester. So it's really hard to keep up with that sometimes. It's even hard to sometimes do things like send emails when it hurts a lot. I had some stuff going on with my left ulnar nerve, so I was just in bed most of yesterday cause it's the kind of thing where bending your elbow or resting it on anything inflames the pain so you can't really do anything...A lot of people my age they're on the computer a whole lot. I know I'm on the computer too much, but I wouldn't say it's more or less than a lot of people I know…They just don't really understand kind of that it causes a huge amount of pain.

She also told me a story of experiencing this pain during a class she had the week prior to our interview:

> Last night during class I was having, not last night, it was two nights ago, yesterday I was in bed not doing anything. Wednesday night I had a three-hour night class. The chairs are kind of designed like this [office chair] right but if you're having to rest your arms like this, it's kind of irritating to the nerves. So I'm like sitting like this. I probably took about four Tylenol during. I was rubbing Aspercreme on my elbows, so it had to be like really awkward just watching me. So I just felt really awkward.

Not only did Rachel's experience of pain inhibit her ability to attend and perform in the classroom environment, it also required a type of forced disclosure (explaining her actions during class time).

In addition to issues of strain and pain, students also reported the material impact of fatigue. Leah, for example, reported fatigue resulting from insomnia, stating: "I might have slept four hours per night at times…though I was not falling asleep in class, my migraines were often occurring each day of the week. One of my neurologists during high school felt that my continued lack of sleep might be contributing to my

migraines." Diane told me how taxing it is for her to suppress her ticks while in class. Diane has Tourette Syndrome, and she explained her "tick" as continual, repetitive throat clearing and sometimes squeaking. She said, "I'm self-conscious about it. It's less so when I'm around people I'm comfortable with because they know so they don't really care but when I'm in class, I suppress it for a while, and then eventually when I'm at home or when I'm in the car, I let it out." I asked Diane if this type of suppression required a lot of mental and physical energy, and she nodded her head, telling me, "It makes me tired, and it depends on the day. If I'm really stressed, like around finals, it's terrible. That's why usually I get, the week after finals I'm pretty much sleeping 24/7."After these intense bouts of suppression, Diane's body literally goes into recovery mode. Perhaps instructors might productively consider how their manner of framing acceptable bodily behavior in the classroom setting contributes to the impulse for such suppression.[73] Amber reported that extreme fatigue results from insomnia she experiences during her manic phases. Like Amber, Hilary expressed the intense impact of fatigue resulting from manic episodes associated with stress. She described this process vividly:

> So I needed to make good grades, and I was staying up late and the class was at 8:00am. And then I had to go to the rest of my classes. So after big test days, I was so manic, I would crash so hard because I'm up, up, up, up, up. And I'm so stressed out. I'm not getting enough sleep. And then when I could finally take a nap or something, I would just wake up and bawl my face off because I was so stressed out. My mind was just a race track and I was just freaking out and it was just, not a mental breakdown, but I'd just have to have a little meltdown and get it out of my system.

The common thread among the reported experiences of Amber, Leah, Diane, and Hilary is the connection between their embodied experience of disability and the resulting fatigue that impacts their ability to perform and/or succeed in the classroom. The

trouble here is that Amber, Leah, Diane, and Hilary all expressed hesitation at disclosing their disabilities to instructors for fear of judgment or due to an ambivalence regarding its relevance to the writing classroom. That said, their narratives offer (at the very least) a cautionary tale for teachers that—upon encountering the tired eyes and listless posture of a student during a given class period—assume late night drinking, lack of interest, or general boredom to explain such behavior. Such assumptions not only entrench problematic notions of the entitled, sluggish student, they also work to further obscure the ways in which mental disabilities remain largely invisible and un-interrogated in terms of pedagogy.

In addition to bodily issues of pain and fatigue, discussion of medication emerged as one of the most dominating themes from my interview transcripts, though not one of my interview questions inquired as to the impact of medication and/or medication management. The Attention-Deficit Disorder/Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD) medication Adderall featured prominently in these discussions, with students describing both the benefits and the severely detrimental consequences of taking the amphetamine psycho-stimulant. April reported on the benefits of taking medication for ADD, saying, "It's time-released so you just get a little throughout the day. And that's all I really needed to keep my mind straight. I actually ran out of Vyvanse. I haven't been on it for about a month and a half because I have to go back to Dallas to get re-prescribed for three months. So I've been struggling." For April, who sees medication as beneficial, access to medication is critical to her success, and her material conditions (traveling to Dallas) impact her ability to keep her "mind straight." Diane also reported benefits from her ADHD

medication, but explained that it was only available to her when her family could afford it. After they lost insurance, she said she had to "re-evaluate everything." Though both Diane and April had positive things to say about prescription medication, access to these drugs proved difficult; this material reality demonstrates the danger of assuming that ADD or ADHD are easily and/or effectively managed with medication.

Rose also described the perceived benefits of her ADHD medication, stating that it is "managed very well," but she acknowledged that for some people "that's not the case." She articulated the effects of the medication, saying, "It wakes me up in the morning. It really helps with getting me up, so I can get to class on time and be alert. But overall, it's really helped a lot. There's a big improvement in my grades." For other students, access to these prescribed drugs may involve procurement via illegal means. Lynn reported that her access to Adderall, which she does not have a prescription for, determines the pace at which she is able to study. She said, "There've been a lot of days where I don't have an Adderall and that doesn't mean I'm not gonna study…it's not like I'm totally dependent on it. But if I had it, I would be better. …It takes a lot more self-control to do good, self-discipline without it do to good." Although Lynn does not have a prescription for the drug, she reports that when she is able to access the medication, she very clearly perceives several benefits for her academic performance. James reported that although he perceives his medication to be helping him, he does try to reduce his need for it, and he emphasized that his doctor is able to help him manage the multiple medications he takes (Adderall for ADD and additional medications for his Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and his Tourette's).

While the above examples document a handful of my students reporting the benefits of ADD/ADHD medication, negative anecdotes abound in the data set when it comes to prescription (and non-prescription) use of Adderall. James, for example, in addition to discussing some benefits of his medication, also mentioned some negative effects of the drugs, stating:

> The only times I ever have issues is during finals week or something like that or dead week, and I'm constantly studying non-stop. I'll make sure I'm staying up to my dosage constantly. And I'm staying up late and having a lot of caffeine, trying to stay focused. Those are the times where I feel it can kind of give me an effect. There are times when I feel really jittery, and it makes it even harder to focus because of my lack of sleep…I've learned that caffeine and lack of sleep is not a good thing when you're taking your Adderall.

Gavin also experienced several alterations in his medication regimen due to changes in diagnoses after being hospitalized. He reported that although he "gypsied the doctor" into giving him Adderall, Gavin perceived Adderall as contributing to a major psychological breakdown that resulted in hospitalization. He expressed dismay that so many people abuse prescription drugs, abuse to which he himself also admitted. Like Gavin, Hilary experienced fall-out from taking Adderall. When I asked Hilary what triggered her diagnosis as Bipolar, she told me:

> I had a suicide attempt…And I tried some other counselor before and one of them told me I was depressed. The depression symptoms were actually masking a thyroid problem so that didn't work. The next counselor I tried told me I had ADHD and put me on Adderall. And if you're Bipolar, Adderall is awesome because you're manic all the time. And so, that's really, really dangerous. And so my suicide attempt came right after the beginning of spring semester where I was just done with [a difficult semester] and I'd come off like a six-month Adderall binge, and I just basically flat-lined.

She stated, "I just had lost my ever-loving marbles. After that, that's how I got help. And now I'm medicated and everything so school is more feasible at times." Hilary went on to mention self-medicating with drugs and alcohol: "Obviously weed's all over

campus. Alcohol, Xanex, I don't know, there's kind of a big underground pharmacy at our college campuses, ya know the whole Adderall thing. Because of my experience with it, I see it as a really dangerous drug because I didn't know what it would do to me." James, Gavin, and Hilary draw attention to the ways in which attempts to treat and/or manage disability might result in extreme fatigue, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and even hospitalization.

A few of the students I spoke to expressed resistance to relying on medication. Mike reported that he took himself off prescribed narcotics for pain because "it slows your thinking down," and he also said, "I took myself off that stuff because of school. It affects your nervous system." Even though he reported intense pain due to his disability, Chesty too reported resistance to narcotic use. He said, "I don't want to be on narcotics because I have to drive to school. I have to go to work. I have a newborn. I don't want to be on narcotics, so [disability] was tough to deal with." Taken together, all of the narratives my interviewees shared about their experiences with medication combine to reveal a profoundly complex portrait of disability management. In order to understand the takeaway of such a portrait, it's useful to return again to Bruce Horner's claim regarding student representation and the need for materialist perspectives. If the materiality of writing is undervalued and under-examined, one might extend such an argument to the materiality of student experience in relation to writing, writing teachers, and writing classrooms. Understanding student materiality encompasses their *journey* to the classroom setting, their *being* in the classroom setting (environmental factors such as light and temperature), and the conditions at work when *performance* is altered due

to a complex array of spatial and bodily variables, such as pain, fatigue, and the consequences and/or absence of medical intervention.

Educating faculty through professional development training is perhaps one of the best ways to begin working against the paucity of instructor knowledge of the material experiences of students with disabilities. These workshops might be offered from disability services or as pedagogical brainstorming among instructors of writing. If funding is available, departments might bring in Disability Studies specialists to facilitate such training. Departments should also consider involving students themselves in such workshops, setting up a panel of SWDs to talk about the material challenges they face as student writers.[74]

Taken together, the tenets I've offered in this chapter should be seen as enacting three things: first, each tenet elucidates the perspectives of students with disabilities about access and accommodation; second, each tenet suggests practice-based strategies for increasing access in writing classrooms and in writing-intensive coursework; and third, the culmination of these tenets aim to increase attention to access in a sustained and reflective manner, for students and teachers alike. Such sustained attention to access requires a classroom community envisioned as interdependent and a classroom design that foregrounds universal design rather than individualized accommodations. Access-centered pedagogy also asks that teachers reconsider the conditions of student production and what types of body-minds those conditions privilege. It also suggests that teachers proactively and positively develop relationships with students that are grounded in affirmation of ability and awareness of materiality. In the following chapter, I extend access-centered pedagogy to account for two additional dominant

strains from the data set: the manner by which strictures of time determine access and the ways in which student presence is determined, valued, and assessed.

Chapter Four: Cripping Time & Rethinking Presence

In the previous chapter, I presented five different strategies for enacting access-centered pedagogy, and in the chapter that follows, I offer in-depth analysis of two additional dominant themes that emerged from my data: time and presence. The students in my study had considerable experiences to share that focused on their relationship to time and their ability/willingness to maintain presence in the writing classroom. If time is considered to be the *progress* of existence and presence is defined as the *state* of existence, then the relationship between these two themes might be understood as the ways in which students advance through and inhabit in the space of a classroom. Composition instructors need to consider how normative constructions of both time and presence may negatively impact students with disabilities.

Cripping Time: Flexible Approaches to Normative Time Frames

One major theme that resulted from my study was the issue of time. A consideration of time is a top concern for disability services; extended time is one of the most frequently used accommodations. However, extended time, as it is most often conceived in accommodation models, is associated with exams. Extended time on assignments is far less common. In fact, while working as a graduate research assistant in the Office of First-Year Composition at my university, I requested a meeting with the staff at my campus disability services center. One of the questions I asked them centered on offering extended time on essay assignments as an accommodation that might be applicable to the writing classroom. They were extremely resistant to this idea, arguing that students would take advantage of such an accommodation and that it

wasn't fair to the other students. In my experience, students are not attempting to take advantage of the accommodations system; they are trying to succeed and have honorable intentions. To make this point more forcefully, I would argue that the very notion of the "shifty," manipulate student seeking accommodation-as-advantage is a disability myth, a trope with deep rhetorical roots. In his recent book, *Disability Rhetoric: Critical Perspectives on Disability*, Jay Dolmage presents extensive analysis of the many myths that inform rhetorical constructions of disability. He writes, "We have always had disability myths, and these myths have always been rhetorically significant and rhetorically contested" (11). I'll take up the accommodation-as-advantage myth more deeply in chapter five, but it's important to keep in mind throughout this chapter as well, due in part to the frequent rhetorical association of *extra* time and *unfair* advantage.

Many of the students I interviewed expressed a desire for flexibility with deadlines and with processes of writing, along with a resistance to timed writing. This raises the question of whether or not writing teachers obstruct access when they assign timed-writing prompts in their classrooms. In the case of timed writing, access might be inhibited because some students might not benefit from composing in a restricted time frame in the same way that other students might. In other words, SWD might be at a disadvantage when asked to compose within strict or normative boundaries of time. "Crip" time offers an alternative approach to conceiving time in composition classrooms.

Crip time is a concept in in disability culture that "refers to a flexible approach to normative time frames" (Price, *Mad at School* 62; see also Zola; see also Gill).

Margaret Price points out that classrooms adhere to such normative time frames, almost by definition. She writes, "Students are expected to arrive on time, absorb information at a particular speed, and perform spontaneously in restricted time frames" (63). She asserts that adhering to crip time means "recognizing that people will arrive at various intervals" and that people "are processing language at various rates and adjusting the pace of conversation" (63). Alison Kafer, in her book *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, theorizes crip time and crip futurity, or the ways in which the "future" is constructed as compulsory ablebodiedness (27). Kafer draws particular attention to the "compulsory" deployments of futurity, or the curative imaginary. She makes clear that desires for cure are not anti-crip, but that curative imaginaries are problematic (and ableist) when they are constructed as compulsory, viewing ablebodiedness as the ultimate, ever-desirable end. Cripping time in composition pedagogy requires inquiry into the effects of normative time frames as well as into the tacit curative imaginaries that undergird our classroom practices, our assignments, and our policies. The following section examines the barriers to access that such time strictures construct for students with disabilities. I focus on timed writing during class, what Price might refer to as "spontaneous" performance, but also on writing assignments themselves. While assignments do not have a number of class minutes, the nevertheless exist within strictly defined boundaries of time that are controlled by the instructor (or sometimes by departmentally standardized curriculum). Finally, I look at specific moments in my interviews in which students reported contradictory relationships to time, inconsistent and often conflicting notions of being in time and performing in time. These contradictions expose the fissures between crip time and academic time, thus revealing academic resistance to the

cripping of time, a resistance grounded in ableist notions of intelligence, performance, and ability.

While extended time on an exam is a very common "conventional" accommodation, few writing classrooms rely on timed essay exams as a common component of their pedagogical approach. Rather, students are assigned essays (textual or perhaps even multi-media) that they complete throughout the course of a given semester. Although this common accommodation doesn't typically apply to the writing classroom, composition instructors need to carefully interrogate the ways in which we construct timed writing in our classroom activities and in our assignments. In my own teaching, I never assign an essay exam, but I frequently ask students to "take ten minutes and please write about…" Strictures of time exist by definition in a classroom; every class has a first day and a last day. Every class has due dates, measures of time for when students should complete a task and a stop-time for their work on that task, at which point the teacher takes control of that text and begins the evaluation process. To regard the (seemingly) inevitable boundaries of time that mediate student experience and student production as de facto standard, however, obscures the normativity that supports such strictures. In other words, we must pay attention to how we construct time; otherwise, we may enforce normative time frames upon students whose experiences and processes exist in contradiction to such compulsory measures of times.

The students with whom I spoke offered several insights into their experiences with in-class writing. Amber, for example, had the following to say:

> Whenever we would have our mini-essays in class, because we only had 50-minute classes, and then she'd allow 15 minutes in class. When the 15 minutes was up, I'd be like, I finally know what I can put on this paper! So that would've helped for the essays in class. If I had extended time on that, it would have

> helped…When they put a time on it, then I start getting anxious. And then it gets harder.

Like Amber, Andy experienced difficulties when asked to write in a timed setting. For example, when asked to freewrite, he reported that he didn't do very well because, he said, "I didn't know what I was gonna say, and it was really rushed for me. They didn't really give me enough time to think it out." For both Andy and Amber, their own sense of the time required to complete a writing task existed in conflict with the teacher's expectations for performance. Andy also informed me that one of the reasons he didn't think he needed accommodations in writing classes was due to the fact that the bulk of the work happened on his own time at home: "Everything was outside of class, the writing. None of it was time in class really. So that was kind of nice. I was able to do it outside of class and take as much time as I needed. So I don't think I really used anything in there, any of my accommodations." With this quote in mind, composition classes might seem conducive to cripping time due to the fact that so much work occurs on the student's own time (outside of class). However, later in our interview I asked Andy how his disability impacts him as a student, and he again reiterated time. He said, "I feel like it impacts me a lot. Just because I feel like sometimes and just in general with everything I do, I feel like somehow it takes me a long time. I have to drill it in…it takes me a while to realize, to sit down and write. What do I want to say, how can I say it? And that's a majority of my time right there." Andy went as far as to tell me that when he is asked to write in a timed environment, he is filled with so much anxiety his hands shake. He experiences a bodily reaction to the compulsory time strictures placed on student performance in timed writing.

Many of my research participants discussed the connection between anxiety and in-class writing. Like Andy, Charles reported significant anxiety with being forced to participate in timed writing. He said, "Short time makes me panic. But say it's given over a couple class periods, I'll feel a little better about it." Later in the interview, Charles made a distinction regarding when he felt timed writing was appropriate. I asked him if he felt that writing teachers should avoid timed writing, and he responded, "They're good in a way, if it's self-reflectant, because you know about yourself. But if it's a topic, I wouldn't suggest a time limit." For Charles, if timed writing is over a topic with which he has familiarity (his own experiences, for example) then he feels it can be productive, but if the topic is unfamiliar, timed writing creates anxiety and is therefore less beneficial for him. A teacher would never know this about Charles, however, unless Charles himself disclosed these preferences and requested (non-sanctioned) accommodations. In my instructor/faculty survey, 69% of respondents confirmed they would grant accommodations without documentation, stating reasons such as "the legal requirements are terribly minimal and all students need access" and "some cannot afford to be tested for disabilities." Of the 10% who answered that they would not provide any accommodations without documentation, one respondent stated, "The registration process is clear and I am not a disability professional." Another respondent also exhibited complete deference to a medical model of disability, stating, "It is appropriate to let trained disability specialists assess whether there is a genuine disability and what the appropriate accommodations might be." By and large, however, instructors seemed flexible and dedicated to ensuring access to all students, with respect for (but not complete reliance on) disability services but with a sensible understanding

of the complexities of disability documentation, disclosure, and the nature of accommodations in writing classrooms.

These complexities emerged consistently in my conversations with students. James explained how his experiences with multiple disabilities create a connection between anxiety and time. He said, "It is hard for me to focus with my ADD but my OCD I get really nervous about time and everything and making sure everything's correct. And when I do that and I get nervous, my Tourette's goes off, and it makes me more self-conscious about people hearing." The anxiety that James experiences due to time strictures creates a confounding of multiple disabilities that results in significant discomfort for him. Very similar to James, George reported on the experience of embodied disability and timed writing, stating that, "One of the issues that I have whenever I'm doing timed writings or even just writing an essay in general, I'll be sitting there, and I won't think that I'm going into enough detail. Or I'll get really nervous, and I'll think I'm going into too much detail." He also reported that OCD routines impact his performance on timed writing:

> I was constantly doing things in groups of three. Even like essay responses, I'd be sitting there and I'd go over the question like three times. And if I didn't feel like I did it correctly the first three times, I would do it again and again. And eventually my [teacher] picked up on it and she said you can't do that on timed writings. So then she got me to talk to my parents and then I went and got a psychiatric evaluation.

