

COMPOSING DISABLED FACULTY

2013-2014 CCCC Research Initiative Application

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Brief Overview of Project

We are investigating the experiences of disabled faculty in higher-education settings, focusing specifically on the rhetorical event of disability disclosure. We understand disclosure as a multi-layered process constituted through the verbal, visual and temporal interactions of a rhetorical situation, rather than as a one-time, verbal utterance such as “I am disabled.” Our study uses mixed methods: surveying, interviewing, and review of autobiographical writings by disabled faculty.

Definition of Project and Research Questions

The way disabled faculty compose themselves and are composed by others is complex, and engages questions that have long occupied CCCC scholars with regard to issues of identity and positionality in classrooms and professional exchanges. For example, some might assume that the disability of a deaf faculty member is easily ascertained because she often and willingly tells others that she is deaf, wears visible hearing aids, has a voice that broadcasts the fact that she hears differently, and works with sign language interpreters. And yet, despite the apparent obviousness of these signs of disability, this faculty member must negotiate complex rhetorical positions in which she has to explain, repeatedly and for various purposes and audiences, what her disability means in the workplace, and her students and colleagues will need to learn over time what sorts of gestures and situations may impede this faculty member’s access. In our analysis, we call this process of learning and familiarization “disability literacy.” Although we have conducted only six pilot interviews thus far, disability literacy has already emerged as one of the major themes in disabled faculty members’ narratives. Adding urgency to our project is the fact that the stigma attached to disability disclosure intersects with other factors affecting faculty identity management, including race/ethnicity, gender, rank, discipline, and a host of others.

The following research questions ground our study:

1. What linguistic, rhetorical, and interactional choices are involved in a faculty member’s disclosure of disability?
2. In what ways are disabilities perceptible—or not perceptible—to others?
3. How is disability perceptibility accomplished, avoided and/or negotiated by faculty in various locations?
4. How does a richer understanding of disability perceptibility productively impact the professional and social environments of higher education? That is, how might policies and/or professional practices adjust in response to a deeper, broader and more nuanced understanding of disability perceptibility?

Significance of Topic and Gap in Knowledge

To date, research across the disciplines with and about disabled faculty has mostly been conducted in two different modes: 1) large-scale, quantitative studies that count the number of disabled faculty but offer little sense of their experiences; and 2) small-scale case studies that offer rich detail but often do not provide connections to other studies or a sense of how a particular case fits into the larger picture. An example of the first kind of research comes from

the National Science Foundation (NSF), which tracks disabled employees in STEM disciplines and classifies faculty in the sweeping terms of “with disability” and “without disability.” Examples of the second kind of research come from the edited collections *Disabled Faculty and Staff in a Disabling Society* (Vance, 2007) and *Illness in the Academy* (Myers, 2007), both of which include numerous first-person accounts and small studies, but whose individual pieces generally don’t make connections to a larger aggregate picture.

To help fill this gap, and following the urgings of CCCC scholars to design studies that are both richly detailed and data-driven (Haswell, 2006; Jamieson and Howard, 2012; Lindquist, 2012), we are gathering mixed-methods data that will enable us to trace relationships and convergences across several data sets, while also connecting our data to other related studies (such as the NSF’s). Statistical analysis of our survey, now underway, informs our work on the interview portion of our study. For example, the survey reveals that over half of respondents (all of whom self-identify as disabled or as having disability issues) do not know what office or person they should approach at their university to request accommodations. That surprising insight has led us to inquire about requests for accommodation in our interviews—not only asking how such conversations unfold, but how a disabled faculty member might figure out where to go in the first place. Similarly, our extensive literature review of research with/by disabled faculty also informs our interviewing process. Bringing together the many anecdotal accounts in Vance (2007) and Myers (2007) indicates that the issue of disabilities being “hidden” or “invisible” is a topic of great importance to many, if not the majority, of disabled faculty. Thus, we are developing the concept of “disability perceptibility” to theorize this issue, and are paying particular attention to it in our interviews.