In George's case, his behavior in timed writings led (at least partially) to his diagnosis. George told me, "I actually really love writing like a lot. I'm better at it when it's recreational just because there's not the pressure of it being timed." Marie said,

> If I'm put on the spot in the classroom, it's just me like that and you say you have this amount of minutes, I automatically am thinking, oh my gosh, I'm not gonna have enough time and then all the things rush through my head. And then

> what do you know, I've spent 15 minutes thinking about how I'm not gonna beat it.

When I asked Marie to elaborate, she provided some insight regarding how teacher delivery and attitude about timed writing shape her performance: "It's more the way it's presented. Like if a teacher says that in a relaxed way, like 'Ok you guys are gonna do an in-class assignment,' that's fine. I just don't like to hear that there's a…." I asked, "Strict boundary of time?" She replied, "Yeah, because then that drives the anxiety up." She later expressed that she doesn't feel relaxed when she experiences performance in a timed setting and sees everybody else finishing around her. In the final moments of our interview, she advised writing teachers, "Be more cautious about making people feel pressured for time because that really does drive a lot of kids crazy. A lot of times I've felt like I'm just holding up a teacher's day or something."

The pressures and anxieties these students feel when faced with timed writing suggests that SWDs relationship with time exists in contrast to the ways in which composition classes (and academia, more generally) construct and value time—especially in relation to performance and production of assessable texts. Where this conflict exists, barriers to access arise as a result of compulsory notions of ablebodied composing processes.

In addition to the resistance to cripped time that exists within sites of timed writing, the duration of writing assignments themselves also warrant interrogation as to the ableist barriers constructed through manifestations of temporality. Several of my research participants described the ways in which disability disrupts their writing processes thus inhibiting their ability to adhere to normative, or "strictly" defined assignment durations. Leah, for example, reported that sometimes illness associated

with her disability interrupts her writing processes: "When a disability-related [illness] causes a long gap between times in which I am able to work on writing assignments, it makes getting back into the frame of mind and flow of papers difficult." She told me that she relies on effective time management in order to improve her success in writing classes:

> When it comes to writing, I am a perfectionist. I try to start writing assignments as early in my timeline as I can because I know how much I will scrutinize my work. Additionally, I never know when I might be ill. Since I don't know when my disability issues will become serious, I know it is best to try and get ahead on writing assignments. Trying to have as much time as I can get is the most helpful thing for long writing assignments.

She went on the explain that:

> Stringent deadlines make it very hard for me to complete assignments. I never know when I will be sick. I like to try and think that if today is going well, tomorrow will too. Unfortunately, simply wishing something doesn't make it happen. I try to make the most use of time when I am feeling well, but because I don't know when or for how long I will be ill, strict deadlines are quite difficult for me to adhere to.

While disability services allowed her "to have some leeway as to when assignment are due," she reported that "the extent of this accommodation is usually dependent upon the professor of the class. Some professors in the past would give me an extension of a week. Other professors are extremely lenient and just wanted everything turned in by the end of the semester. My professors this semester are at various ends of the spectrum." When I asked Leah what she thought accounted for the variances of flexibility among her professors, she had this say: "I've found, in most instances, that older professors have been less accommodating than younger ones. I don't think I can quite speculate on why that is." Like Leah, Greg relies on extended deadlines in part due to the occurrence of disability-related illnesses. He explained, "Generally, I don't

ask for a lot, just at times, I may be late with assignments and to please understand that there are health issues that are preventing me from being able to get my work in in the given time frame." He further stated, "I kind of hate to ask that, but it is what it is. I got to do what I've got to do to make sure I don't get penalized for turning in something late." When I asked Greg why he hates to ask, he said, "I'm a proud person. I don't like to ask for a lot of help. I just don't." The perspectives offered from both Greg and Leah demonstrate that at times, disability makes it difficult to adhere to frames of time imposed by instructors, and while disability services might intervene with extended deadline accommodations, both Greg and Leah draw attention to the limitations of "conventional" approaches to access. Leah points out that even when the accommodation for extended time is in place, the instructor retains authority over defining the boundaries of "extension," and Greg foregrounds the ways in which a desire for independence further complicate the need for "cripped" time.

While Greg and Leah discussed "interruptions," other students I spoke with explained how the designated stop-time on a given assignment creates an obstacle, those moments when the due date collides with disability. To be clear, I see this collision not as a problem related to each student's disability, but as a problem with strict adherence to normative time frames. This is not to suggest that due dates, by their very nature, inhibit accessibility; I'm presenting these students' experiences in the hopes that writing teachers are better able to consider the ways in which allowing a flexible approach to time ("cripping") can benefit students. Diane associated her tendency for late work directly with her disability. She said, "The OCD is not as difficult as it used to be. I used to obsess over every little thing, making it perfect, and

sometimes I'd turn in assignments late because I'd have to make it perfect." Like Diane, James also discussed delaying the moment of submission, stating, "Turning in assignments is a very difficult thing for me. There's been times when I can turn a paper in and go right back up there, pull it out, make sure it's all there, just several times because I just, I turn it in, knowing it's all there, sit back down and think: was it really all in there?" Rachel also expressed a desire for extended time and pointed out the limitations of relying on disability services. She said, "The only thing that would make it more manageable is giving me an extension on deadlines and reducing the amount of work I have to do, neither of which [the DRC] are really eager to ask teachers to do." For Rachel, her desire for cripping time exists not only in contrast to normative time frames but also to the systematic constructs of disability services.

One of my interviewees offered compelling insight as to the ways in which instructors might negotiate cripped time with students. Lillie described her own difficulties with normative time frames, saying, "In-class essays are very difficult for me…it's just the idea of pressure that gets to me [and] just comparing myself to other students, it just takes so much more time, to get concepts, to do homework, to write essays. I need to focus. I can't mess around." In fact, when I asked Lillie how her accommodations might be improved, she stated that it would be helpful if her extended-time accommodation applied not only to tests but to essay assignments as well. She smartly stipulated that it should be, "Extended time but with a little give and take both from the teacher and the student. Like if you're gonna ask for extended time, go in and talk to your teacher, don't just have extra time. Talk to them about why you need it. That's when I feel productive." She followed up by offering me an example of this type

of negotiated access between teacher and student, describing a writing teacher who recognized that she could use extra time. “I used it for the first paper to make sure I was on the right track and I actually met with him during the extra time…and after that I was able to gauge in my next essay the time I needed to put in and research and like when I should talk to him. So I only used it for that first essay but it really helped set the foundation.” This anecdote represents an instructor allowing for a cripping of time that resulted (for better or worse, depending on your perspective) in Lillie’s ability to adhere to normative time frames.

A small portion of the students I interviewed reported resistance to cripping time and/or an acknowledgment that time (or lack thereof) isn’t relevant to their experiences. John reported that “time’s not really an issue,” and George expressed resistance to teachers offering him flexible deadlines. George said, “And another reason is because I don’t necessarily want to receive more time to complete a paper because I don’t feel like that’s fair, and I don’t feel like it’s preparing me for the future.” George’s desire for fairness, for a level playing field, might be interpreted as a desire for normalcy, which might suggest that he is a product of the ableist hegemony that created that playing field in the first place.

Many of the students with whom I spoke reported conflicting and contradictory relationships with time. Justin, for example, reported that she was often paranoid about not finishing tasks on time, speeding through tests, rushing through reading because she doesn’t “want to be one of those people that’s reading really slow.” Justin told me that her ADD speeds up her ways of talking and thinking: “I like talk a-mile-a-minute and constantly, and it’s also the way I do things. I never stop going, and I’m interested in a

million things at once." Yet, she recognized that her dyslexia could benefit from slowing things down a bit: "I think that might be kind of where my dyslexia is bad because I speed through things and don't notice that I do things wrong." Justin perceived a contradiction due to her multiple disabilities: her tendency to rush and her need to slow down. When Justin experiences a task with definite boundaries of time, she is forced to face this conundrum. Some might think that teachers should simply encourage her to slow down, but because her expression of the desire for speed is tied to her identity (as a person, as a student, as an individual with ADD), this encouragement might be problematic in that it suppresses a component of her identity/learning style. Perhaps a better alternative would be to offer scaffolded exercises that allow for freewriting/stream of consciousness and follow-up exercises that encourage revision and reflection (thereby honoring her speedy style while also encouraging her to review and reflect).

Rachel also expressed a conflicting experience with time. She said:

> I have a hard time just sitting down and doing a chunk of writing for maybe an hour…I can't really start unless I know I have a huge chunk of time to work…what I do best in writing is to sit down for five to six hours and get the whole paper done. But that's also really, really bad for my hands…if I do that for three nights in a row, I have compression again and I can't move for a day.

For Rachel, the temporality of her preferred writing process exists in contrast to her bodily ability to sustain the pain associated with prolonged periods of composing.

Like Justin and Rachel, Rose also expressed a contradictory experience with time. She told me that she likes to get her writing done quickly and right away, but she also reported that one of her accommodations in high school was extended time. When I asked her if this was a contradiction (her desired process of promptness and her

accommodation of extended time), she told me "I don't want that." She did mention, however, that she needs to improve her time management, explaining, "Timeliness is a really big thing. I have such difficulty with scheduling and that was kind of my downfall my first semester here. Because my time management was terrible." Rose's desire to produce at a rapid pace exists in tension with the disability services prescribed to her, thus revealing a contradiction in Rose's reported needs and the conventional accommodations assigned. This suggests that normative conceptions of time may mediate conventional accommodations in ways that deny student's right to their own composing processes, thus working against (not toward) enhancing access.

Veronica spoke at length with me about her experiences with time, writing, and accommodations. She told me, "When there's that time pressure and I'm unfamiliar with the topic or the question, it's a lot harder, which I'm sure is hard for most people." But she clarified later that she likes "the pressure of the assignment because I think it makes me work faster…so I'll research that whole week beforehand and then I'll write it about maybe start two days before it's due and just keep writing 'til it's due." When I asked Veronica if there was a contradiction between being given more time and feeling like she produces well under conditions of waning time, she said:

> I think giving myself less time, well, I think the time when I need more time is when I'm surprised by the question…When they give me a question and it's something I haven't been thinking about for a week so I haven't had time to organize it in my head that much. That's when I get really nervous, and so there's that time pressure and I don't feel like I have the time to organize it in my head, think about it more, and then produce it on paper. Whereas the deadlines and the short amounts of time, that's after, it's not that I just start the paper the day before. I have researched it. I know my arguments. I pretty much know everything I'm going to say. And I may have already made some sort of outline on paper but then I just have to produce it.

Veronica even told me that she uses a timer at home when she writes: "So like I said, I love my deadlines. So if I make sure I have a set time then I have to get it done by then." Veronica works best when she is in control of the time constraints put upon her writing and researching processes. When asked to perform spontaneously, the time pressure is debilitating, thus not measuring her ability to perform in a given writing task nor allowing her to compose in a manner conducive to her learning style. Put another way, Veronica needs to be in control of time or it controls her.

Veronica also made an important point about her accommodation of being able to use a word processor in class and how this affects the issue of time. She mentioned that most professors are fine with her using a laptop because everybody uses it. However, this creates an unexpected complication. She said:

> I've already talked with my professors, and they're fine with it. I mean they have to be. But they both told me, well, the word processor, don't worry about it. Everybody uses it. And I'm like, oh, ok, well that's cool. I like it in the fact that then I don't feel so obvious about it or weird about it. But it's one of those things where I'm like ok well then am I expected to write more because they're writing faster?

Veronica astutely points out that once the playing field is stabilized (i.e. everyone can use a computer), this also seems to equalize the quantity of production. This complication further demonstrates the difficulty of enacting UD; while allowing everyone computer use in the classroom might seem like a positive step toward universal design, it might create additional complications for students who qualify for the conventional accommodation of using a word processor in the classroom. However, the underlying assumption of Veronica's point above suggests that word count is indicative of quality, an assumption of which any good writing teacher would be immediately suspect.

Cripping time in the composition classrooms requires that teachers relax their hold on the boundaries of time that define writing inside and outside the classroom. This requires some relinquishment of authority, but it also functions to enhance access through allowing SWDs to compose in their own ways, rather than by normative standards of performance and production.

Rethinking Presence: Disability & Participation in Academia

"Like the zero in mathematics, silence is an absence with a function" Cheryl Glenn[75]

If cripping time allows instructors to offer flexible avenues for progression of existence and performance in the classroom, what might it mean to crip presence, or the state of being in the classroom? Margaret Price writes that "'Presence' is usually taken as empirically obvious, and as an a priori good" (*Mad at School* 64). Attendance, presence, and participation are viewed as conditions within the student's control and exist in direct correlation with higher grade performance. Mary Reda's *Between Silence and Speaking: A Study of Quiet Students*, reviews composition literature on non-participating students as disengaged or even hostile and claims that these representations of students arise from "composition's interest in collaborative learning and 'student-centered' pedagogies" which are definitionally maintained by "students' literal, audible voices" (29). Price examines these common perspectives on attendance from a DS perspective and argues that these assumptions neglect the fact that many SWDs face barriers to both attendance and participation. Price questions "Where and when do students' voices enter the debate on attendance?" and points out that "testimonials from students on presence as a feature of undergraduate education…are

hard to find" (70-71). The studies Price reviews are not methodologically diverse; most rely on questionnaires rather than more qualitative methods, such as narrative or interview data. In the following section, I aim to contribute to this area of research, reporting on the perspectives of students themselves regarding presence and participation in writing classes and in academia more generally. Ultimately, I contend that teachers should consider allowing various ways for students to participate inside (and outside) of classes, as well as making clear that these various forms of participation are valued.

For many of the students I spoke with, participation in discussion amounted to silence, selective mutism, and listening. In *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Cheryl Glenn discusses silence as a rhetorical positioning, as either strategic choice or as im/position. She asserts that "The question is not whether speech or silence is better, more effective, more appropriate. Instead, the question is whether our use of silence is our choice (whether conscious or unconscious) or that of someone else" (13). Because participation in class discussion is defined by most composition teachers as verbal contribution, speech is clearly defined as better than silence. As for the question Glenn sees as more relevant, the students with whom I spoke did indicate that they make deliberate choices about how and when they chose to participate. However, just because I might point out that SWDs may use silence deliberately, their grades may nevertheless be affected. As bell hooks points out in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, "Silence and obedience to authority were not rewarded" (qtd. in Glenn 71). Furthermore, teacher's perception and value of non-participating students are inevitably impacted by silence as well, perhaps detrimentally because as Richard

Johannesen points out in "The Functions of Silence: A Plea for Communication Research," "listeners and observers…attach meaning to silence whether the sender wishes so or not" (25). When the meaning attached to student silence becomes associated with a perception of the student as lazy, incapable, or unintelligent, teachers run the risk of imposing ableist assumptions of worth onto their students. Moreover, just because SWDs may elect not to verbally participate, does that necessarily make their silence rhetorical? Strategic? Blair, Charles, and Amber all described their various reasons for not participating in "traditional" ways.

In class discussion, Amber prefers listening over active participation. She stated, "I personally don't like discussions. I don't like to be in the spotlight. As long as other people are discussing and I'm watching, that's fine. But as long as I don't have to be the center of attention." When I asked Amber about how she felt about being called on directly, she said, "I would almost start to cry." That's a pretty significant emotional resistance to the types of participation many teachers not only expect but tend to value. In my instructor/faculty survey, 73% of respondents indicated that they award points for "speaking up." Of the 11% of survey respondents who indicated they do not grade participation, one instructor stated, "I had serious trouble participating in class, so I don't feel comfortable making that an official part of the student's grade." While these survey results are context-specific, they do suggest that verbal participation is still highly valued among teachers (at least here at the University of Oklahoma, but I strongly suspect elsewhere as well).

Like Amber, Blair prefers listening: "I like discussion…because then you have a chance to listen to everyone else's ideas on the topic that's being discussed, and it's

really helpful." Blair's enjoyment of discussion may seem paradoxical: the thing she enjoys about discussion is *not* actively participating. This calls for an alternative definition of participation and of discussion, one that allows for listening as a valuable form of involvement. Moreover, it requires a re-thinking of how teachers define contribution. For students who practice listening over active verbal sharing, one might argue that this form of participation is less valuable because it does not offer contribution. However, contribution manifests for the student themselves; just as a more active student may benefit from thinking aloud, sharing thoughts and opinions through lively verbalization, a disabled student may benefit from the inner dialogue that might result from selective mutism. For example, Charles told me, "I like discussions, but I don't like lectures when there's no engagement to the students…Because in discussion I usually don't say anything, but I'm paying attention to what another student is saying compared to what I'm thinking, kind of considering how they got to their thinking point." I probed Charles on this point, asking him "Do you not say anything because you just like to sit and take things in? What motivates you not to say anything?" He told me, "Take things in. Because I'll write and kind of get into a debate with myself. If a person thinks something different from me, it is their experience that is different from mine. Something is varying, and it starts with that." The value of demonstrated classroom engagement seems to be determined by verbal participation, but Charles indicates that he has sophisticated strategies for critically interweaving the ideas of his peers with his own opinions and experiences, strategies that performed in silence.

April also had certain preferences for how she interacts in classroom discussion. She told me, "I don't like when people point at me and tell me to talk. I hate the

spotlight. I like to be able to sit." Marie explained that she "couldn't stand it" when teachers called on her by name during class discussion. She also said:

> One of the things that stuck out was that I had a writing teacher that required, like had a participation grade. Just for me, in a classroom of that size, I can't bring myself to raise my hand. I don't know why. It's this anxiety. And it's not that I'm not focused or thinking about what she's talking about, I just literally can't do it. If she puts us in groups of three then I would talk the whole time, but just in front of all those eyes on me, doesn't work for me.

In her final comments in the interview, she said teachers should be more aware that "a lot of kids are struggling. Sometimes my ADD does play off as anxiety. And it would be nice for a teacher to recognize that maybe that's why I'm not raising my hand or talking a lot in class." Lillie said she preferred big classes, and when I asked her to explain why, she said:

> I'm embarrassed. I don't like to read out loud. I don't like to talk out loud. Just because I know I mix up words all the time, and I sometimes can't even read out loud. When I'm in a small class like English, I worry about that. And I'll read ahead to make sure if she asks me to read out loud, I can read out loud. I don't even listen to what she's saying. I'm reading ahead. I'm not paying attention. I'm just trying to not be embarrassed. And that's not what it's supposed to be.

Lillie's fear of reading aloud, a task this teacher seems to value pedagogically, reveals a concern that Reda points out in her study of quiet students. Reda states, "What we cannot see, we cannot evaluate" (29).

Teachers should be wary of making assumptions about student engagement level based on active participation in class discussion. Tyler relayed the following insight on this point: "There have been times she'll say something in class and she's looking at me and I'm just nodding along. And she'll ask me a question I didn't hear, and she thinks that I'm just not really there or not paying attention or didn't really care…She thinks I'm an idiot but I have no idea what she said." Tyler's remarks provide a stark warning for teacher assumption about levels of student engagement reflecting student

intelligence or student desire to achieve in that particular class. Tyler's decision not to disclose, a decision that must be respected, prevented this teacher from understanding the lack of access Tyler experienced. The teacher's (perceived) assumption about Tyler's intelligence negatively impacted the teacher-student relationship. The assumption of the normative student is also connected to the "ideal" student that Reda points to in her study of quiet students; she writes "there is a tension between what we would like our students to be (those we would most like to teach) and the students we see before us who do not meet that ideal" (29). Disability experience enables productive, critical attention to the "tension" that Reda points out; this is an excellent example of what Brueggemann, Price, and Davis refer to as "disability as insight" (see Brueggemann "An Enabling Pedagogy"; Price "Accessing Disability"; Davis "Deafness and Insight").

In addition to preferring listening as a tactical strategy to avoid anxiety and/or practicing self-mutism in order to process and absorb class discussion content in an alternative manner, some students' preferences for listening and passive participation may be interlinked with cultural background. Michelle informed me that she preferred listening and connected this preference to her cultural background as a Native American. "I prefer larger discussion or lecture. I learn better by hearing… I'd rather hear someone speak and talk to me about it." She went on to say:

> I tend to be the one that sits back and listens just because kind of culturally, growing up I was taught that we learn better listening, not talking. So I tend to just sit back and listen. If it's really required, sometimes I'll say a little something, but usually it's not something profound or anything big just because I'd rather listen to what the person next to me has to say than tell everybody how I feel about it. So the few times I have spoken out in class, it's been under circumstances where I had no other, it's been dire. Most of the time I'm pretty quiet.

It's important to note, however, that not all SWD prefer listening or alternate modes of participation. Chesty, for example, said "When I'm participating, I'm focused on it. I love to get my voice out there. I'm an extrovert. I don't usually shut my mouth. I enjoy it." Diane also expressed a positive attitude toward participation in class discussion, explaining that she likes Socratic-style classrooms and even thinks that required, graded participation can be beneficial.

James pointed out that perhaps the best tactic for ethical assessment of participation is to offer multiple ways for students (all students) to participate. He said:

> I would say if you offer other ways to participate, not just strictly basing it off of in-class. Some people may feel very shy talking in class. For my developmental psychology class, she had in-class as well as discussion posts. We could just post online on our own and a lot of people give feedback on that just because they felt more comfortable just writing on their own, saying what they thought, rather than saying it in class. I feel like in class, other students may raise their hands and be like you're wrong. It's stupid to think that. And that could really affect them ever saying anything in that class again. Whereas just posting something to a teacher, they feel really comfortable doing that because they feel they're not gonna be judged by it.

Tom expressed a desire to be able exert some agency over his preferred manner of participating in class discussion. "There's still a bit of anxiety about sharing in a group setting, sharing my disability and how people will react…If I had to choose, I'd rather be in a lecture or a discussion based class where you're able to contribute as you want." Tom and James both point to the value of allowing students to self-select the manner of their contributions to the classroom community and to the collaborative knowledge building that teachers hope manifests in their classrooms.

Not only do students with disabilities suggest ways in which instructor assessment of participation might need to change, they also draw attention to the ways

in which their arrival and presence in/absence from class call for a cripping of presence in the composition classroom. Bob pointed out that disability parking, navigating campus, and difficulty with stairs impacts his ability to arrive on time for class. Chesty talked about connections between his disability and tardiness and late work. He said:

> I let [professors] know I'm impaired physically as far as my movement…If I'm late and I don't get an assignment in on time, there's a reason. It's not because I'm lazy. That's not how I was taught or trained. The way I was trained, I despise being late anywhere. I hate it. I'm always 15 minutes early. That's how I was trained. I hate not getting things done the right way, the way it should be done and on time. I hate it when I don't. But it happens. I can't help that.

James reported that he has been tardy to classes due to an OCD routine that he performs when he exits his car. Chesty also talked about how his incontinence and Irritable Bowel Syndrome make it necessary at times to leave class abruptly. "When I'm in a class, I gotta go, I gotta go." As Price emphasized, cripping time relies on instructors being open to people arriving (and departing) at various intervals (*Mad at School* 62).

Interestingly, most of the students who spoke at length about absenteeism identified as having some type of mental disability, such as depression. Diane said, "PCOS makes me really sick around that time of the month so I miss school a lot and my professors think I'm ditching but I'm not. I'm just really sick." She also mentioned her depressive episodes causing her to miss class, and when I asked why she didn't choose to tell her professors she was missing due to depression, she told me, "It just makes me feel kind of bad because I mean, I feel like if I just say, 'Oh I'm missing because of my depression,' that's not an excuse. It's just, the real reason is I didn't go because I didn't want to get out of bed. I just felt like laying there, which is kind of a really bad excuse." When I pushed her on this point, she said, "I just feel like a lot of people would use it as an excuse…I feel bad I feel that way but at the same time, I want

to do better at like showing up for class but at the same time, they get a bad view of me. They get the bad side of me. They think I'm a slacker." Like Diane, Hilary also made explicit connections between her attendance issues and a fear of inaccurate teacher perception. Hilary explained why she misses class due to her disability: "If I'm having a hard day or if I just can't do it, I don't go…I'm Bipolar. I don't want to get out of bed some days." After her suicide attempt, she missed class for a hospital stay at a local mental health facility. Although Hilary discussed her tendency to miss class frequently, she also described her tactics for working the system, saying proudly that she is "really awesome at getting doctor's notes." She even asked me (jokingly) during the interview if she could get a note stating that she visited my office. In a rather sobering moment of the interview, however, she again emphasized how teacher assumptions about her absenteeism are misguided:

> I have this really stigmatized disease and it affects me from the time I wake up to the time I go to sleep. And I need [teachers] to understand that my, I may not learn the same way or you may think I'm some slacker kid who is missing assignments, not doing stuff but in reality, I still care. I may turn it in the next day. Just give me some slack or at least understand…I don't have all these zeros because I'm a slacker. 'Cause I'm sure some of my teachers think I'm just this fuck off kid. I'm not in class. I randomly have a rasta backpack so I'm sure some of my teachers think I'm a random stoner, hippie chick, skipping class to smoke weed. And that's not who I am actually.

Both Hilary and Diane have mental disabilities and do not typically disclose to instructors, yet their absenteeism is directly influenced by their experiences with disability. Their narratives here indicate that they are deeply concerned with how their teachers will view them, and they seem to be stuck somewhere between a decision to disclose a stigmatized disability or to be perceived as a "slacker."

Gavin too reported issues with attendance and depressive episodes. I said to Gavin: "When you say you don't want to study, can you give me an idea of why that is? Is it because you're having a depressive episode? Feeling lethargic? Unmotivated?" He responded:

> Yeah, it's really a combination of all three, you kind of nailed it there. There are times I feel mentally paralyzed and in a sense physically paralyzed. I won't move. I'll just lay on my couch or in my bed, just dysfunctional. I don't know it's it motivation to a certain point. It's a feeling of I can't do anything. I can't, whereas it's just a matter of getting up and doing it but it's hard to maintain that focus sometimes.

Lillie reported missing an extensive amount of class in high school due to depression. She said, "I ended up going to school every morning and just crying my way through the first two classes to the point where the administration was just like, 'You need to do something because she's just missing too much class.'" When I asked if her depression impacted her life as a college student, she said, "Definitely. Everything always happens in one week. I don't know how that happens but it does. I call it spinning. I go to worst-case scenario for everything. It impacts your focus and drive and that's definitely reflected in class and in grades." When I asked George if he ever missed class due to his disabilities, he told me:

> Yes, I have. With depression, there are some days where I'm laying there and I'm like you know what? I can afford to miss a class today. So that's an issue I've had there. My OCD, when I was in high school, because I was transitioning between medications, I missed a lot of school. To the point where if it hadn't been for doctors notes I might not have graduated. The second semester along it's pretty safe to say I missed a solid month. I would wake up and I would be so anxious about going to school and turning in assignments and stuff and the only way I could cope with it was to avoid stimulus. I ended up taking a year off and kind of really explored how to cope with my anxiety.

Although Jessica identified as having a physical disability not a mental disability, she too drew connections between instructor perception and absenteeism. She explained

that she experiences debilitating migraines due to epilepsy, migraines that make it impossible to attend class. "I know that since I've gotten epilepsy, I've had really bad migraines so attending class is very difficult with migraines, especially because I have a kind of migraine where being in a big room with florescent lights is hard during that time." She went on to say, "I actually don't tend to email my professors when I have migraines. Because I don't want them to think I'm classifying a migraine as like a small headache whereas for me it's really debilitating. I don't want them to think, 'Migraine? Well, that's just a headache. That's a really poor excuse to be missing my class.'" For Jessica, instructor perception (or misperception) leaves her with two perceived choices: attend class with a debilitating migraine or disclose her reason for missing and be falsely judged by her professor. This may not always be an accurate perception, but it influences Jessica's behavior, her ability to effectively participate, and her ability to be assessed accurately for her levels of participation.

The portrait these students paint strongly suggests that teachers need to think about the ways in which we value, assess, and understand student presence. The complexities of stigma, disclosure, multiple disabilities, fear, and resistance converge in a tangled knot of misperception, and the students typically pay the price. When teachers are either oblivious or indifferent to the embodied experiences of disability, they enforce a standard of presence that is (at times) unachievable by students whose body-minds might not match up with the "ideal," or "normal" student. This is no fault of the student; it reveals a systemic double jeopardy for students with disabilities: pay once by missing out on the learning experiences in which their nondisabled peers partake more freely and pay again when the instructor imposes an unfair grade penalty.

Like verbal contribution to class discussion and presence in the classroom, productive participation in group work also requires a particular student profile, one that is very difficult to untangle from ablebodiedness. Because the value of collaborative knowledge building is conventional pedagogy among most writing teachers, it becomes all the more imperative to investigate the ways in which group work may marginalize, exclude, or expose students with disability. Writing in response to Mary Louise Pratt's renowned work on contact zones, Min-Zhan Lu questioned how certain teaching practices might (or might not) adopt a multicultural approach to style. She refers to this line of inquiry as "The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone" and describes teaching practices in which she attempts to facilitate productive collisions in the contact zone. These "collisions" take place in group discussions that ask students to examine how different styles are connected to particular cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds. She writes, "Bewilderment and suffering as well as revelation and exhilaration are experienced by everyone, teachers and students, at different moments. No one is excluded, no one is safe. Therefore, learning to be comfortable in making blunders is central to this type of teaching" (456). Taking her methodology and applying it to the context of my own research, a useful question emerges: Is there a politics of ability in the contact zone? When the type of suffering that is part and parcel with the dynamics of the contact zone is correlated with a stigmatized disability and requires a type of willing or even unwilling disclosure, how much power do students with disabilities really have to interrogate, share, and learn from the collisions they experience alongside their peers? Looking at the perspectives of students with disabilities about the nature and stakes of their participation in group work offers some insight as to how the

"politics of ability" might play out, often in such a way that SWD are marginalized, excluded, or exposed.

For many of the students who shared their experiences with me, their concerns about group work centered on a fear of peer judgment, or a fear of being exposed as "slow" or "stupid." Jake mentioned that if he participates in group work, he prefers not to be the recorder, writing down and documenting the group's ideas and/or work. He said, "I have anxiety about [group work]. I definitely like other people to write, as far as like if I'm in a group. I'm often just more of an idea guy, and I'd rather someone else sit and do the writing." Like Jake, Jason mentioned that he enjoys group work "where you can get away with being in a group and only one person has to do the writing." He told me that he would rather work individually if all group members are required to write:

> In writing classes I would say I probably prefer to work in…Well, it kind of depends on whether I can let someone else do the writing for me. But if I can't, and we all gotta do the writing anyway, I probably rather work by myself just because that way I don't have to be writing all slow and they're waiting for me to catch up. And I'm doing the best I can.

For Jason, writing alongside fellow group members presents a risk of peer judgment, and this fear mediates his involvement in and preferences for collaborative classroom work. Lillie also emphasized wanting a say in the terms of her participation, asserting that if she is required to participate in group work, she is fine as long as she doesn't have to talk a lot. She said, "I'll be more of a contributor than a trailblazer." Essentially, Lillie is more comfortable if she is able to adopt a more passive role in group work.

Jessica, Michelle, and Mike all shared similar descriptions of anxiety and fear associated with small-group work, and like Jason, Jake, and Lillie, expressed trepidation about being negatively perceived as a result of their performance in the group. Jessica

reported that she struggles with short-term memory loss as a result of her epilepsy medication, and this memory loss impacts Jessica's inclination to participate in group work. She reported that of all the classroom styles I mentioned to her (lecture, discussion, group work, individual work), she is least comfortable with small-group work. When I asked why that is, she said, "Mostly because like now I just stopped in the middle of a sentence, so I don't want to be talking and just kind of blank out." She confirmed that her anxiety with small-group work stems from her reluctance to be judged negatively by her peers. Michelle mentioned that she doesn't care for small-group work because, "When I end up being the one having to do the writing in a small group, I immediately get nervous because I can't spell…When I write it I get really self-conscious about I don't know how to spell this and all these people look at it." Mike mentioned some anxiety about participating in small groups. He said, "I can't handle the anxiety of being around four or five people, trying to get my point across, get my information into the paper we're writing. And I kind of feel like I'm not smart enough and everybody else kind has it going on. I don't want to put my word in there and feel stupid." The stigma of disability is the cultural determinant of the fear of negative perception that so many of these students associate with being regarded as "slow," "stupid," or "not smart enough" during small-group interaction with their peers.

Continued presence in the classroom also plays a role in determining the terms of participation in group work. As mentioned previously, maintaining presence in the classroom space often poses a serious obstacle for many students with disabilities. I asked Leah: "Have you ever felt as though you were not a part of a classroom community due to your absenteeism? Might this have something to do with your

preference for individual work?" She responded by saying, "Your observation might be the very answer as to why I don't feel comfortable or enjoy working with other students. I can recall a day in a class…which necessitated group work. I stood up and due to being sick so much, I didn't know anyone well enough to go directly to them to be in a group. It was a horrible feeling. It was sort of like being the last kid picked for a game." Leah's lack of sustained immersion in the physical, face-to-face classroom space resulted in a feeling of isolation and exclusion.

SWDs are often forced to make difficult choices about how and when they choose to participate or *not* participate in particular classes. It is useful not only to think about participation in terms of something like class discussion but also in terms of overall retention. I heard many stories from the students I interviewed about how their experiences as disabled students influenced their decisions to switch majors, drop classes, take incompletes, and even withdraw from the university. Amber told me a story about dropping an Italian class, a decision that resulted from the limitations of conventional accommodations from disability services, from a lack of imagination on the teacher's part, and from her own anxiety about being forced into a position of disclosure during class time. She stated, "I took Italian and part of the exam is verbal. And I couldn't take it at the DRC because it was verbal. So I had to tell [the Italian teacher] about that, which like in the time and a half, he would give it to me at the end of class, but it didn't work. I dropped the class because everybody was always waiting on me." While this example is not directly focused on writing, it is useful to examine for a variety of reasons. First, this demonstrates a limitation of conventional accommodations through disability services. While disability services granted Amber

extended test time, because a component of the test was delivered orally by the teacher, she was unable to take the test at the Disability Resource Center. The teacher's response to this lack of access for Amber was to allow her extra time during the class period, in front of her peers. Not only did this force Amber into the center of attention, inviting peers to question her about her disability, it also demonstrated a lack of imagination on the teacher's part. Why couldn't s/he have audio-recorded the verbal portion of the test and sent that over to the DRC? Some might read this anecdote and think that Amber should have self-advocated and pushed back against this lack of access rather than simply bowing out of the class. Assigning blame to Amber, however, is problematic because, as I emphasized in chapter three, students with disabilities should not be solely responsible for ensuring their own access. When we look at moments of inhibited access and then suggest that students themselves need to do a better job of obtaining what they need, we obscure a system of discrimination. We construct the student as a poor self-advocate, rather than examining the system that positioned that student in a place in which self-advocacy became necessary in the first place.

Leah, too, reported dropping a class (deciding *not* to participate) when professors were unhelpful and/or resistant to her need to be accommodated. She told me:

> Most teachers are very helpful in the realm of writing and when I can turn things in. I have had professors in the past that completely disregarded the accommodations they were supposed to adhere to. I never wanted to deal with those professors. They made me feel badly about myself and self-conscious that I needed accommodations in the first place. I always dropped the classes where the professors acted that way.

In order to ensure full participation for Leah, teachers needed to be flexible and willing to offer extended deadlines and/or incompletes.

Sometimes a student's disability makes it impossible for them to complete a course. Amelie experienced a need to seek out several incompletes when her need for treatment of eating disorders outweighed her ability to complete coursework in a given semester. She told me, "I am currently in an intensive treatment program for my disorders, which has made it impossible for me to return to school and my ballet career this semester." Amelie viewed teacher willingness to grant incomplete *as* accommodation, stating, "My teachers here at OU have been really helpful since I have had to withdraw from classes on short notice this semester. They have, all but one, granted me incompletes in my classes, which allow me to seek the treatment I need without having to repeat the classes I am in. This is such a relief." However, when I asked Amelie about the effectiveness of her accommodations, how they might be improved, she expressed a desire for distance education as an alternative to taking incompletes: "I had hoped that I might be able to complete my studies from afar, without having to take an incomplete. It would be nice if there were a separate accommodation for students who must leave a class mid-course due to health reasons." Toward the end of the interview, when I asked Amelie what advice she might have for writing teachers for improving access, she once again mentioned the need to withdraw from courses. "The only thing I think teachers could do to improve their classrooms in regard to making a student like me more comfortable is to be understanding when the student has to take a leave of absence to seek treatment for their disorder." Because Amelie's disabilities are eating disorders, she did not register with disability services: "My disability doesn't require much accommodation when it comes to academics." Had she elected to register, she may have requested an incomplete as an official

accommodation (the one teacher who held out may be been officially obligated to grant the incomplete). However, because eating disorders are not commonly viewed as warranting academic accommodations, Amelie did not have access to this type of advocacy from disability services. Teachers should keep these complications in mind as they make decisions about granting incompletes to students who report medical issues such as the need for treatment of an eating disorder. Departments and/or programs should develop recourse policies for students to address a professor's refusal to grant incompletes. Amelie's situation also elucidates the danger of "no accommodation without registration," and her ultimate advice for understanding from her professors draws attention to the desire for empathy.

Like Amelie, Leah also expressed the importance of professor's willingness to grant incompletes. In talking about attendance issues, she told me, "I have missed an extensive amount of school ever since elementary school due to migraines…Missing school due to chronic migraines is one of the reasons it took me a total of nine years to complete my undergraduate degree." She elaborated:

> During semesters in which I am well enough to complete the semester, I would not be able to pass or complete the class without an incomplete, without the help of the accommodations that I receive. There have been so many semesters where I will be ill so often that I miss too many classes and fall far behind. During times like these, accommodations aren't as helpful. However, when I am in relatively good health, the disability accommodations I receive are one of the biggest reasons I am able to complete my classes and receive a grade that I know I deserve according to how much work I put in, even if it is after the deadline.