Our research joins a long tradition within CCCC of investigating the mechanisms by which students, faculty and staff gain (or are denied) access to the spaces and interfaces of higher education. We draw upon various explorations of access by CCCC researchers, including close studies of identity negotiation (Herrington and Curtis, 2000; LeCourt, 2004; Villanueva, 1993) and examinations of working conditions (Bousquet, Scott and Parascondola, 2004; Schell and Stock, 2001; Strickland, 2011). We also draw upon the growing tradition of disability-studies research in composition/rhetoric (see, for example, Brueggemann, 1999; Dolmage, forthcoming; Palmeri, 2006; Vidali, 2009; Wilson & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2001). Taken together, these bodies of research highlight a powerful interest in identity negotiation and access. Yet most of the work by CCCC researchers investigating disability access has focused on students. Disabled faculty are in a very different position vis-à-vis the university than are students, not only because faculty are employees, but also because structures for handling accommodations and disability are very different for faculty. This is another of the gaps our study seeks to fill.

Our means of exploring identity negotiation and access builds on composition/rhetoric research that has focused on rhetorical situations composed by factors in addition to verbal speech or writing. Such research includes studies on silence and listening (Glenn, 2004; Ratcliffe, 2005; Reda, 2010), passing (Caughie, 1999; Dawkins, 2012), and multimodal communication (Dunn, 2001; Yergeau et al., 2013). We expand this stream of research through our development of a theory of access that attends to interactional micro-cues in the rhetorical situation. In this way we continue the trajectory begun by our previous research, which foregrounds theories of *marking* (Kerschbaum, 2012; forthcoming) and *kairotic space* (Price, 2011). Our analytic vantage points are infused by insights from disability studies research (Barnes, 2003; Price, 2012), sociolinguistic narrative analysis (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Ochs and

Capps, 2001), and digital research methods (Markham and Baym, 2009; Halbritter and Lindquist, 2012).

Our goal is not to “add” disability to research on access. Rather, we approach the topics of disability and disclosure intersectionally, asking about their roles in the larger “scene” (Halbritter and Lindquist, 2012) of rhetorical exchanges. For this reason, our methodology—particularly for interviews—is designed to capture the rich and multi-layered detail needed in order to fully understand how disability identity emerges through long-term, complex and recursive processes of disclosure.

Methodology

Composing Disabled Faculty involves three overlapping sets of data. However, this proposal requests funding to support collection and analysis of the second data set (interviews) only. We sketch all three sets here to provide background and clarity for the project overall. IRB approvals for all stages of the study are in hand. Spelman College is the IRB of record for the survey stage, and the University of Delaware for the interview stage.

- 1) An anonymous survey of faculty with mental-health histories, conducted in collaboration with researchers at Temple University. The survey window opened on November 1, 2012 and will close on October 31, 2013.
- 2) In-depth interviews with faculty who have disabilities of any/all kinds, conducted by Kerschbaum and Price. Six completed; target 20. We currently have 82 volunteers.
- 3) Published articles or memoirs by disabled faculty. These sources are being collected and analyzed by Kerschbaum and Price concurrently with interviewing.

The first data set, over 400 responses to an anonymous survey of faculty members with mental-health histories, is a joint project with the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion (<http://tucollaborative.org>). We focused the survey on mental health in part due to a sampling issue (faculty with mental-health histories are nearly unreachable except through anonymous recruitment), and in part because early plans for the study, designed by Price and the TU Collaborative in 2010-2011, were focused on mental disabilities only. When Kerschbaum joined the project in 2012, it expanded to include all kinds of disabilities, a decision that was supported by our initial analyses of survey data, which showed that many “physical” disabilities (such as multiple sclerosis) have powerful mental effects. Our findings from that stage are currently being analyzed and written up in collaboration with our Temple University partners.