Like Amelie, Leah missed classes in order to receive treatment for her disability. In Leah's case, she received electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) and "the treatments would interfere with school because they were only given at the beginning of the day on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays. Many times these were the same times I had certain

classes." Leah also experienced long-term hospital stays as a result of severe depressive episodes.

Greg needed to ask for an incomplete due to issues with his pancreas that resulted from his HIV medications. When I asked if the professor was amenable to granting the incomplete, he said:

> Yeah, they had no problem with it and through the office of disability services, they're really kind of obligated…and that's why I kind of hate it in a ways because while I need this and I'm registered with them so you have to do this. And I kind of hate that in a way because it makes me feel like I'm asking for preferential treatment but at the same time, like I said, I'm not gonna have my work reduced over something that I don't have a lot of control over.

Because Greg was in fact registered with disability services, he had some additional leverage for ensuring an incomplete, but the influence of stigma and "bootstraps" mentality still permeated his description of ensuring his own access in the event of illness. In addition to needing incompletes, Greg has also been forced to withdraw from school several times.

> I came into OU 11 years ago as a freshman and then I've had to stop a couple times due to health… [HIV] stopped me twice from just sailing right on through. I've had to stop a couple times for HIV-related illnesses, not for full blown AIDS related symptoms or illnesses, just underlying things. The medications will really damage your liver and your pancreas. And I've had to stop school twice to get that addressed.

Other students I spoke with also discussed leaving university altogether. Gavin, for example, had to withdraw from coursework completely due to being hospitalized after a manic episode that occurred during finals week. Rachel spoke with me about how her experiences with pain have weighed on her decision about whether or not to continue pursuing her graduate degree. She told me, "This [semester] was kind of a testing ground honestly…Last semester was just hell basically. It was awful because I was

turning in 4,000 words a week or trying to, and I had a regular class load on top of that…I'm still thinking I'd rather just be done with because I'm really tired of working into a void, not getting paid, and causing so much pain." I asked if she might consider switching her degree program to something less typing-intensive and she said, "Everything I can think of that I'd be interested in doing is really keyboard intensive."

While composition researchers such as Glenn and Reda have theorized the rhetorical and pedagogical effects of student silence, disability remains an unattended variable. For students with disabilities, silence can be both imposed and strategic (as Glenn might observe), and it may operate as empowering reflection (as Reda might argue). While it is certainly important to think about how silence functions in the classroom, disability requires that we also consider what silence reveals about the potentially ableist commonplaces of composition pedagogy, the good student speaking well. Reda concludes her book with suggestions for pedagogical processes that incorporate and foster productive use of silence in the composition classroom, suggestions that emphasize freewriting, teacher-directed silence, and student reflection. She acknowledges, however, that silence is seemingly not assessable. These suggestions and challenges need to be considered from a DS perspective, allowing composition teachers and researchers to understand the challenges that SWDs face when their own ways of learning and being conflict with instructor values (of dialogue, of active participation, of presence).

Chapter Five: Disability Identity, Disclosure, & Rhetorics of Ableism

"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."-Albert Einstein

Identity is increasingly understood not as a stable, fixed "self" that one might discover or fully realize, but rather as something that is performed, constructed, and malleable depending on the dynamics and demands of a given context. Stuart Hall argues that identities "are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (394). Bronwyn T. Williams draws on Hall in the introduction to the edited collection *Identity Papers: Literacy and Power in Higher Education*, noting that these "narratives" belong to dominant culture. Williams points out that when the identity you want to perform does not cohere with the expected dominant narrative, trouble ensues (5). When a student does not conform to the archetype privileged and maintained as "normal" by the university, this "trouble" may manifest as complex rhetorical management of disability identity. Moreover, Williams points out that because "writing is a deliberate construction of identity on a page" (6), the composition classroom is a battleground of sorts for identity work. He writes, "The way we arrange words, choose to disclose or not, assume our audience, construct our sense of credibility through language are all inextricably bound up with issues of identity" (6). While Williams isn't deliberately focusing on disability, his attention to acts of disclosure is noteworthy here. Not only are students with disabilities subject to dominant narratives of identity—the normate imperative—they also face high-stakes decisions regarding practices of disclosure. I certainly agree with Williams that identities manifest in textual production, but I do not focus specifically on the written texts produced by students with disabilities. Instead, I examine negotiation of

disability identity in a multitude of contexts, including personal encounters between students and teachers, students and their peers, as well as students' own reflections on their status as "disabled."

In doing so, I follow the lead of DS scholars such as Tobin Siebers, who insists upon the power of narrative. He points out that many disability scholars and activists have argued for moving beyond first-person accounts of disability experience on the grounds that such narratives only invite pity and sympathy, not critical examination of the social and political meanings of disability ("Tender Organs" 50). Sympathy, or caring for someone else's misfortune, is problematic for people with disabilities because it relies on an equation between misfortune and disability. Historically, the oppression of people with disabilities has often relied on such an equation.[76] However, Siebers launches an intense critique of the accusation of narcissism (oftentimes associated with or equitable to identity politics) that is so frequently launched at Disability Studies, and he argues that "people with disabilities need to resist the suggestion that their personal stories are somehow more narcissistic than those of able-bodied people" (50). He goes on to say that "If we cannot tell our stories because they reflect badly on our personalities or make other people queasy, the end result will be greater isolation. For human beings make lives together by sharing their stories with each other. There is no other way of being together for our kind" (50). The stories and insights shared in my conversations with the participants in this study enable both a purposeful visibility for their first-person accounts as well as a critical examination of what their experiences may suggest about the positioning of disability in college classrooms. In the pages that follow, I begin by presenting the dimensions of disability identity present in the data,

including shame, stigma, and resistance. I then examine the stakes of disclosure and the dominant rhetorics that seem to shape disability experience in postsecondary education.[77] My overall aim with this analysis is to think though how and why students disclose, what they gain or lose when they make these choices, and how the conditions that shape their decision-making enrich our understanding of the rhetorical negotiations of disability identity in higher education, and in writing classrooms more specifically. In locating rhetorics of ableism, their avenues of circulation are exposed and might thus be rearticulated in such a way that disability identity is (at least partially) released from its supposed indignity.

Disability Identity: Rhetorical Agency, Stigma, and Patterns of Resistance

It's nothing new to point out that a dominant discourse in the experiences of disability identity in higher education (or anywhere for that matter) is stigma. The 2013[78] gathering of the Society for Disability Studies conference devoted a distinguished panel to reflecting on the impact of sociologist Erving Goffman's work on stigma. Goffman's oft-cited work *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* provides analysis of the ways in which individuals "manage" identities deemed deviant, primarily through concealment of their deficiencies. Panelist Jeffrey Brune recounted the major critiques of Goffman launched by many respected scholars working in DS, most notably that Goffman "approached the topic only from the perspective of normality" (paragraph 4).[79] Brune also points out that Goffman "failed to see how disability activists in his own time and in the coming decades could resist stigma and transform the meaning of disability identity (paragraph 6). In other words, Goffman

neglected to account for any possible agency among people with disabilities. Many of the students I interviewed discussed their experiences with stigma and shame surrounding their disabilities, and although many of these narratives exhibit a suffocating entrenchment of stigmatized identities constructed and imposed upon them, there are also moments of resistance and rhetorical agency as well. Collectively, the perspectives that follow most likely reflect the infinite complexities of identity, including adoption of the dominant narrative, as well as resistance to and away from disability identity. In the article "On Rhetorical Agency and Disclosing Disability in Academic Writing," Stephanie Kerschbaum writes, "By treating agency as a rhetorical negotiation between speakers and audiences, a negotiation in which individuals do not have full control over their own identity, it becomes possible to identify some of the complexities of naming and claiming disability" (60). Drawing on Marilyn Cooper's notion of rhetorical agency as "an emergent property of embodied individuals" (421), Kerschbaum asserts that it is less useful to consider agency as something an individual does or does not have. Rather, agency should be considered as emerging interactionally and being shaped by the readiness and responsivity of particular agents and audiences. I follow both Cooper and Kerschbaum's notion of agency but where the latter focuses primarily on disability *self*-disclosure, I also critically examine the ways in which the very notion of disability "self" is contested, as well as sites in which disclosure occurs inadvertently by other agents who act on behalf of or in spite of the student.

Jake, for example, traced the impact of the stigma of having a learning disability to his early experiences in school. He said that he knew he was a "really smart kid," but he was being treated like he was slow "because one aspect of his academics, which was

basically just speed reading" proved difficult for him. He followed up by saying, "And so I thought I was dumb…I couldn't stand having these remedial classes. I couldn't stand being this kid who's struggling." He also talked about the stigma associated with separation from "normal" kids, saying, "Being pulled out of the normal classroom to go to a special classroom, even young children still understand that special equals different and different is a stigma." Andy too expressed resistance to a segregated approach to access, reporting that he sometimes avoids getting accommodations because he feels "weird" about leaving class to test at the DRC. He said, "It's kind of a stigma to be a DRC student." Blair, who referred to her disability as a "problem" several times throughout our interview, talked about the interconnected, double-impact of stigma that she experiences as both an individual with a disability and as a female student in the hard sciences. Blair told me, "I don't want people to identify me by my disability because I'm in [pre-med]; it's a really hard major and there's already a stigma of being a girl. And it's still really hard and I don't want people to think I'm not as smart as everyone else. And then if I identify with my disability, people will be like, 'Oh she's not as smart as everyone,' but that's just not true at all." Greg only disclosed being HIV positive to one teacher during his 11 years of studying in higher education. He disclosed to this one teacher because she revealed to the class that her son had HIV. Greg said, "It was just nice to have somebody understand where I was at. Because that is still such a stigma in society. It's just not something that I want everybody to know about. And most people don't know." When I asked why he thinks the stigma persists, he said, "because it's still mainly associated with gay men. That's it right there."

Jake, Andy, Blair, and Greg all draw attention to the impact of stigma on self-worth, as well as to the ways in which stigma influences their decisions about seeking accommodations. Goffman argued that stigma is produced in personal encounters, and the above examples illuminate such encounters (between teacher and student and between student and peer). The fear of being ostracized, of being labeled as "remedial" or "dumb," and the fear of isolation all manifest in the production of stigma in these encounters. Marxist geographer Brenden Gleeson, however, points out that Goffman's attention to the personal encounter obscures attention to the social and political structures that support such manifestation of stigma. In other words, Goffman foregrounds the personal and relegates the social and political dynamics to the background. It's not that Goffman would deny that identities are embedded in social and political structures, but his choice to emphasize the personal occludes certain interpretations of disability experience. In the cases above, these structural forces might be considered remediation in primary education, special education curricula, systems of accommodations, as well as intersections with other structures of oppression, such as sexism and homophobia, as is the case with both Blair and Greg's experiences. Teacher-scholars devoted to reducing stigma must also examine the ways in which such structural forces may further calcify denigrated notions of disability. Jake's decision to avoid disclosure in college is deeply connected to his experiences in remediation at young age. As Kerschbaum argues, "Over time individuals learn ways of managing disability discourses, motivated by their past experiences as well as by their short- and long-term goals for identity construction and social interaction" ("On Rhetorical Agency" 63). We cannot continue to wonder as to why college students don't take

advantage of disability services available to them without carefully interrogating the systems of stigma they have experienced from a young age, as well as the double-impact of multiples systems of stigma (a girl in the sciences, a disabled student in pre-med, a man with HIV, a gay man). Greg and Blair's reflections on the multiple stigmas they face demonstrate the intersectionality of the dominant discourses that both Williams and Hall describe. These intersections inform the performance (or non-performance) of identity as both Greg and Blair attempt to manage the stigmas associated with femaleness, queerness, and disability.

Many of the students in my study also expressed resistance to identification with disability, or resistance to being defined by their disabilities. To better understand this resistance, let's look at the experiences of Diane and Gavin. Diane told me that her therapist advised her against openly advertising her identity as someone with Tourette Syndrome, and Diane reported that she liked this advice because "Tourette's isn't really me. It's just a part of me I guess. A little quirk I guess is what you'd say." She also confirmed that living with multiple disabilities is tricky and at times contradictory; her ADD causes her to have trouble focusing while her OCD increases her desire for perfection. Diane also had a vivid way of describing her disability (the Tourette's) that she claimed she'd been using to explain it to others since a very young age. She said, "I always notice it. It's like the best way to describe it is try and keep your eyes open without blinking…if you try and keep your eyes open without blinking, you're gonna eventually blink and then you look around and you notice, did anyone notice me blink? It's always there. It's always nagging at me." Diane expressed resistance to disability identity, stating:

> I feel like myself as a person is more than my disabilities, and I shouldn't be defined by my disabilities. I mean, they're a part of who I am, but they shouldn't define me. I'm a creative, intelligent person. I'd rather those things define me than someone who just looks at me and sees depression and Tourette's.

Later in the interview, she said that she doesn't disclose because she doesn't "feel like [disability] should define her." Although Diane mentioned several times that she doesn't want disability to define her, her vivid description of Tourette's reflects the profound impact of disability on her embodied experience of being in the world.

While Diane expressed a desire to be understood as more than the sum of her disabilities, Gavin explained that he "combats" and "survives" his disability. When I asked him if he considered disability to be a large part of his identity, he told me:

> No, I don't allow it to become a portion of my identity. It's like anything else in life. It's a problem. It's a problem like, being an engineer, you think analytically about things so I'm more of the type of person who would rather identify any problem or any bump in my life and do my best to overcome that. My identity is not defined by whatever diagnosis I've currently been prescribed. I don't allow it to because if I did, I'd just be more depressed of a person than I already have been.

Later, however, Gavin expressed complete faith in the diagnoses offered up to him, saying, "I do trust the doctors…they're the ones who are much more educated and much more intelligent on the subject." This seeming contradiction—resistance to the medical label/diagnosis and complete faith in the expertise of his medical team—illuminates the vicissitudes of disability identity, especially for those students who are experiencing recent or changing diagnoses. Their experiences of disability are very much unfolding and unstable. One might argue that disability identity (or any identity for that matter) is never fixed, and I agree. But there is a dramatic difference between a student who was diagnosed very early in life and a student who is diagnosed right before or even during their first year of college. This difference impacts the choices

they make regarding registration with disability services, disclosing disability to peers and/or teachers, as well as to the rhetorics they employ to narrate their experiences.

Although Diane resisted being defined by her disability, she also expressed considerable resistance to the stigma that prevents people from seeking treatment. When I asked Diane about whether or not she thinks depression carries a social stigma, she related a story about her interaction with an older gentleman in the meteorology department with whom she was acquainted. This gentlemen, according to Diane, was experiencing some mental disability issues. Diane said told him:

> You should go see the doctor at Goddard and get diagnosed. And he was like 'I don't feel like taking the medicine.' And I was like take the medicine! It will help a lot. Finally, he's taking the medication, but I could see, he's in his 40s, I could see the social stigma coming out like taking medicine makes you crazy and I'm like no, no, no. I've been taking medicine a long time. It's fine.

I asked her if she thought the stigma was getting better, and she replied, "I think it's getting better, but I also think it has a long way to go." She then opened up about her sister sharing suicidal thoughts with her. When Diane approached her parents on her sister's behalf, they downplayed the seriousness of the situation, but Diane continued to advocate for her sister and her sister ending up seeking help from a psychiatrist. Diane further explained that this resistance might be due in part to her mother's experience with her father (Diane's grandfather) who was a diagnosed schizophrenic. Diane said, "My mom associates [mental illness] with her father having to be hospitalized." The encounters that Diane shares here—advising an older professor to seek prescriptive treatment for mental illness and advocating on behalf of her sister to a resistant parent—both demonstrate her own rhetorical agency as a person with a mental disability. Because Diane is confident in the benefits of her own prescriptive and therapeutic

treatment, she actively resists the stigma associated with both when she encounters others struggles with seeking treatment. Diane also draws attention to the ways in which attitudes about mental disability are shifting as well as to the impact of familial and personal histories of mental illness and treatment for mental illness, once again concretely demonstrating both Cooper and Kerschbaum's assertion of the linkages between agency, disclosure, and past experience.

Hilary reported that she is very open about her disability and jumps at the chance to write about her experience with Bipolar Disorder. She said, "It's always my go-to [essay] because I know the diagnosis. I understand it. I don't have to do a lot of research so I can sit down and crank out a paper about it." When I asked if this made her feel vulnerable in any way, she said, "No, I'm pretty much an open book about being Bipolar…I'm pretty open about it because I hate the stigma of it." When I followed up again asking why she thought that stigma persists, she said:

> A lot of times, I think crime gets blamed on mental illness…we don't have asylums and we're not afraid of mentally ill people anymore, but I think that fear is still there. It's an unknown. It makes people unpredictable. Plus, I mean, I'm taking psychology of deviance and the book makes me so mad because whenever they reference deviant individuals, it's criminals, cross-dressers, and mentally ill people. I follow the rules and norms of society. How you gonna throw me in there?

Later, she told me about participating in a Reddit subgroup for people with Bipolar Disorder. She said, "It's really interesting because it's people all over the world and people go and post things about hard times they're having or how they're feeling…and I post on there a lot to help people who have just been diagnosed. Because I remember how terrible that was." She elaborated, "I went through a period of great shame about it. I felt like, 'Oh I'm a freak. I can't have a normal relationship.' And I think if people

have that shame, they won't talk about it, but if you realize it's not a big deal, it's like diabetes: you go get treated." Like Diane, Hilary expresses that she is comfortable with her disability and desires to actively resist the stigma that is so often associated with mental illness, once again exhibiting rhetorical agency. She actively writes about her disability, she interacts with others who share her disability, and she even engages in critical examination of curricular content that seems to further entrench stigmas of mental deviance.

The student-veterans that spoke with me about their experiences with disabilities were definitely not as open as either Diane or Hilary. Chesty and Mike both expressed the impact of stigma on their educational experiences and remarked on the association between their decision not to disclose mental disability for fear of negative perception, judgment, and/or stigma. Chesty spoke at length about the negative impact of his disability, saying:

> It was really affecting me mentally as well as physically. There were days I would be driving to work wishing I could crash into a tree and not have to go to work that day. It was that bad. I would rather go through physical harm than go to work. And no one should have it that bad…I wasn't being treated as a person. I was being treated as less than human.

Chesty reported that he typically discloses that he has a disability that might make him tardy and asks for his teacher's understanding, but he limits his disclosure to saying he has "physical impairments," offering no additional details. He never discloses his experiences with mental disabilities. When I asked why he doesn't talk with his instructors about his ADHD or Anxiety-NOS, he said, "The ADHD is handled by the Adderall. It shouldn't be an issue in class. The anxiety, I don't want to put them off. I don't want them to be weirded out. I think that with PTSD, veterans have gotten a really

bad rap as far as that goes, so I don't want them to be nervous." Mike, another student-veteran, said that he would disclose some of his physical disabilities but not his mental disabilities. When I asked why, he said, "too personal. It's a mental health problem, and I don't want people to look at me like I'm crazy or that I'm subnormal." In the article "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and the Returning Veteran: The Rhetorical and Narrative Challenges" authors Bekah Hawrot Weigal and Lisa Detweiler Miller discuss the ways in which student-veterans with PTSD are far more likely to be subjected to stigma than welcomed into the university setting with understanding and adaptation. Miller and Weigal present two common identity constructions available to veterans: the Homeric Hero or the Ticking Time Bomb. Both Chesty and Mike make the archetype of the Ticking Time Bomb quite concrete. This particular construction of veteran identity mediates their interactions, relationships, and disclosure practices. Chesty doesn't want to make his teachers nervous; Mike doesn't want people to think he's crazy. The stigma of the time bomb is further intensified with traditional notions of masculinity that are so heavily engrained in military discourse: the returning hero should be able to overcome any trauma he experienced. Just suck it up. Be resilient. Neither Chesty nor Mike seems willing to occupy an identity that contradicts positive military identity (the returning hero). Or perhaps another way to understand their resistance to disclose is as a strategic choice. Each man recognizes the risks involved with disclosure of mental disability and manages that risk through concealment. In contrast to the above examples, Kerschbaum analyzes the disability disclosure of Georgina Kleege, an author, lecturer, and memoirist, pointing out that Kleege's self-identification as "blind" operates as strategic resistance of the stigma of blindness. Can Chesty and Mike's lack of disclosure also be

considered strategic? Does the decision to withhold assert rhetorical agency? By not voicing their identity as mentally disabled, they eliminate potential consequences from the rhetorical field, so in some manner, they are enacting agency in regards to the circumstances of their own discursive interactions. Chesty and Mike's experiences also raises questions regarding the impetus for disclosure of mental disabilities in the first place. That is to say, in what way is it useful, important, or relevant to disclose a mental disability in a writing class? What purpose does it serve? Scholars such as Amy Burke Valeras examine the choices that people with hidden disabilities make regarding when (and when not) to disclose. Valeras argues that many individuals learn various strategies of disclosure, including passing, strategic self-disclosure, and impression management; I'll attend to these points in greater detail later in the chapter.

Margaret Price's work on rhetorics of mental disability in higher education enacts such critical engagement and rhetorical agency via her analysis of the rhetoricity that PWD either have or aren't considered to have. Linda Adler-Kessner's review of Price's award-winning book *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* points out, however, that some aspects of Price's analysis leave readers unfulfilled. Adler-Kessner writes:

> 'But what happens' Price asks, 'to the rhetor who cannot be listened to?' (44). Indeed. What are our options as language instructors? How can this important and vexing point become part of a discussion that increasingly focuses on 'standards' (or even 'outcomes') and the products attesting to same? To some extent, Price seems to want to call for an obliteration of context such that mentally disabled communicators are considered rhetors, but what replaces those problematic contexts is never quite clear. (4)

Like Price, I am unable to fully articulate the characteristics of a complete paradigm shift in the rhetorical values of academic discourse. And perhaps I'm unable to suggest

a rubric that successfully accounts for variant rhetorics (including the rhetorics of disabled rhetors). I do hope to suggest, however, that student writing itself (the writing which is subject to the "outcomes" Adler-Kessner mentions) is not the *only* place that teachers of writing can value disabled rhetors and their respective rhetorics; peripheral rhetorical situations abound in which this type of paradigm shift might also take place. The conversations that take place in office hours, moments of disclosure, representations of disability on syllabi, text selection—all might serve as spaces for changing the devalued, stigmatized, and often silenced rhetorics of disability.

Yet another example of a peripheral rhetoric worth tapping and/or cultivating might be the ways in which institutions of higher education create spaces for students with disabilities to interact with other students with disabilities, or even a space in which all people—regardless of bodily ability—might collectively examine issues of ability, access, and difference, as well as share experiences of disability, both positive and negative. While some universities have SWD clubs, oftentimes these groups are exclusively associated with disability services centers and because of the high number of students who elect non-disclosure, this exclusivity eliminates many possibilities for interaction and group development.

There were many moments in my interviews in which students discussed the impact and import of their interactions with other persons/students with disabilities. George, an avid blogger, reported that interacting with other persons with disabilities offers a "comforting feeling" because of the realization that "there are other people out there who have these same issues." He also said, "I have the ability to help them and usually when I converse with individuals with OCD or depression or any other disorder,

I usually learn stuff too. And so it's kind of a two-way street in a sense." Hilary told me a story about a friend of hers with the same disability (Bipolar Disorder) and explained how hard she tried to help that friend avoid abusing her medication. She seemed to tell me the story in order to illuminate that mixing medications, along with the disorder itself, can have detrimental effects. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Hilary is also an active contributor to a Reddit subgroup for people with Bipolar Disorder. Mr. C said he does consider disability to be a large part of his identity, and he associates this with his ability to speak out to his community. He said, "I used to avoid letting my disability define me, but now I see that I have a unique story to tell and I have the ability to inspire others. Through my disability, I can educate and build the capacity of my community. While that may sound lame, it is the reality of the difference I can make in the world." I asked Mr. C what he meant, and he said, "I would like to take my experiences and talk to others about them. Topics might be gun control, living with paralysis, being an underserved population, parenting with a disability, overcoming the odds or being a leader through adversity."

George, Hilary, and Mr. C all point out the positive impact that interaction with other PWD has had on their lives, their feelings of self-worth, and their ability to help others. Veronica too spoke of interacting with others with disabilities, but spoke at length about a deeply profound connection she experienced with a friend who shared her same learning disability. Veronica told me that she has an incredible memory and that this might be associated with her learning disability. She said:

> The one person who I've met who has the same thing as me, the same mix, she's the exact same way. We have an incredible memory for things…I think knowing other people with disabilities is helpful for people and I don't know if that necessarily happens on a large campus like this or if it happens in high school.

> But I think it's helpful just because you see what different kinds there are and also if you have something very similar, you can discuss it and you can say Oh ok, I realize that this is that learning difference coming into play and somebody else understands what I'm going through. So like I went throughout elementary and middle school with my friend that had the same issue as me. I went to school with her for nine years. And so she had much more severe dyslexia than I did but definitely had dysgraphia and used a word processor like I did. And she also had that memory thing I mentioned… It was nice to know that someone was using the same mechanisms that I was using.

I followed up by asking, "You said it was nice to know that someone else was doing something similar, what do you think is underneath that? Is it the comfort of identifying with someone so that you don't feel like an outlier? Or is it sharing strategies?" She replied, "I think it's the idea that it makes it more of a strategy than me just waiting and not being able to write it for some reason. And that we came up with it independently with that kind of technique. That's kind of a validating factor of like ok so I guess maybe we are doing something right." Not only does Veronica develop the same positive import that Mr. C and Hilary describe, she also experiences validation of her learning disability as difference, potentially even positive difference, and is able to confidently assert her independently developed strategies for learning.

In his article, "The Identity Game and Discursive Struggles of Everyday Life" Angel Lin argues that "Although people who find themselves in subordinate positions can attempt to construct positive identities for themselves in their struggles to gain recognition, it is often the dominant regimes of the powerful that dictate the identity game to them on the basis of a rigged and stacked text" (1). These dominant regimes—the normate narrative, the ablebodied collective—have been made clear through many students' narratives throughout this study; yet, there were also moments in which students expressed an embracing of their disability identities as well. Some students

drew attention to the temporality of disability identity, noting shifts in their own conceptions of disability over time, while others noted the impact of disability on their career path. Amber said that disability is a large part of her identity and explained that "growing up, I thought I was stupid and then whenever I went to a psychiatrist and they told me what was wrong with me, and then going to college—I'm not stupid. I just learn in a different way." Amber experienced shame with her disability but eventually came to understand it as difference, not disability, and this shift in perspective seems to correlate with her receiving a medical diagnosis. Michelle told me, "I didn't really talk much about [disability] until I got into college where I finally started to piece together my past and be like it's ok. There's nothing wrong with it. I'm fine. It's nothing to be ashamed of." Later in the interview, when I asked Michelle about whether or not she had confidence in her writing abilities, she said, "I feel like I can compete with people that I'm with now, but it is still something I'm self-conscious about. It still shakes me a little bit in my confidence." When I asked if this was related to her learning disability, she said, "Yeah, I would say so because you're basically being told your whole life: you're not quite where you need to be. That's always something that follows you." Michelle is moving toward acceptance but still battles the rhetorics of remediation that "follow" her into the college setting.

In the college setting, students (all students) are exploring, developing, and negotiating their varied and emergent identities, and all face a myriad of expectations: expectations to be a good friend, to be charismatic and respected, to make their family proud, to be a model student, to be successful. Students with disabilities face these same expectations but must also continually negotiate their embodied and rhetorical

experiences in an effort to account for their own ways of knowing, learning, and being in the world. In listening to the experiences of students with disabilities, rhetoricians and compositionists might learn a great deal not only about increasing awareness of disability and access, but also about rhetorical agency and the complexities of identity construction. The ways in which students manage their identities and negotiate disability requires in-depth analysis of disclosing processes and the conditions that invite, coerce, or pre-meditate revelation of disability. The conditions and contexts in which disclosure takes place, allow for an examination of the agentive strategies that students employ when faced with a decision to identify as disabled.

Disability & Disclosure: Rhetorical Strategies for Impression Management

Angel Lin, editor of *Problematizing Identity: Everyday Struggles in Language, Culture, and Education*, writes that, "For different subjects (or social actors) located in differential socioeconomic and sociopolitical positions, the notion of identity is double-edged and is a weapon with risks and dangers (and often with far greater risks and dangers for subordinated groups)" (2). The identity marker of disability is clearly a subordinated group, but a student with a disability is doubly subordinated: on one hand, their disability in and of itself implies a type of subordinated body and on the other hand—as a student—they are subordinate to the authority of the teacher. The stakes of disclosure are fraught with risk, and students employ various and complex measures to calculate and manage the identities they reveal to their instructors. In the following section, I discuss several agentive strategies for disclosure, including strategic genericism, selective disclosure, risk management, and self-disclosure through writing.

Sociologists define impression management as "self-presentation and/or public display of identities created through the management of personal information" (208). Students with disabilities employ widely diverse and intensely complex tactics for managing the components of the identity that they regard (or that others consider) as connected to disability. One such tactic is the practice of revealing their status as disabled yet resisting a specific revelation of their *type* of disability; I refer to this tactic as strategic genericism. Andy reported that he will disclose if he thinks he might use accommodations but that usually he just uses the generic form because he doesn't "feel like there's any more to be said." Amber reported that she just uses the generic disability services email to disclose she has a disability but generally avoids specifying what type of disability she has. When I asked her why, she said, "I don't think they need to know, I guess. I don't want them to treat me differently." She later told me about an instance where she disclosed her "anxiety problems" so that she could get extra time for testing during an evening class (when the disability services testing center was closed). Greg specified that when he has to miss class, he provides doctor's notes and reports illness, but due to a fear of stigma, he does not state the cause to be HIV. Michelle and Rusty also both reported that they disclose disability but avoid specification of type. In the context of disclosure in higher education, all five of these students enact strategic genericism. Andy questions the purpose of revealing his specific disability while both Amber and Greg seem to use this strategy as a self-protective measure.

Like the students above, Leah reported that she enacts strategic genericism in practices of disclosure, explaining:

> I feel that sharing the specific disabilities I have with a professor is sharing things that can be easily judged one way or the other. Other disabilities are

> accepted by society as legitimate and thus, a professor can't react badly to it. Migraines and depression, I feel, are things that general society might not automatically deem a disability. It might take having a conversation with someone like me, who has been so significantly affected by them, for a sway towards disability to happen. By not describing my disability, the professor doesn't have the opportunity to judge whether it is legitimate or not.

Leah's resistance to specifying her disability indicates her savvy understanding of social attitudes toward her particular type of disability. She points out that many might regard her disability as not quite a disability; both migraines and depression are invoked so often they have become commonplace experiences—not an outlying disability experienced by a minority. Leah's observation draws attention to the ways in which degree of disability impacts disclosure. In her case, she suspects people may regard her as *not disabled enough* to merit accommodations; therefore, she too enacts strategic genericism as a self-protective measure to ensure she is accommodated—not scrutinized—by her professors.

Students with multiple disabilities reported that they practice *selective disclosure*, revealing some disabilities while concealing others. James reported that he often employs selective disclosure, saying he felt more comfortable telling them about ADD and less comfortable disclosing OCD and Tourette Syndrome—although the latter two impact his classroom experience more heavily. Lillie expressed that she will disclose her LD to professors but that she does not disclose her depression. When I asked why, she said, "I don't feel like they need to know. Learning disabilities tend to be accepted and I almost feel like depression isn't even a problem." Lillie observes the same commonplace attitude about depression that Leah reported earlier. Chesty and Mike, the student-veterans discussed earlier in the chapter, also report practicing selective disclosure, readily volunteering information about their physical but not

mental disabilities. Like Chesty and Mike, Diane has multiple disabilities (depression, PCOS, ADHD, Tourette Syndrome) and she explained that she usually only discloses the Tourette's (the only "visible" disability), and only that when she perceives the course as "strenuous."

Disclosure of disability operates as a type of risk management, or the assessment and prioritization of risk in a given context. If "risk" is considered a type of danger, the dangers students with disabilities may face upon acts of disclosure include stigma, judgment, denial of access, and/or exposure to discriminatory and hurtful rhetorics of ableism. April reported mostly positive experiences with revealing disability to her professors but also expressed some resistance to disclosing, however, on the grounds that teachers might judge her for not electing to use the Disability Resource Center. She said, "I should tell them but at the same time I feel like I'm gonna get scolded for not going to the disability center. I feel like they're not going to respect that I'm telling them, very unofficial. So I try not to tell them unless I feel closer to them." For April, trusting her professors not to judge her choices is paramount to her decision to disclose. George reported that he discloses to teachers in order to make certain they don't think he is cheating on exams. One of his coping techniques for anxiety is to talk to himself or mouth words. So, prior to exams, he lets the teacher or proxy know about his anxiety disorder. He also explained that he has a fear of disclosing because he's worried that his instructors will advise him to drop if he performs poorly on any given task. While April and George both manage risk in ways that prevent unfair judgment, Tom's approach to disclosure as risk management is a means of ensuring access for himself. He said, "They have to know. It's like helping myself by telling them. If I try to pass as normal

and not tell my professor, that's really hurting myself." He elaborated by saying, "talking to the professors is not that big of a deal because I guess it doesn't matter if they accept me or not. It is what it is. I'm not trying to be their friend."

Selective disclosure, risk management, and strategic genericism are strategies or patterns of agentive, impression management among students with disabilities in the post-secondary setting, and oftentimes these strategies overlap. George offered me one of the most vivid disclosure stories, telling me about a moment during a residential advisor training that asked students to reveal their identifications with various groups (Are you a gun-owner? Are you an athlete? Have you ever been bullied? And so on). George told me, "We were talking about mental disorders and I don't mind talking about mine because I realize it might help someone to hear about it. But it was just like I kind of felt this shift, like my palms started sweating and I got really nervous." He went on to describe the activity in which all participants in the training were asked to stand in a circle and then were asked, "If you suffer from something, take a step forward." When the group was asked to step forward if they suffered from a mental disorder, George stepped forward. He told me, "I took a step forward and out of 30, I was the only one. I just stood there and I counted. And it was 15 seconds, and I think the teacher wanted to get the perspective of it or the feeling of it. But it was just like, wow, I feel really lonely right now." In the anecdote above, George took an enormous risk, and he felt the consequences of that action. This moment of isolation serves as an apt metaphor for the experiences of risk that students with disabilities face. The training activity is presumably designed to help students identify with one another and to think

through the ways in which their experiences position them as unique. George said that he thinks the teacher wanted students to "get the feeling of it," and he certainly did.

The writing classroom represents a highly probable site for disclosure of disability for a variety of reasons. First of all, the smaller class size of a writing course might increase chances that students and teachers get to know one another in a more intimate manner than in a larger lecture-based course. There may also be more opportunities for one-on-one discussion, especially if the writing teacher practices face-to-face conferencing. Writing classrooms themselves are hotbeds of identity-work; teachers are asking students to reveal their stance on various issues, to relate their own experiences to the experiences of others, and to critically examine their own positions. Because writing classrooms are so uniquely attendant to issues of identity, writing instructors should be all the more privy to the dynamics of disclosure.

Many of the students in my study talked with me about disclosing through writing. Greg, for example, reported that he somewhat disclosed through a writing assignment, although he posed it as writing about a "friend" with HIV. When I asked why he relied on the "friend" persona, he said it was to protect himself, but he stipulated that "It was cathartic in a way. It was like I could actually kind of like tell some of this story to a broader audience." Veronica also talked about disclosure through writing, but reported that she worries about the risk involved with doing so, especially when the stakes are high. She said, "There's always debate about mentioning it in my master's applications. I remember I went back and forth about it, should I disclose this or should I not? And I think I ultimately decided to not just because you never know what people's opinions are about disability." Veronica's decision to avoid disclosing in an

application essay reveals her sophisticated analysis of the risks and rewards associated with disability disclosure in that particular genre. She anticipates the power of the overcoming narrative, but ultimately decided that because she has no knowledge of her audience's views on disability, the risks are too high. This choice demonstrates a keen level of rhetorical awareness on her part.

Two of the students in my study reported that they disclosed through writing but that they would not have done so had the teacher insisted upon peer review workshopping. Amber reported that she wrote an essay about her disability, but when I asked if she shared the paper with classmates in a peer review, she asserted that she wouldn't have written the paper if peers has been asked to review it. When I asked why she told me, "Everybody thinks that people with Bipolar are crazy." She was willing to disclose to her teacher through her writing but not to her peers for fear they might judge her as "crazy." Amber also told me that she would sometimes tell peers that she had "anxiety problems" but that she never disclosed she had OCD or Bipolar, which seemed to represent a different (and increased) level of disclosure risk. Like Amber, James reported that he felt comfortable disclosing his disability to his teacher through a writing assignment, but he would not have done so if peer review were a part of the assignment.

One of the most compelling narratives of disclosure shared with me in this study came from Tyler, an art student. She first pointed out that, "I'm still trying to figure out how to communicate about [disability] with certain people," and then she described a very interesting and complex experience with disclosing to two different professors. She explained:

> It's kind of an interesting situation. There are two professors who are dating. So I told the girl professor. Just 'cause I don't think she's a very emotional person, but I still think that she'd be more empathetic than a male professor who can be really cynical. I think he's one of my favorite professors, but if I were to start tearing up in the middle of this conversation, I would feel really uncomfortable, so I told the female professor. And part of it was because I realized that no one in the art school knew about this condition whereas my entire family knows, all my closest friends know, people at my workplace know, so I was wondering if art has to do with the rest of my life, why am I not telling these people about it? So I sat down and talked with [her] about it and she was really encouraging and supportive of it and wanted me to pursue artwork that explored my feelings or reactions to the disability. And so I did create a couple of pieces that were responses to the everyday [experience of disability]. So I think she most likely would have communicated that with [him] which I was kinda hoping would happen just so I wouldn't have to tell him… And I think just in the sense that he like has a better understanding of where my questions are coming from.