The second data set, collected by Price and Kerschbaum only, involves in-depth qualitative interviews with faculty members with a wide range of different kinds of disabilities. We recruited participants for interviews through two primary means: by asking for volunteers at the end of the anonymous survey; and by posting a recruitment email on various faculty-oriented listservs, including WPA-L. As of October 2013, we have over 80 volunteers for interviews and have conducted six pilot interviews through various media (including face-to-face, Skype, and telephone). In deciding whom to interview, we are using diversity sampling (also called “maximum variation purposive sampling”) to gather narratives and experiences from as broad a range of disabled faculty as possible. To ensure the diversity of our interview population, we asked volunteers to complete an introductory questionnaire asking about factors including gender, race, age, faculty rank, department, type of institution, type of disability, and preference

for interview modality. “Diversity” in our sample means, in part, communication preference. For example, a faculty member with cerebral palsy whose voice can be difficult to understand may prefer in-person interactions where additional cues may facilitate communication, while a faculty member who has anxiety in social situations might prefer online and text-based modes of communicating, such as instant messaging or email.

Given the overwhelming response to our call for participants, we hope to extend the number of interviews beyond 20, and to conduct some follow-up interviews if needed. Indeed, inspired by Rebecca Moore Howard’s and Sandra Jamieson’s work on The Citation Project, we are hoping that our mixed-methods study might become a large, ongoing project like theirs. However, this proposal requests funding just for the next feasible step (reaching 20 interviews), after which we will seek further funding if more interviews seem warranted.

Innovative Aims and Approach

Addressing the topic of disability in composition/rhetoric is not all that unusual; nor, as of the last decade or so, is taking a disability-studies stance in CCCC research. What is unusual about our study is its scope, mixed-methods design, and overall aim to create a working resource base for all research on disabled faculty. As researchers, we are uniquely situated to create a framework for research with and about disabled faculty, due to our long experience in the field of disability studies, and our large network of contacts with disabled scholars. For example, through visits to various universities to talk about disability and higher education, Price has gained access to unpublished and semi-published studies on disabled faculty that can help us deepen our findings and analyses. One such study is in progress within the California Polytechnic system; another was conducted as an in-house initiative at North Dakota State University (see http://www.ndsu.edu/forward/people/women_with_disabilities_task_force). In addition, we have conducted a comprehensive literature review that encompasses most of the existing research on disabled faculty; there is no other study that brings together this large cross-disciplinary and often anecdotal store of knowledge. Finally, through our collaboration with the Temple University Collaborative, we have been able to implement our survey, analyze it both quantitatively and qualitatively, and use its results to inform the interview phase of our study. The framework we create will gather existing knowledge on disabled faculty; will add new information to that store from our own survey and interview work; and, perhaps most important to the larger situation of composition/rhetoric research, will provide a clear framework and set of themes pertaining to the experiences of disabled faculty so that future researchers will have a solid and well-informed foundation on which to build.

Our research design departs from other work on disability (including much of the disability-themed research in CCCC) because we understand disability not as a deficit that must be accommodated or “made up for” within a specific context (such as an interview), but rather as a unique source of knowledge. In this, we are using an approach that Price has called an “interdependent research paradigm” in the article “Disability Studies Methodology” from *Practicing Research in Writing Studies* (2012). This paradigm assumes that there is no “normal” or default setting for any data-collection event such as an interview; rather, every setting must be (re-)designed according to the needs and abilities of its participants. Participatory design (see Spinuzzi, 2005) and action research influence this approach.

Finally, our positions as researchers make our study unusual in a way that will be of interest to other CCCC researchers seeking to learn from it. Kerschbaum is deaf, while Price

experiences both physical and mental chronic illness. Our disabilities provide us with very different knowledge bases, and through them we bring different strengths and skill sets to interview situations. For example, autistic interview participants may prefer to avoid extensive eye contact, and consequently would be likely to be more comfortable interacting with Price, whose hearing allows her to hold an oral conversation without actually looking at the other person, and who can draw generally upon her experiential knowledge of what factors might cause overstimulation. In turn, Kerschbaum can conduct interviews using sign language, a move that enables signing participants to fully access the interview situation (see Zaurov, 2012). In other words, and in keeping with our disability-studies methodology, we regard our own disabilities as ways of being in the world rather than as deficits.