I followed up with Tyler by asking, "So with the female it was less a decision about something you needed practically in the class and more about your art community at OU and them knowing where you're coming from?" Tyler answered:

> Just to have someone else understand. Especially last semester. I've been dating someone for about six months and so with that I've been wondering okay what would marriage look like. Is this person willing to continue dating me and potentially marry me knowing there's that risk of me becoming blind or deaf? And we've had that conversation many times and he's been incredibly encouraging, supportive, and just surprisingly willing and so I was just thinking about it a lot last semester and become really upset about it and cry or something and I don't know just be unsure about what I was gonna do so it was just a big part of my thought process last year. So I think I just wanted to have this dialogue within my art work about it and then I didn't want to just announce to the class, 'This is what it's about it.' I kind of wanted to talk to my professor about it and see what she thought about that…You're creating something and then other people are going to say I like that or I hate that. And it would be hard if you do that too soon. It's deeply personal... It's an emotional thing.

I've included a large portion of Tyler's narrative here because it is intensely revelatory of the complexities of the disclosure process for students with disabilities. Tyler highlights the differences in her choices for disclosure among different faculty, suggesting that suggesting that personality type and even gender may play a role in her

selection process for who she deems a safe disclosure recipient. She also reveals the ways in which her own personal relationships impacted the choices she was making about disclosure in the college setting. And, like James and Amber, she seems concerned with how her exploration of disability in her own personal expression, her artwork, might be perceived by her peers.

All of this is to say, the complexities of disclosure are not reducible to an email from disability services. Instructors should have a deep level of understanding and respect for the stakes of disclosure and should attempt to construct conditions that invite—but don't coerce—revelation of disability. Andy told me that he dropped a class in which he had been using accommodations. One of his good friends remained in the class and told Andy that a few days after he was no longer enrolled in the class, the teacher asked the entire class, "Does anyone else test at Goddard? I think Andy was the only one?" Hilary explained that after her suicide attempt, she sought treatment from a mental health facility and all of her former professors received a note from disability services stating that she was "at Griffin," thus disclosing mental disability because the facility is well known in the community. Lillie described a classroom scenario in which she was engaged (in front of the class) in a conversation about her accommodations. Where coercion forces the moment of disclosure, invitation provides opportunity. These opportunities might take the form of rhetorically designed accessibility statements on syllabi or sustained and frequent office hour invitations to all students. Inviting disclosure is about creating hospitable conditions for disability, not about voyeurism or exposure. Instructors should think critically and purposefully about the stakes of disclosure that their classroom creates.

Rhetorics of Ableism: Taking Advantage, Overcoming, & Enduring Pity

During the design phase of my study, I hoped that I would encounter many students who worked against the systems of oppression and exclusion that so often exist for persons with disabilities. Several of the students I spoke with in the study, however, seemed to adopt rhetorics that are seemingly contrary to the values and aims in Disability Studies. One such rhetoric might be characterized as the advantage rhetoric, or the idea that seeking out access, accommodations, or assistance is somehow working an advantage, a special privilege, or an unfair assistive measure to which other (nondisabled) students do not have access. This is the ultimate irony: students with disabilities hesitant to gain access (via accommodation) because they see it as an unjust means of taking advantage. These rhetorics of advantage are deeply connected to the metaphor of the playing field, which is heavily circulated among disability services discourse in the post-secondary setting. This metaphor assumes that an accommodation should level the playing field, giving students with disabilities the same opportunity to fail or succeed as their nondisabled peers. Scholars such Barber-Fendley and Hamel have pointed out that the warrant of this metaphor assumes the playing field itself is a logical, legitimate, and accessible space. They ultimately suggest that perhaps the playing field itself needs to change. In order for these dominant perceptions of access and accommodation to be challenged, the rhetoric of the playing field and of advantage-taking must be critically examined and alternative rhetorics must be systematically put into place. Moreover, the conversations, policies, and propaganda that uphold and propagate such rhetorics must be identified and suppressed.

First, I'd like to look at several student comments that seem to echo these rhetorics of taking advantage. Andy, Charles, and Justin each express a desire for independence, and this desire seems couched in a rhetoric of advantage-taking. Andy, for example, reported that disability is not a large part of his identity: "I don't want it to be, no. I want it to be something I grow out of…I don't want to have a crutch from relying on special privileges that other people don't get. And I don't want to have to credit that to my success in life." Diane too used the word "crutch" to describe her resistance to accommodations saying, "I see people at the DRC who kind of use their disability as a crutch. And it kind of makes me angry because it's not supposed to be that way." Charles also expressed resistance to accommodations and to identification with disability. He said:

> I was going to just see if I can still make it on my own. I want not to be categorized in that kind of. So when, if a teachers sees, oh, they're a person that needs to go to the [disability services center], I just prefer to be under the same conditions as a regular student so I can actually get the full experience. Oh, I have to get extra time. I have to justify it. I don't want to justify anything. I feel like I'd be justifying my degree.

The "full experience" that Charles desires might be interpreted as the space within the boundaries of exclusion, the playing field for the able. Justin said:

> When I first came to college, I thought—because I took dyslexia [classes] the entire time growing up and finished them in high school—I thought, when I get into college, I will just deal with it on my own because I didn't want to be labeled as having a disability or any professors to think of me differently. I wanted to prove that I could do just as well as students without disabilities.

Andy, Charles, and Justin each express a desire for independence that is tangled up with notions of advantage-rhetorics, or the idea that if they seek access via a system of accommodation, they are somehow not playing by the same rules as their nondisabled peers. When a teacher applauds a student's bootstrap approach to access, their tenacity

to "do it on their own," they fuel advantage-rhetoric in such a way that social structures of ableism and stigma are further legitimized. This also suggests that perhaps it is not necessarily disability identity that these students resist, but rather the disability identity that emerged from (or is definitionally maintained by) medical models or systems of accommodation.

Another trend in these narratives of disability identity seems to indicate an association between disability and work ethic. Interpreting the connection between disability and "work ethic" might be productively considered through invoking the "overcoming" trope that so often circulates around issues of disability In the book *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*, which is a foundational text in Disability Studies, Simi Linton examines the intensely troubling warrants that uphold "overcoming" as a myth of disability. She writes that when the phrase "'she has overcome her disability' is espoused, this rhetoric suggests that sheer strength or willpower has brought the person to the point where the disability is no longer a hindrance" (17). This "willpower" might also be what both Michelle and Veronica assert as their work ethic, a component of their identity which arose directly out of a conversation aimed at understanding how their disability has impacted their identity. Michelle, for example, said that disability is a large part of her identity because "It's forced me to be a much harder worker…I try to put 110% because I know I can't compete on the same level as everyone else. It's added that part to me that I don't know if I'd be here without, if I wasn't a hard worker because of it." Veronica too expressed her self-identity as a hard worker: "It's just made me a really hard worker. I always had to struggle with it so it's just the knowledge that I'm gonna do that and I'm gonna pull

through it." Although both Michelle and Veronica assert their strong work ethic as connected to their experiences of disability, this does raise questions about the conditions that produced these ethics in the first place.

Linton also writes, "The ideas imbedded in the overcoming rhetoric are of personal triumph over a personal condition. The idea that someone can overcome a disability has not been generated within the community; it is a wish fulfillment generated from the outside. It is a demand that you be plucky and resolute, and not let the obstacles get in your way" (18). While I certainly agree with Linton that the emphasis on *personal* overcoming obscures attention to the *social* structures of oppression that undergird ableism, I am sadly skeptical that these rhetorics of personal triumph are not solely generated from outside the disability community. My own sense is that many of the students I interviewed do not have a "disability community." Moreover, many of them seem to adopt the dominant narratives of disability, the rhetoric of overcoming being the case in point. Perhaps Linton is correct that this impulse for overcoming is generated from the "outside" but I would also argue that it is circulated and sustained both outside and within. Placing this argument within the context of the classroom, teachers do no service to SWD when they applaud, reward, and echo these rhetorics of overcoming. In her article "Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted," Marilyn Cooper points out that "[T]hough the world changes in response to individual action, agents are not often aware of their intentions, they do not directly cause changes, and the choices they make are not free from influence from their inheritance, from past experiences, or their surround" (421). Stuart Hall also attends to re-thinking the ways in which we theorize the subject position of a given identity,

drawing on Foucault to assert that "what we require is not a theory of the knowing subject, but rather a theory of discursive practice" (2). The students perspectives in this chapter, therefore, should not be theorized according to whether or not disability identity is something they have or do not have, nor that disclosure is something they do or do not do; a better method is to analyzing the complex and emergent negotiations of disability identity and the conditions that mediate practices of disclosure—with disclosure considered both in-action and inaction. Moreover, disclosure should be considered from both an angle of in-action (the practice of verbalizing and/or textualizing that one has a disability) but also from an angle of inaction (the practice of withholding that one has a disability).

In addition to the assertion of "work ethic," other students in the study offered their own unique vectors of the overcoming narrative. Chesty reported that although he was diagnosed with ADHD at a young age, his military father resisted the process of getting his son help because "he wanted [him] to do it on his own." Chesty later identified this push for overcoming as a "big problem in the marine core" saying that, "They always tell us, deal with it. When it starts to get really bad, then go get it seen. But the marines have a problem with that. We don't go into the clinics as much as we should…because we're expected to be tough and rough…Full Metal Jacket." For Chesty, his experience with rhetorics of overcoming are deeply imbued by militaristic notions of ablebodiedness, masculinity, and self-reliance, growing up in a military family and then being trained in the marine core. His emphasis on self-reliance is exactly the type of "pluckiness" that Linton refers to, but with a much more aggressive and masculine undertone.

Other students expressed contradictory narratives of overcoming, one moment resistant and the next compliant. Justin described writing about disability for a standardized test in high school, a test which prompted her to write about something she had overcome. She said, "I was like, I've overcome dyslexia, but in my mind, it's not something you ever really overcome. You learn how to manage it, but it doesn't go away. It's still a part of you." However, later in the interview, she said, "I wanted to just be rated the same as everyone else, and if I make problems, I want to be counted off for those problems, not be like 'Oh, she just made those problems because she's dyslexic.' Because I do want to overcome dyslexia if that's possible. I need to be treated the same as everyone else and overcome those things on my own." Justin seems to be struggling with her own embodied opinions and experiences of managing/coping/living with disability but also with the pressures of overcoming, of being normal, and of "doing it on her own." Like Justin, John expressed some resistance to the idea of overcoming disability. He described writing a scholarly essay, which asked him to write about overcoming something difficult. He said, "Basically, I just wrote about in school I was diagnosed with dyslexia in second grade…and just kind of talked about how I overcame it, sort of overcame it. But in reality you don't really overcome it, you just learn to cope with it." John too seems stuck between a rock and hard place: adopt the rhetoric of overcoming or resist it and risk penalty for not giving the reader what they want: resolution, triumph, that courageous kid who has overcome life's challenges.

In my own article "Overcoming Rhetoric: Forced Disclosure and the Colonizing Ethic of Evaluating Personal Essays," I look specifically at the personal essay as a site in which there exists a tacit invitation for students with disabilities to draw on

"traumatic" experiences which they have overcome. This invitation implies to students that successful enactment of the overcoming narrative will result in successful writing, successful grades. Alison Kafer might refer to this invitation as curricular manifestation of the *curative imaginary*—which I discussed in chapter four. The curative imaginary, or viewing ablebodiedness as the ultimate, ever-desirable end, demands a futurity in which all trauma, abnormality, and defect are resolved, eliminated, and followed by a return to normalcy. Just as I interpret several of the narratives in my study as demonstrating a rhetoric of overcoming, I also see connection between "cure" narratives and the rhetoric of the curative imaginary. April, for example, told me a story about her parents putting her in a program called Learning RX, aimed at helping her combat her disability. She cited this program as the reason she didn't register for accommodations in college: "They told me they could cure me…getting my brain un-jumbled, to making my thinking clear…I think it helped with my memory but I don't know if it helped me with my writing at all." I asked April to explain further how this program influenced her decision not to register, and she told me, "I thought maybe I was better." Yet April reported no confidence and significant anxiety about her college writing abilities. The impact of this curative rhetoric may have resulted in her missing out on the chance to obtain access and/or to receive accommodations from disability services.

If the individual isn't asked to overcome, the discursive pendulum swings in the opposite direction, offering up the pathetic tragedy of disability. In other words, if they're not the Super-crip, they're Tiny Tim.[80] In a rhetoric of pity, the individual is regarded as worthy of and even necessitating tragic regard. This rhetoric serves to uphold the primacy of the able in that it constructs disabled people as reliant upon the

caretaking capabilities of the ablebodied. In *The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community*, Harlan Lane examines the ways in which representations of d/Deaf people and communities are constructed by hearing culture's paternalistic and benevolent response to deafness as abnormal pathology. Joseph Shapiro's *No Pity People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement* also considers the benevolence model, critically analyzing the ways in which pity has functioned as an oppressive social mechanism that prevents forward political movement for disability activism. Other scholars have looked at the various infantilizing representations of autism that are informed by the piteous gaze upon an abject, pathetic person afflicted with a "sad" condition (see Stevenson, Harp, and Gernsbacher for an example). In the student-teacher relationship, the function of pity serves to further uphold the type of infantilizing benevolence that focuses only on individual circumstance and elides the social structures of ableism. If a student discloses disability and the teacher responds with pity, the standard of normalcy is affirmed, for any deviation worthy of pity only functions to reinforce the primacy of the normal body.

Lillie described an example of the pity response, telling me about a teacher to whom she discloses her disability: "I felt comfortable going in his office hours. I was probably in his office hours a lot…I went in to go talk. I don't like the email thing. I'd rather go in there face-to-face. And I went in there and got the sick puppy, and I just hate that." I asked what she meant, and she said, "That's what we call it." I asked, "Pity?" and she said, "Yes." I asked if that bothered her and she said, "Yes, I'm not helpless. If anything I work ten times harder than anyone else…It's almost like they've [teachers] never handled it before." Lillie's reaction to the "sick puppy" response is

forceful distaste; she does not want to be perceived as a helpless, incapable victim of her disability. Her story here once again invokes the "work ethic," willpower of overcoming, however, when she concludes by asserting how much harder she works than her presumably nondisabled peers. Her assertion of her work ethic is no surprise though, considering that the disconnect between her own effort (her strength, her fortitude) and the instructor's implied perception of her ("sick puppy"). The most important question at play here is what systems of oppression (cultural, social, educational) create the conditions that make it necessary for her to work "ten times harder than anyone else?"

The fear of being regarded with pity also impacts the choices that students with disabilities make about whether or not to register with disabilities and seek out accommodations. Michelle told me, "I chose not to do it. Mostly I kind of wanted the teachers to be more rough on my writing because I wanted to become better at it. So it mostly just stemmed from wanting real criticism and not feeling like they had to be kinder to me over my disability." What Michelle terms "kindness" here I would interpret as a response grounded in pity, or the idea that the instructor would respond and assess her work more leniently because she pitied the circumstances of Michelle's disability. Tyler also reported that a resistance to pity informed the decision she made not to register with campus disability services. I told Tyler that based on what she told me, it seemed like she could have benefitted from having a notetaker, but I pointed out that she also seemed to have a lot of pride in her independence. She said, "I think pride is definitely a big issue. Something I didn't really recognize for a long time. I think

growing up I really didn't want to be different from other people, and I didn't want pity."

In other conversations with the participants in my study, the notion of the "pity card" was introduced. The "pity card" is closely related to the advantage-rhetoric I discussed earlier in the chapter. Playing a card suggests a sneaky and deceitful manner of cheating the system. Gavin and Rachel offers opposing opinions about playing this card. Gavin told me that he does not disclose to his professors and has no intention of doing so in the future. He said:

> I plan on talking to them about my accommodations. Actually, my one professor, before I even had the diagnosis, I came up to him because I've had him two semesters in a row. This is because I completely withdrew from school last semester after having to go to the hospital during finals week and stuff. So I'm having him again this semester, and I like his personality. I did tell him that I'm meeting with the DRC soon. I did pretty poorly on your test and I don't think it's because of what I knew. I have a generalized anxiety disorder and it can accelerate at test times and in a test classroom. So one professor I did disclose some information with it, but I don't plan on telling anyone about Bipolar. I think that would make me look like I was playing a sympathy card as opposed to getting an alternate testing situation that will benefit me.

While Gavin is resistant to being perceived as playing the sympathy card, Rachel's tactic seems much more willing to work any angle she can in order to ensure her access, instructor perception be damned. When I asked Rachel whether or not she typically discloses to her instructors, she said, "I have, yes, because if I think it will help me get accommodations or some leniency on deadlines, I will tell them. I'll tell everyone. I will play the pity card if I have to and it kind of feels like cheating sometimes, but I really do have a hard time getting stuff done like a normal student." While Gavin seeks to avoid being perceived as taking advantage of the pity card, Rachel is willing to employ whatever "card" she needs to in order to create the most desirable conditions for

ensuring her successful performance in a given course, and the burden of "normal" infuses her decision.

Throughout this chapter I have emphasized that the writing classroom represents an environment in which identity is often explored, negotiated, and constructed. As such, it carries an additional opportunity for instructors and students to explore rhetorical agency, construction and negotiation of disability identity, as well as the rhetorics that mediate such negotiations. Disclosure itself might be considered a rhetorical situation: there is a message, a writer, and audience, a mode, and a context for that moment of communication. Enriching the ways in which we navigate those moments, the ways we position ourselves as an audience for disclosure of disability, and the contexts we create for students is paramount in any effort to advance access and inclusivity.

Epilogue: Enabling Others to be Mobile…

In the opening chapter of this dissertation, I highlighted research that posited faculty attitudes as the largest barrier to access in the post-secondary setting (Wolanin and Steele; Lombardi and Murray). *Faculty attitudes*. Of all the variables at play, faculty attitudes are a key determining factor in the choices students make about registering disability, seeking accommodation, disclosing disability, and perhaps even the choices they make about how and when they embrace their disability identity. Beverly Skeggs argues that the issue is not about identity but rather about evaluation, or the judgments to which particular identities are subjected. She writes, "The key to understanding difference is not through identity, which actually makes a difference reproducing the authority of the privileged and resourceful, but in understanding how value is attached and sticks to bodies, fixing some in place whilst enabling others to be mobile" (25). Developing teachers' understanding of these attached values has been a key goal of my work in this dissertation. Throughout this project, I have also argued that a crucial component of enriching faculty awareness is listening to students themselves. To that end, in this concluding moment, I'd like to focus in on one specific question from my interview. I asked each student who met with me: What advice would you offer writing teachers? I've sampled many responses below for browsing and have italicized what I perceive as a key phrase upon which writing teachers might productively and purposefully reflect.

Many of the teachers I run into are not willing to *make changes* to how they do things (Chesty).

If you see a student is struggling with their writing and you know they have a disability, don't be afraid to *reach out* (George).

I would probably just tell them you gotta *be aware* of disabilities because so many of [teachers] aren't, at least the ones I took. I don't know if they weren't aware or they just didn't care. I don't think they realize how hard it is for us to get the same stuff done as everyone else (Jason).

I imagine from a teacher's perspective, accommodations are very frustrating at times but they seriously help, and it's kind of always about connection with the students. I feel a lot more motivated if my English teacher *treated me like a capable student* and was *willing to listen* (Lillie).

I really care about what my instructors think of me, and I'd prefer to *be known for my input* or something else before I'm known for being the girl who doesn't really look like she has a disability but says she does. I think instructors just realizing that this is probably how many people feel might help. *Be attentive* and *realize that not everyone is going to volunteer the fact that they are different* right off the bat (Maria).

I think with disabilities it's, I don't know, for me, *don't underestimate* them. Don't just assume that just because they have a learning disability that their writing's not gonna be any good. For some students, it's not so much their content or not having good ideas to write about, it's just the process is difficult…I think that's the biggest thing to me. I felt like teachers always underestimated me (Michelle).

I wish that I had a professor that *made me feel more welcome*. I'm not gonna be judged or people aren't gonna write me off because I have this disability…So I think I guess if you were gonna say one thing it would be adaptability and *going into every new classroom with openness* to accommodating to whatever student's needs. As opposed to going in focused on this is a normal writing class and then kind of being not necessarily blindsided or whatever by someone with a disability but not really thinking in advance or being open to *having new ideas* about making things easier for people with disabilities so I guess it would just be changing the overall approach to the beginning of each new class, each new semester…Understand that it's not that, the kid's not trying to burden them… it's just it is what it is and you have to kind of take that in stride and try not to get so rigid in what you want to do so that it becomes a burden because you want to do this, this certain way and now you have to change how you're gonna go about it. Be open to whatever may come your way and *make adjustments as needed* and just know that here's my general plan for how I'm gonna teach this

> course but I'm gonna *leave room to modify* it if I need to for specific students or whatever (Tom).
>
> I think just *understanding that a learning disability is not a reflection of someone's intelligence*, 'cause I think they're mixed a lot (Veronica).

Reading through these comments highlights the importance of faculty attitudes. Students emphasize openness, awareness, and understanding as the desirable characteristics of effective writing teachers. Skeggs writes that, "The statement 'I am' always carries its history, traces, and recognition. It is only through relations with others that identity can be known. Therefore I would argue for a focus outward, towards an inspection of the relations and technologies, the forms of inscription that make identity visible and valued. What are the conditions of possibility that make identity possible?" (28). The conditions of possibility that allow for the acknowledgment and emergence of disability identity should not be an accommodation letter. Accessibility can only be fully realized when disability itself is visible and affirmed in all university contexts: on syllabi, in conversations between students and faculty, through continued attention to access throughout the semester (not just on the first day or on test day), and through the inclusion of disability as a critical modality.

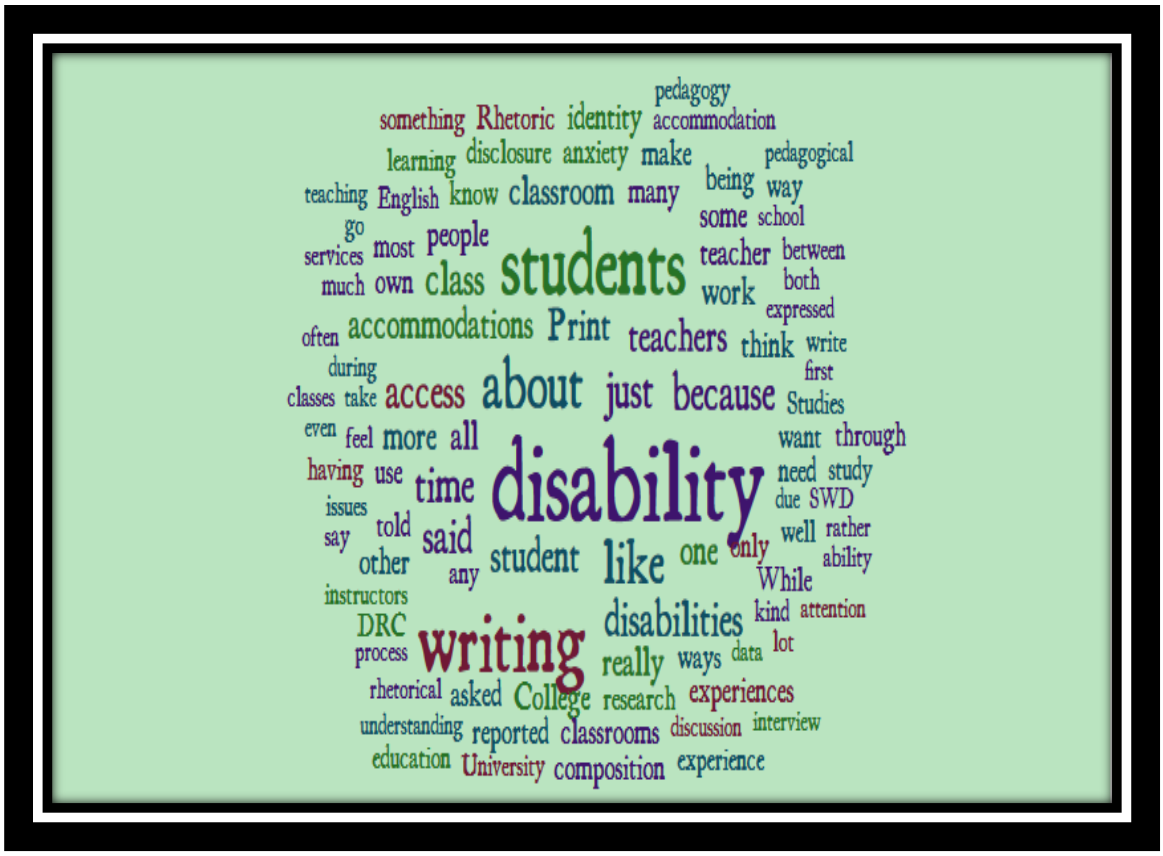

Figure 1.4 Dissertation Word Cloud

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What composition courses/writing classes have you taken in the past?
2. How do you feel about writing? What are your strengths? Your challenges?
3. What type of disability do you have?
4. How does your disability impact your life as a student?
5. What types of support and/or accommodations did you have growing up?
6. Is disability a large part of your identity?
7. What types of help work best for you when completing a writing task?
8. What types of help do not work for you when completing a writing task?
9. What types of accommodations were you offered here at OU?
10. What types of accommodations do you use? Most often? In all classes? In writing classes?
11. What types of [writing] classrooms are you most comfortable with?
12. Do you have anxiety or excitement about writing classes? Explain.
13. Do you have confidence in your writing abilities?
14. What types of things do you expect to learn in a writing classroom?
15. What types of things are you currently focusing on in your writing classes?
16. What types of support do you get from your writing teacher?
17. Have you disclosed your disability to your teacher? Why or why not?
18. What is your writing process?
19. What types of tools do you use to write?
20. How much writing do you do that is non-academic?
21. Describe the effectiveness of your accommodations.

22. How might accommodations be more useful to you in writing classes?
23. What advice would you offer writing teachers regarding how to make their classrooms more accessible?
24. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences with disability, with writing, with your accommodations, or just anything else you think might be useful to me?

Appendix B: Instructor/Faculty Survey

1. Are you aware of the Disability Resource Center (DRC)? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

2. Would you consider granting accommodations for students NOT registered with the Disability Resource Center? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

3. Would you consider granting accommodations for students with disabilities who are registered with the Disability Resource Center but for whom you have not received any communication on their behalf from the DRC? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

4. Do you talk with your students about ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance, accessibility, or accommodations (other than in regards to your disability syllabus statement)? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

5. Have you ever had any disability awareness training? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

6. Have you ever had a student in your class disclose their disability to you? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

7. Please indicate the methods of disclosure that students have used with you. Please check all that apply. (If you select "Other," please clarify using the provided text box.)

□ DRC official email on student's behalf
□ face-to-face before/after class
□ through their personal email
□ through an essay assignment or class writing
□ during class discussion
□ Other
□ I have never had a student disclose to me

8. How do you grade student participation in class discussion? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ I use a points system, awarding points for speaking up
□ based on the content/quality of student's verbal contribution
□ based on how many times they contribute verbally to discussion
□ Other
□ I do not grade student participation in discussion

9. Do you have in-class writing prompts? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

10. Do you ever have timed writing in your class? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

11. Do you administer essay exams of any kind? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

12. Do you administer quizzes of any kind? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

13. Are you flexible with deadlines? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Depends

14. Do you ever devote an entire class period to individual writing? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

15. Do you allow students to use laptops in your class? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

16. Do you allow students to audio-record your classes? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

17. Do students take notes in your class? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

18. Do you meet face-to-face, one-on-one with ALL your students at least once during the semester? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

19. Please rank the classroom episode types based on how frequently you use them (with 1 being the episode type used most frequently). If you select the "Other" function, please specify your additional episode type.

□ Class discussion
□ Lecture
□ Small-Group Work
□ Individual Work
□ Other

20. Do you meet face-to-face, one-on-one with ALL your students at least once during the semester? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Never
□ Less Than Once a Month
□ Once a Month
□ 2-3 Times a Month
□ Once a Week
□ 2-3 Times a Week
□ Daily

21. Do you hold online office hours? (Please use the text entry box to offer any additional explanation of your answer.)

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

22. What is your rank? (If you select "other," please specify your rank.)

□ GTA
□ Professor
□ Adjunct
□ Other

23. What courses (or types of courses) do you typically teach? (e.g. FYC courses, 3000-4000 level literature courses, advanced writing courses, graduate courses, etc.)?

24. Do you call on students by name (asking them directly for participation in class discussion)?

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

25. Do you caption the videos you show in your classes?

□ Yes
□ No
□ I do not show videos in my classes
□ Other

26. Do you assign reflective writing in your classes (asking students to reflect on their writing processes)?

□ Yes
□ No
□ Other

Appendix C: Participant Profiles

1. **AMBER** identified as having Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Bipolar Disorder. She is registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). She is a white, female 21-year old undergraduate student majoring in Zoology.
2. **AMELIE** identified as having Orthorexia and Anorexia. She is NOT registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 19-year old undergraduate student majoring in Ballet.
3. **ANDY** identified as having a learning disability. He is registered with the DRC. He is a white/Hispanic, male 20-year old undergraduate student majoring in Multidisciplinary Studies/Pre-medicine.
4. **APRIL** identified as having Attention-Deficit Disorder and dysgraphia. She is NOT registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 21-year old undergraduate student majoring in Sociology.
5. **BLAIR** identified as having Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and a learning disability (in math). She is registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 19-year old undergraduate student majoring in Biology.
6. **BOB** identified as an amputee. He is registered with the DRC. He is a white, male 43-year old undergraduate student majoring in Science Education. He is a veteran.
7. **CHARLES** identified as having dyslexia. He is registered with the DRC. He is a black, male 21-year old undergraduate student majoring in African American Studies.

8. **CHESTY** identified as having Anxiety-Not Otherwise Specified, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, sleep apnea, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, recurring nightmares, urinary incontinence, fecal incontinence, and Tourette Syndrome. He is registered with the DRC. He is a white/American Indian-Cherokee, male 27-year old undergraduate student majoring in Industrial Engineering. He is a veteran.
9. **DIANE** identified as having Tourette Syndrome, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, depression, and Poly-cystic Ovarian Syndrome. She is registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 23-year old undergraduate student majoring in Geographic Information Systems.
10. **ELLIOT** identified as having hearing and vision loss. He is NOT registered with the DRC, but he is registered with the State of Oklahoma's Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). He is a white, male 19-year old undergraduate student majoring in Constitutional Studies.
11. **GAVIN** identified as having Bipolar Disorder. He is registered with the DRC. He is a white/Asian-American 20-year old undergraduate student majoring in Petroleum Engineering.
12. **GEORGE** identified as having Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and depression. He is NOT registered with the DRC. He is a white, male 20-year old undergraduate student majoring in Psychology.
13. **GREG** identified as having Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). He is registered with the DRC. He is a white, male 52-year old graduate student majoring in Prevention Science.

14. **HILARY** identified as having Bipolar Disorder and Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. She is NOT registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 22-year old undergraduate student majoring in Multidisciplinary Studies.
15. **JAKE** identified as having dyslexia. He is NOT registered with the DRC. He is a white, male 21-year old undergraduate student majoring in Journalism.
16. **JAMES** identified as having Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Tourette Syndrome, and Attention-Deficit Disorder. He is registered with the DRC. He is a white, male 20-year old undergraduate student majoring in Health and Exercise Science.
17. **JASON** identified as having Frederick's Ataxia, or degenerative neuromuscular disease. He is registered with the DRC. He is a white/American Indian-Cherokee male 26-year old undergraduate student majoring in Multidisciplinary Studies.
18. **JESSICA** identified as having epilepsy. She is registered with the DRC. She is American Indian-Creek female 27-year old undergraduate student majoring in Secondary Foreign Language Education.
19. **JOHN** identified as having dyslexia. He is NOT registered with the DRC. He is a white, male 20-year old majoring in Pre-Physician's Assistant.
20. **JUSTIN** identified as having dyslexia, Attention-Deficit Disorder, and a lisp. She is NOT registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 21-year old majoring in Music.

21. **LEAH** identified as having depression and debilitating migraines. She is registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 28-year old graduate student majoring in Museum Studies.
22. **LILLIE** identified as having depression and a learning disability. She is registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 19-year old undergraduate student undecided in her major.
23. **LYNN** identified as having Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. She is NOT registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 21-year old undergraduate student majoring in Health and Exercise Science.
24. **MARIA** identified as having Stickler's syndrome. She is NOT registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 31-old graduate student majoring in Public Administration.
25. **MARIE** identified as having Attention-Deficit Disorder. She is registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 23-year old undergraduate student majoring in Psychology.
26. **MICHELLE** identified as having a learning disability. She is NOT registered with the DRC. She is American Indian-Cherokee, female, 23-year old graduate student majoring in Native American Studies.
27. **MIKE** identified as having Major Depressive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, spinal athesis, and Osgood Schlotter's disease. He is registered with the DRC. He is a white, male 29-year old undergraduate student with an undecided major. He is also a veteran.

28. **MR. C** identified as having Traumatic Brain Injury and paralysis. He is registered with the DRC. He is a white/American Indian-Cherokee male 36-year old graduate student majoring in Human Relations.
29. **RACHEL** identified as having Cubital Tunnel Syndrome, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Attention-Deficit Disorder, anxiety, and panic attacks. She is registered with the DRC. She is a Hispanic, female 21-year old graduate student majoring in Professional Writing.
30. **ROSE** identified as having Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. She is registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 19-year old undergraduate student majoring in Psychology.
31. **RUSTY** identified as having Attention-Deficit Disorder. He is registered with the DRC. He is a black/American Indian-Muscogee-Creek, male 25-year old graduate student majoring in Law.
32. **SARAH** identified as having partial blindness, or blindness in one eye. She is NOT registered with the DRC. She is Asian-American, female 20-year old undergraduate student majoring in Biology.
33. **TOM** identified as having blindness/visual disability. He is registered with the DRC. He is a white, male 27-year old graduate student majoring in Sociology.
34. **TYLER** identified as having Usher's Syndrome (progressive vision and hearing loss). She is NOT registered with the DRC. She is a Hispanic-Colombian, female 22-year old undergraduate student majoring in Art: film/video.
35. **VERONICA** identified as having dysgraphia. She is registered with the DRC. She is a white, female 26-year old graduate student majoring in Communication.

Appendix D: Notes

[1] This quote is taken from *Bending over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism and Other Difficult Positions* (4).

[2] This quote is taken from "Tender Organs, Narcissism, and Identity Politics" (53).

[3] There is a wide range of opinions regarding the language of disability. In the United Kingdom, most disability scholars and activists prefer "disabled person" over "person with a disability." Arguments abound that explain this logic (sometimes referred to as identity-first language), including the notion that one wouldn't describe themselves as "person with whiteness" or "person with gayness." In the United States, person-first language is much more common. Person-first language advocates typically make the case that an individual shouldn't be reduced to their disability (i.e. a dyslexic person). As a rhetorician, my own personal stance on the matter is determined by the context and audience of a given rhetorical situation. For my purposes in this dissertation, I rely on person-first language in order to be consistent with the most widely recognized discursive practice in my discipline, as well as to foreground the role of "student" in my research. That said, at times I do fluctuate between student with a disability and disabled student for stylistic reasons.

[4] The Society for Disability Studies (SDS) was originally founded in 1982 as the Section for the Study of Chronic Illness, Impairment, and Disability. It was renamed The Society for Disability Studies in 1986. The stated mission of SDS is to promote the study of disability in social, political, and cultural contexts, to augment understanding of disability in all cultures and historical periods, to promote greater awareness of the

experiences of disabled people, and to advocate for social change (SDS, "Mission and History").

[5] Disability activists, such as those involved with the Independent Living Movement, argued for the right to autonomy, rather than the right to be cared for, the latter of which has been heavily critiqued for its paternalism.

[6] The use of sensory metaphors may privilege some subjectivities over others. I use the term "visibility" here in order to be consistent with the language as it emerged in DS scholarship within CRL. Specifically, I follow this language as it is used by Brueggemann et al. in their 2001 *College Composition and Communication* piece.

[7] In the introductory chapter of the *Disability: Key Issues and Future Directions* SAGE reference series, Brewer et al. illustrate the rise of Disability Studies in the humanities by citing the Modern Language Association (MLA) *International Bibliography*, which offers "2,200 sources indexed for 'disability' from 1965 to 2010, with 1,755 of these sources from 1995 forward (the year that the MLA's Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession [CDI] was inaugurated)" (41).

[8] I do not mean to suggest that the study of disability did not start until the 1980s. The emergence I refer to here is the systemized formation of disciplinary attention to disability, i.e. Disability Studies. This emergence was signaled by the establishment of *Disability Studies Quarterly* and of the SDS conference.

[9] For more on the history of disability in the United States, see *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* edited by Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky.

[10] Intertexuality exists between the notion of "closeting" disability and closeting in political movements focused on sexuality. For a discussion of these connections, see

Robert McRuer's "Composing Bodies; or De-Composition: Queer Theory, Disability Studies, and Alternative Corporealities."

[11] 1999 marked a significant year for disability within CCCC. The Special Interest Group for Disability Studies (DS-SIG) collaborated with the Local Arrangements Committee to increase attention to access for presenters and attendees with disabilities, and the CCCC Chair, Keith Gilyard invited noted DS scholar, Simi Linton, as a featured speaker.

[12] In the 1990s, Rhetoric and Composition Studies might be characterized as making a pronounced effort toward addressing the challenge of diversity, or negotiating difference in composition classrooms (see the "A Brief History of Rhetoric and Composition" *in the Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing* by Nedra Reynolds, Jay Dolmage, Patricia Bizzell, and Bruce Herzberg). My own project addresses differences that assume no natural or normal center, a radically distributed idea of difference rather than one positioned against an idealized and unmarked subjectivity that need not be named.

[13] In using the phrase "new types of students," I follow Valentino's direct phrasing from her Chair's address. Her use of the term "new" to describe veterans or students with disabilities is problematic, but I think she means to suggest that the "newness" is not the category itself but the notably rising presence on campus of these particular student demographics.

[14] Margaret Price coins this phrase as a habit characteristic of scholarship in CRL that examines emotion. See *Mad at School* 47-57.

[15] The DS theories of the freak, or freakery, upon which Vidali draws include Rachel Adam's *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* as well as much of the scholarship from Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's edited collection *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*.

[16] The absence of DS scholarship might have been a result of editorial choices or due to lack of articles submitted on the topic. Although there's no measurable way to identify the cause (that I can think of), I'd speculate that the former is a more likely scenario.

[17] By rhetoricity, I mean the degree to which persons with disabilities (especially learning and psychiatric disabilities) are understood to be credible, intelligent, persuasive, and/or effective rhetors.