How This Project Supports the CCCC Mission

As the theme of the 2014 CCCC conference (Open | Source(s), Access, Futures) illustrates, access—of all kinds—is a deeply important question for CCCC going forward. As a strand of CCCC’s conversations on access, the themes of disability and disclosure bring together critical issues of identity, communication, pedagogy, and policy. Following Adam Banks’s call in *Digital Griots* (2011), we are aiming to produce a study that opens the many possibilities for what access might mean when understood intersectionally and rhetorically in higher education. This supports the CCCC mission of advancing rhetorical and communicative knowledge, as well as enhancing the conditions for teaching/learning and professional development.

Although our project is still in relatively early stages, there have been indications that it will also support the CCCC mission to act as an advocate for language and literacy education, particularly by gaining visibility with national and/or government agencies. The conference we are co-organizing at the University of Delaware, “Disability Disclosure in/and Higher Education” (<http://www.udel.edu/csd/conference/>), will feature a keynote address by Kathleen Martinez, Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Office of Disability Employment Policy. In addition, our work with the Temple University Collaborative has led to a new initiative funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) in which we will create a training guide and workshop to help universities become more accessible for faculty with mental disabilities. (See “Outcomes and Delivery” for more detail.)

Explanation of Budget Items

Our budget for this project seeks funding to conduct the 14 remaining interviews we have planned, including travel to nine participants who have requested in-person interviews, as well as research materials for videotaping and recording interviews. Travel costs have been specifically estimated for each of the nine trips, and the budget chart shows the median price for each expense category (e.g., flight, train trip, etc.). Conducting these interviews requires equipment for video and audio-recording as well as digital media storage, for which we are also requesting funds. Currently we are sharing a single video camera that is more than five years old and limited in capacity. For each of us to have access to a better-quality video camera and recording equipment would greatly enhance our analytic process and transcription efforts. Further, we seek to facilitate our analytic process by hiring professional transcriptionists to generate transcripts of our remaining 14 interviews.

The budget also includes a request for funds to support our ongoing collaboration via in-

person visits. We hope to conduct five in-person work sessions in either Newark, DE or Atlanta, GA over the next 18 months. Having already conducted three such intensive in-person work sessions (largely funded out of our own pockets), we have found that they are invaluable to our research process. It may be relevant to note here that neither the telephone nor Skype are accessible means of communication for our collaborative exchanges. We are both very comfortable conducting instant-message meetings, but we have found that the particular energy and productivity achieved during face-to-face meetings cannot be replicated through other means.

Investigators' Credentials

Margaret Price is the author of *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (University of Michigan, 2011), which won the Outstanding Book Award from CCCC. *Mad at School* shows that consideration of mental disability as a central factor in academic life challenges the very premises on which higher education is based, including beliefs about productivity, rationality, and communicative ability, and it reports on a small experimental study with independent scholars that led directly to the questions about accessible and interdependent research explored in the present study. Price has also written about disability, rhetoric, and methodology for *Practicing Research in Writing Studies* (Powell & Takayoshi, 2012), *CCC* ("Accessing Disability"), *Profession* ("Languages"), *Disability Studies Quarterly* ("Imagining Access"), and the *Journal of Cultural and Literary Disability Studies* ("Her Pronouns Wax and Wane"). With Kerschbaum, she has collaborated on a CoverWeb for *Kairos* on the topic of disability access in digital spaces, as well as an article for *Profession* titled "Faculty Members, Accommodation, and Access in Higher Education." Price also worked with graduate and undergraduate students to create the "Disability Studies" annotated bibliography for CompPile (<http://comppile.org/wpa/bibliographies/index.php>). She serves on the Committee for Disability Issues for CCCC and is a co-founder of the Disability Studies SIG (now Disability Studies Standing Group), as well as the coordinator of the mentoring program for the Standing Group. In addition, she serves on the CCCC Executive Committee as well as the LGBTQ Committee. At her home institution, Spelman College, she teaches in the Writing Minor, convenes the Writing Committee, and serves on the advisory board for the college's Office of Disability Services.