[18] Initially proposed as a panel for CCCC, the Octalog is sponsored and run by *Rhetoric Review*, in which panel presentations are subsequently published.

[19] Paul Heilker published a response to her piece (he was also a reviewer for this essay) in which he praised her efforts as a teacher but remained hesitant in her seeking out the universal experiences of illness and disability (he discusses his son's autism to make this point about understanding disability verses understanding difference).

[20] Follow up essays and/or features have been notably lacking in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* subsequent to this special issue. That said, Shannon Madden and I have a forthcoming piece on "Suggested Practices for Syllabus Accessibility Statements" that will be published in the 2013 *Kairos Praxis Wiki*.

[21] It should be noted, however, that I've contacted at least a handful of CFPs within the last year requesting and/or inquiring about disability inclusion in their CFPs.

[22] Brueggemann self-authored *Deaf Subjects: Between Identities and Places* and served in editorial roles/contributor roles in the following: *Women and Deafness: Double Visions*; *Disability and/in Prose*; *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*; *Disability and the Teaching of Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*; and *Literacy and Deaf People: Cultural and Contextual Perspectives*.

[23] Jennifer Clary-Lemon points out that "It is no accident that CCCC adopted political stances about accommodation and accessibility at the same time that there was a proliferation of identity-based caucuses, groups, and committees in the organization" (136). She points out that political developments influenced the formation of such identity-based committees; these developments include the Executive Committee's renewed commitment to diversity as well as the refusal to hold conventions in states that had not passed the Equal Rights Amendment (135).

[24] These developments were due largely to the tireless efforts of Jay Dolmage and Margaret Price.

[25] The edited collection *Listening to Our Elders: Working and Writing for Change* offers historical perspectives on many of the committees and caucuses that have developed through the National Council of Teachers of English and through the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Jay Dolmage and others provide a chapter highlighting the development of the Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition.

[26] The number of students coming to college with experience in the special education system and/or with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) is relevant in that it may indicate student knowledge of and comfort with systems of accommodations and the

ease with which they choose (or choose not) to register with university disability service centers. Student experiences with systems of accommodation and/or special education during primary and secondary school may have profound effects on their views on disability, stigma, fairness, accommodations, access, and more.

[27] Throughout my research, I often use the phrase "meet the educational needs." I recognize, however, the ambiguity of this phrasing. At the most basic level, by "needs," I mean the ways in which educators and administrators might provide the most accessible and highest standard of opportunities for academic success for SWD.

[28] This quote appears on their title page.

[29] It's important to point out that while both Wolanin and Steele and Lombardi and Murray point to the need for faculty disability-related training, it remains less clear who initiates this training, what this training should look like (slide shows on disability law?, UD practitioners leading a pedagogy workshop?, people with disabilities themselves presenting a panel?), or how such training might be funded.

[30] While the original study design aimed to recruit participants enrolled in one of the first-year writing courses at my institution (Principles of Composition I or II), I opened up my pool of potential candidates by speaking with students enrolled in a variety of writing courses or general education courses with a writing component. At the University of Oklahoma, the Writing across Campus program oversees the policy on writing in general education courses. The Provost's Advisory Committee on General Education (PACGEO) stipulates that "GenEd instructors, from anthropology to zoology, practice the following policy: writing should be incorporated into all general education courses. The amount of writing will vary depending on class size and the

level of support for the class. However, each course should include one or more writing components such as essay exams, graded journals, laboratory reports, or term papers" ("Writing across Campus"). The PACGEO defines the writing component in lower-division courses as a five-page scholarly paper (written outside of class) and other writings such as responses, book reviews/reports, journals, essay exams, in-class feedback, or peer review. At the upper division, the writing component is defined as a ten-page scholarly paper (written outside of class) along with other writings such as responses, book reviews/reports, journals, essay exams, in-class feedback, or peer review ("Symbolic and Oral Communication Course Proposal Form").

[31] This does create some potential tension between disability services and writing teachers in that the former relies on the system of individual-based accommodations as its raison de'être.

[32] Undue administrative burdens include changes such as specially designed equipment, structural alterations, or modifications to classroom procedures (Rehabilitation Act of 1973 qtd. in Ketterlin-Geller and Johnstone 165). That said, this notion of "reasonable" is really quite murky. What constitutes an unreasonable modification of classroom procedure, for example?

[33] Additional classroom accommodations include an assigned classmate as volunteer assistant, beverages permitted in class, prearranged or frequent breaks, and private feedback on academic performance (Souma, Rickerson, and Burgstahler 5).

[34] Additional accommodations for exams include exams being individually proctored (in the hospital, for example) and increased frequency of exams (Souma, Rickerson, and Burgstahler 5).

[35] Additional assignment accommodations include written vs. oral (or vice versa), assignments completed in dramatic formats, and academic assistance during hospitalization (Souma, Rickerson, and Burgstahler 5).

[36] It's important to note, right off the bat, that UDL does not deny the need for accommodations; it seeks to make them less and less necessary.

[37] The distinction between UDI and UDL is a bit murky. According to "Equal Access: Universal Design of Instruction," UDI is applicable to all areas of instruction whereas UDL is more specifically tied to curriculum design (Burgstahler 1).

[38] Some institutions have progressive disability service centers that expose students with disabilities to the theories, practices, and values that inform Universal Design for Learning (see The Ohio State University or University of Washington for great examples). Typically, however, students do not encounter the language of UDL; my own institution makes no mention of it anywhere in their published literature (textual or virtual). When I say that my study participants are not commonly exposed to UD, I specifically mean the *language of UD*. If I were to ask them about Universal Design, many would not know what I meant. If I were to ask them about accommodations, all of them understand what I am asking. This exposure reflects the culture of disability access at my university.

[39] TAB has become a common acronym in DS. It refers to those individuals who are temporarily-ablebodied. This suggests that all people will eventually experience disability in some way, such as losing their hearing as they age or developing some type of chronic illness.

[40] HEAL (Helping to Educate about Alternative Learning) is a student action group created by Luna while working at her home institutions University Learning Resource Center.

[41] Remediation pedagogies are often deeply imbued with a sense of student deficit, aiming to "fix" whatever program the students is deemed to have. Pedagogical models of composition grounded in deficit rely on a student who is constructed in a position of lack, and while CRL scholars have devoted substantial scholarship to critiquing such models, they persist in practice (Vidali, "Discourses" 42-43; Fox 2; Lu, "Conflict" 32). Students frequently represented according the skills they "lack," such as basic writers, ESL students, and students from low-income backgrounds, seem to have something in common with students with disabilities, namely their inability to perform at the same level as normative student populations.

[42] Helmers's works with Stephen North's concept of the "Basic Writing Story" in her analysis of composition testimonials. One of the central plot points of this Writing Story relies on the infliction of wounds on the basic writer (these wounds might be understood as classroom failures), and Helmers argues that composition testimonials function to provide evidence that "Although students lack, it is believed that they can be corrected out of their abnormality" (22). This element of redemption or transformation is, again, another parallel between the representations of basic writers and the representations of students with disabilities. Theorists in Disability Studies identify this concept as overcoming and connect its prevalence to the ablebodied desire for a return to normalcy.

[43] Again, this notion of student's right to their own experiences echoes SRTOL, as Heilker invokes in his response to Ann Jurecic's article on neurodiversity.

[44] For more on the "Nothing About Us Without Us" and the Disability Rights Movement, see James Charlton's *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*.

[45] In contrast to purposive sample, I did not elect to use probability sampling because I am not attempting to generalize my study results. Much of the history I provide is drawn from the electronic conversation that is captured in this chapter.

[46] The decision to increase my sample size resulted from an abundance of interest research participants and from my desire to increase data saturation, or the notion that qualitative researchers should seek out enough data until they begin to "see and hear the same things over and over again" (Merriam 219). I capped at 35 due to labor issues, financial constraints for compensating participants, and in order to ensure the timely completion of my dissertation.

[47] During my time as a graduate student at the University of Oklahoma, I had the opportunity to serve as an assistant to the Director of First-Year Composition as a graduate research assistant. During this time, I also had the chance to tutor a deaf student from Nigeria. During my time working with this student, I attempted the advocate on his behalf to the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Due to issues of stigma and pride, this student elected not to request accommodations such as Computer-Aided Real-time Transcription (CART) for his English composition class. After I encouraged him to do so, he agreed that it might benefit him and requested said accommodations from the DRC. They denied his request as it was made mid-semester. When I

approached the DRC to question this denial, they advised me that their decision was based on staffing, scheduling, and labor issues. After more pushing (and some considerable tension), they agreed to arrange accommodations for the student. That incident marked my first interaction with DRC staff. The following year (still working as a GRA in FYC), I revised our department's boilerplate accommodations statement, emphasizing teacher-student negotiations and diverse learning styles. During a face-to-face meeting with DRC staff regarding my changes (a meeting I requested), they expressed stark resistance to my changes, arguing that students would take advantage of such rhetoric. It is with this history in place that I embarked upon my recruitment process in the fall of 2012.

[48] While some qualitative research lists participants according to their specific disabilities, I wanted to represent participants more collectively. Put another way, I am trying to avoid as much individuation as possible. I do not want my study to be about what works for individual disabilities or for individual students. Rather, I am hoping that my study speaks about disability, access, and inclusion more generally.

[49] These disabilities are named as the participants themselves described them.

[50] Allowing participants to select their own pseudonym marked my status as a novice researcher. Some participants selected names that were already selected (and I had failed to notice this during the time of pseudonym selection) and some wanted to select a name that obscured or even changed their gender.

[51] I would consider this part of my own process as a variation on what Saldana might call "analytic memo writing," or reflecting on the interview data. I did mine during the interview itself because I process information best through writing and being able to

take notes during the interview helped me process the information as I was taking it in. This process also enabled me to refer back to those notes as I was transcribing (in order to see if I could understand something the participant said that I might otherwise have labeled indecipherable) and to refer back to in order to brainstorm codes, categories, and the like. I chose this method instinctually.

[52] My initial interaction with the transcripts might be best explained as "comments" that were eventually refined into codes. Every comment did not emerge as a code, nor did every code necessarily derive from a comment.

[53] In reporting findings from the survey, I define "significant majority" as 60% or greater. I define "vast majority" as 80% or higher.

[54] I am very grateful to Bill Condon and Mary Sheridan for helping me think through the cross-context relevance of this study.

[55]It is absolutely useful to understand the disability identity, diagnoses, and demographic information for the students that I interviewed. Throughout this chapter, however, I mention them by name and—for the most part—avoid describing them by their disability. In writing up the analysis, I wanted to avoid introducing each of my participants by name and diagnosis because I felt that to do so might negatively reinforce the idea of their disability entirely defining their identity and also that it might further entrench notions of disability-specific pedagogies. Disability-specific pedagogies are instructional approaches that target a specific disability type. For example, one such approach might list a number of strategies that work well for helping dyslexics write better. Yet another might suggest a list of strategies for helping students on the autism spectrum better participate in class discussion. Access-centered pedagogy

should deliberately avoid strategies that isolate and work instead toward re-envisioning access as an approach that benefits all students. To focus on individual disabilities works to systematize the retrofit: apply an accommodation to a particular disability and all's well. Access-centered pedagogy focuses on systems, entire conceptual frameworks of pedagogy rather than on individuals. Avoiding an over-emphasis on each participants' disability and/or diagnosis is my effort to move away from the individualization that permeates accommodation models. At times, I do include their disability if the quote or comment requires specificity of context in order to make sense. All that said, I have included an appendix that readers may reference at any time if they'd like additional information about any of my participants. This appendix offers readers information about each participant's gender, race, disability, veteran status, age, enrollment status at time of interview, and major.

[56] Certain verbal placeholders specific to spoken language have been omitted for ease of reading. These placeholders include words such as "uh," "like," and "ya know."

[57] I do not mean to assert that disclosure is a required component of a student's responsibility for access in a shared community. The section in this chapter on adopting conventional accommodations as common pedagogical practice helps to illuminate the ways in which demands for disclosure are negated by pre-emptive instructional approaches.

[58] The instructor/faculty survey indicated that a significant majority of instructors (69%) in the department would willingly accommodate without documentation from disability services.

[59] Walls, Schopieray, and DeVoss offer *hacking* as a strategic tool for examining the ways in which certain issues of space—"restricted movement, impaired ability to collaborate, sensory disruption"—might be negotiated or disrupted (269).

[60] At my current institution, efforts to post syllabi and other course materials onto course-management pages have recently increased in response to university-wide "Green Initiatives." This is no doubt a wonderful development. It makes me wonder what types of progress might result if university administration mandated an "Access Initiative."

[61] Such a statement would need to be included on the syllabus and articulated in such a way that students understand that audio is never to be duplicated or distributed for any reason and that to do so may result in legal prosecution. This statement might also stipulate that a privacy contract must be signed by any student who wishes to audio-record. This contract could be signed with both parties present and would provide further opportunity for the instructor to emphasize the importance of ensuring rights to their own intellectual property. This type of openness to accessible uptake for all students (regardless of "documented" disability) provides the added benefit of increasing opportunities for discussing intellectual property with students.

[62] Text-to-speech software (e.g. Natural Reader) might be a potential investment for writing programs, writing centers, or writing studios—made available to all students for their composing needs and eliminating *exclusive* reliance on documented disability to access such programs.

[63] Consider web design for an example to elucidate this point. Many times, excessively stylistic web pages are inaccessible to persons with disabilities. Alternative text is not

provided for non-text images. Captions are not provided for videos. Examples of inaccessible web design abound. WebAIM at Utah State University provides excellent resources for improving web accessibility.

[64] Shannon Walters's article "Toward an Accessible Pedagogy: Dis/ability, Multimodality, and Universal Design in the Technical Communication Classroom" offers a teacher-researcher exploration of a class in which she invited students (primarily non-disabled) to experiment with assistive technologies such as Dragon. Her study reported that her students expressed several ways in which assistive technologies such as Dragon would be beneficial to their composing processes (441).

[65] For a summary of empirical studies of writing anxiety, see Michael W. Smith's *Reducing Writing Apprehension*.

[66] I am not endorsing these (problematic) categorizations of anxiety, nor am I assuming these distinctions are fixed or stable. I'm merely trying to point out the different ways of conceptualizing how students "have" anxiety.

[67] It is important to note that while I'm pointing to the tacit dimensions of the linkage between dis-ability and pathology in Rose's work, he thoroughly attends to such connections in his own work, particularly in "The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University," in which he explicates the historic origins of the term "remedial," itself also linked with pathology, disease, and deficit.

[68] Conferencing is not the only site or manner through which teachers might increase intimacy in the student-teacher relationship, but in my own experience as a teacher, the face-to-face sit-down is definitely the most compelling venue for such development. Also, expressing faith in student's ability is not necessarily equitable to expression of

praise. An instructor might note an error or make a suggestion while also expressing faith in the student's ability to revise, learn, or grow. However, in my opinion, an expression of praise is very powerful—especially for a student with a disability—because they have so often been told what they need to "fix," what they're doing "wrong," and how they should "get better."

[69] The material demands associated with both basic writers and students with disabilities serve as a compelling parallel between the two groups. Horner writes that basic writers "worthiness for college admission was constantly challenged, and [their] demands on institutional resources were constantly lamented and scrutinized" (*"The 'Birth'"* 14). Vidali complicates this further by critiquing Patricia Dunn's work (specifically *Learning Re-Abled: The Learning Disability Controversy and Composition Studies*) for "castigating" basic writers in an effort to justify the needs of students with disabilities. According to Vidali, "In the face of scant institutional resources, perhaps such competition among marginalized groups is expected, but in another sense it is surprising, given that the low-income and/or students of color who traditionally fill basic writing classes have a longer and more productive history of gaining access to colleges and universities than do students with disabilities" ("Discourses" 50).

[70] At my current institution, we have several computer-mediated classrooms, within which set seating charts are mandatory in order to enable administrators to track illicit browsing or damaged components back to a particular user's log-in. In this example, flexibility of seating arrangement is trumped by the demands of institutional surveillance.

[71] Obviously, there may be (many) environmental factors of the classroom that are seemingly out the teacher's control. Issues such as lighting for example may be difficult or even impossible to remedy. If lighting is an issue, teachers might request a different classroom, hold some class periods at alternate locations (e.g. at the writing center or even outside), or allow students to wear sunglasses in class. Teachers should consider brainstorming accessibility challenges with students, fellow teachers, writing program administrators, department heads, classroom scheduling, and any others that may have a stake or a say in such issues. Ideally, an administrative or departmental committee and/or initiative should be set up to offer recourse and to work proactively to address issues of access on campus. For one example of such a committee, see University of California, Davis's Disability Advisory Committee.

[72] Marie commented on the space of the DRC, stating that "the room that the DRC is in is really small and they are like cubicle type things but sometimes it's a day where no one else is taking a test but there might be one day where literally every cubicle is packed and it's just such a small room to have that many people in there. Like the last test I took last week, I was like sitting on this little end table with a keyboard on the desk. The rooms could be improved. They could be bigger…it's not good at all." Rusty, a law student, told me that his reduced-distraction space is at the law school and is very nice. He said, "It's a conference room where I can spread out all my papers, scratch paper, and what have you, and go to work." Rachel also mentioned that the DRC hours are inhibitive for access, saying, "I can go over there and use the speech dictation software on their computer but since you can only go over there from 8:00am to

5:00pm, like you have to do that. And I work mostly at night. So I haven't really gotten much from them."

[73] When I attend disability-centered panels each year at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the manner of acceptable behavior in those spaces is dramatically inclusive. It makes me feel so proud to be a part of that community. Panelists usually announce in the beginning that people should feel free to clear their throats, stretch, move around, depart, do whatever their body needs to do. As a result, people are openly stimming, stretching, lying on the floor, moving about the room, and so on. Self-stimulatory behavior (stimming) and/or ticking (sudden, repetitive motor movement) are "normal" and "acceptable" behaviors in these settings, and—as a result of the explicit efforts of panelists and/or facilitators to promote inclusive spaces—often go unnoticed. This is an example of the type of framing I'm encouraging.

[74] It's important to note here that I'm not suggesting some sort of voyeuristic disclosure session, but rather for students to voluntarily provide information about their material experiences that might help instructors and faculty develop their understanding of the types of systematic, institutional, and cultural conditions to which students with disabilities are subject.

[75] This quote is excerpted from Cheryl Glenn's *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, page 4.

[76] For examples of the association between oppression and piteous regard of disabled people, see Joseph Shaprio's *No Pity: People with Disabilites Forging and New Civil Rights Movement* and/or Paul Longmore's "'Heaven's Special Child': The Making of Poster Children."

[77] I am not attempting to generalize these rhetorics to all experiences of disability regardless of context. I do hope, however, that my analysis of these rhetorical commonplaces offers suggested strategies for improving the ways in which we—as teachers, administrators, and rhetorical scholars—understand, talk about, and position disability in our own minds, classrooms, and relationships.

[78] 2013 marked the 50-year anniversary of the publication of *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*.

[79] For more examples of this critique, see Frank 106, Mest 117-125, and Titchkosky 204.

[80] Joseph Shapiro's book *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement* has a chapter titled, "Tiny Tims, SuperCrips, and the End of Pity."