Stephanie Kerschbaum is the author of *Toward a New Rhetoric of Difference*, which is forthcoming in 2014 from NCTE's Studies in Writing and Rhetoric series. In it, she frames identity categories and negotiations as dynamic, relational, and emergent within particular contexts; this vantage point entails challenging some of the traditional ways that identities have been studied and framed in writing studies and in diversity rhetorics. Her article "Avoiding the Difference Fixation," first published in *CCC*, was reprinted in *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*, 7th ed. She has written and collaborated on several articles and essays on disability and the academy appearing in *Academe* ("Access"), *Kairos* ("Multimodality"); *Profession* ("Faculty," forthcoming); and *Rhetoric Review* ("On Rhetorical," forthcoming). Kerschbaum serves on the CCCC Committee for Disability Issues in College Composition and is an active participant in the CCCC Disability Studies Standing Group as well as the CCCC DSSG mentoring program; she has also served on the CCCC Committee for Preparing College Teachers of Writing. At her home institution, the University of Delaware, she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in writing and rhetoric, is a Faculty Scholar affiliated with the Center for the Study of Diversity and serves on the Executive Board of the UD Women's Caucus.

Outcomes and Delivery

1. A monograph (working title *Disabled Faculty: Disclosure, Identity, Access*). The University of Michigan Press and Lynne Rienner Press have each requested the proposal for this project; we plan to submit to Michigan first. The following draft chapter titles are based on themes emerging from our pilot interviews. They are supplied here to give a sense of our approach to our data, but we expect that they will be revised as the next 14 (and possibly more) interviews are completed.
 - “Confronting Myths: Bringing Disability Literacy to the Workplace and the Classroom”
 - “Passing and Covering: Why ‘Coming Out’ Isn’t the Metaphor We Need”
 - “Burdening and Helping: The Emotional and Economic ‘Costs’ of Disability in Higher Education”
 - “Interdependence and Community: Toward Participatory Design in the Higher Education Workplace”
2. An article reporting quantitative and qualitative findings from our survey of faculty with mental-health histories. This article is currently being drafted in collaboration with members of the Temple University Collaborative.
3. Two chapters for *Crippling the Computer*, a collection edited by Melanie Yergeau and Elizabeth Brewer, under consideration by the Computers and Composition Digital Press. Both Kerschbaum and Price were personally solicited to share proposals for this collection; we are each writing a separate chapter about an aspect of accessible online research. Our proposals are currently with the editors.
4. An international conference titled “Disability Disclosure in/and Higher Education” to be held October 25-27, 2013 at the University of Delaware (<http://www.udel.edu/csd/conference/>). This conference features a keynote address by Assistant Secretary of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy Kathleen Martinez; presentations by CCCC scholars including Jay Dolmage, Amy Vidali, Kristin Lindgren, and Shannon Walters; and a fully accessible “multi-modal hall” (our take on the traditional “poster session”) featuring an exhibit by the creators of the Accessible Icon Project (<http://accessibleicon.org>). Kerschbaum obtained the funding for this conference, and she and Price are co-organizing.
5. Two workshops. The first, funded by NIDRR, is focused on fostering accessibility for faculty with mental-health issues, and will include a written training guide. The second is focused on fostering accessibility for disabled faculty in general and has been requested by the University of Delaware. The training guide funded by NIDRR will be available to visitors to the Temple University Collaborative’s web site. The workshop requested by the University of Delaware will be an interactive session designed to foster dialogue and create manageable, concrete steps for administrators and faculty interesting in creating a more inclusive campus environment, with particular attention to disabled employees (including faculty).

Timeline

This proposal outlines an 18-month period (May 1, 2014 through October 31, 2015). Six out of our 20 planned interviews are complete as of the start of this schedule. The timeline shown here assumes we will receive release time from our universities and/or from other granting agencies. If release time is not forthcoming, the writing stage will be extended. However, the activity for which this proposal seeks funding (completing 20 interviews), will remain unchanged.

- **May 2014-September 2014:** Conduct, transcribe, and begin analysis of 14 interviews using a variety of modalities. Seven interviews will be conducted by Kerschbaum and seven by Price; some will involve travel, to meet participants' requests for face-to-face interaction. Transcription of interviews will be supported by professional transcriptionists, but will also involve the co-researchers going through each transcript and adding interactional detail (for example, gestures, pauses, interruptions). Some preliminary analysis (especially to guide any necessary adjustment of interview procedures) will be conducted during this period.
- **October 2014-February 2015:** Intensive analysis and writing period. We will do a second round of coding across all of the interviews, continuing analysis until we reach saturation. (That is, coding will be considered complete when we have a usable master list of codes that accounts for all data, and when thematic categories have been determined.) Concurrently with coding, but more intensively toward the end of this period, Kerschbaum and Price will each draft one chapter of the book manuscript. Chapter topics will be organized around themes that emerge through the analytical process. Thus, for example, a particular chapter will not focus on a certain disability, or group of people; rather, it will identify a common theme (such as "burden") and discuss ways that this theme works intersectionally across differently situated individuals.
- **March-May 2015:** Kerschbaum and Price will revise the first two chapters, engaging in the collaborative process we've used for previous projects (see narrative for more detail on our collaborative process). In addition, we will prepare and submit a proposal to the University of Michigan Press. Because the press has requested this proposal, and because of Price's previous publication record with the University of Michigan, we hope to secure a contract on the basis of our proposal and two sample chapters.
- **June 2015-August 2015:** Each researcher will draft another book chapter (making four total, and completing the manuscript except for the introduction). As with the first two chapters, we will focus each chapter's topic on an important theme that emerges through the analytical process, and will revise and complete the chapters through a close collaborative process.
- **September 2015-October 2015:** Collaboratively draft book introduction. Prepare full manuscript for submission. Target date for delivery of full manuscript to publisher is October 31, 2015.

Budget

A) Travel to conduct 9 interviews: various locations across the U.S. and Canada

<u>Item</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Total</u>
Airfare (for seven trips)	7	\$350	\$2,450
Car rental (for three trips)	2 days/trip x 3	\$120	\$360
Airport shuttles (for two trips)	2 roundtrip tickets x 2	\$50	\$100
Lodging (for seven trips)	2 nights/trip x 7	\$100	\$1,400
Food (per diem)	2 days/trip x 8	\$50	\$800
Mileage (for one trip)	\$0.565/mile x 20 miles	\$11.30	\$11.30
Train ticket (for one trip)	1	\$12	\$12
		Subtotal:	\$5,133.30

B) Travel between collaborators' home institutions for meetings (approximately bi-monthly)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Total</u>
Airfare	5	\$350	\$1,750
		Subtotal:	\$1,750

C) Hardware and Software

<u>Item</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Total</u>
Panasonic V201 HD Video Camera	2	\$250	\$500
16GB Memory Card	2	\$40	\$80
Carrying Case	2	\$21	\$42
Tripod	2	\$30	\$60
2TB External Hard Drive	2	\$130	\$260
Skype Call Recorder (2 year subscription)	1	\$60	\$60
		Subtotal:	\$1,002

D) Transcription

<u>Item</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Total</u>
Interview transcription	1500 minutes (25 hours)	\$1.49/minute	\$2,235
		Subtotal:	\$2,235

Total Amount Requested = \$10,120.30

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