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Crippling Time in the College Composition Classroom

This article shares findings from a qualitative study on the experiences of students with disabilities in college-level writing and writing-intensive classrooms. I argue that normative conceptions of time and production can negatively constrain student performance, and I offer the concept of crip time (borrowed from disability theorists and disability activists) as an alternative pedagogical framework.

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. Timed writing is often used as a tool to generate discussion, to do quick evaluations or comprehension checks, or for practices of invention. A core principle of writing pedagogy, the “scaffolded” assignment, relies upon time, having some sense of pacing and sequence. Yet, to regard the (seemingly) inevitable boundaries of time that mediate student experience and student production as de facto standard obscures the n supports such strictures. In other words, we must pay attention to how we construct time; otherwise, we may enforce normative time frames upon

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students whose experiences and processes exist in contradiction to such compulsory measures of time. In the following essay, I explore how the temporal conditions of production in the writing classroom often enable these normative assumptions to go unchecked. Such omission may disenfranchise students whose bodies and minds don't adhere to expectations for commonplace pace. While my focus here is on the experiences of students with disabilities, the target of my analysis—normative assumptions of time and production—should resonate across many discourses in the discipline, including implications for materialist perspectives on student performance and conceptualizations of writing as ideological work, as well as for other marginalized identity markers. Ultimately, this essay aims to critically reconceptualize time in the pedagogical practice of writing instructors, and I draw on the experiences of students with disabilities in order to sketch the possibilities of an alternative approach, a concept I borrow from disability theorists and activists: *crip time*.

Most of the accommodations for disabled students in higher education are heavily tied to test taking: extended time on exams and reduced-distraction environments, for example. If not directly tied to test taking, common accommodations are designed for lecture-based classrooms: note-takers, carbon copy paper, and the like. In discussion- and process-based writing classrooms, most of these accessibility measures do not necessarily apply. Jay Dolmage has warned, however, that commending ourselves for designing classrooms where accommodation is unnecessary functions as a “defeat device” and that such self-congratulatory attitudes may actually allow us to “fail completely to consider what the proper, useful retrofits and accommodations need to be in our classrooms” (“Ableist” 4). Scholars working at the intersection of disability studies (DS) and composition studies have a longstanding history of interrogating access in writing classrooms, working both within and against traditional models of accommodations. The publication of the 2001 article “Becoming Visible” marked a key moment when our discipline began to purposefully attend to issues of disability and access in college writing (Brueggemann et al.). During the following decade, several scholars responded to this call for attention, attending to issues such as learning disability discourse (Feldmeier White) and alternative assistance efforts within writing programs (Barber-Fendley and Hamel).

The application and presence of disability theory gained traction in our discipline, as evidenced by the work of scholars such as Patricia Dunn,

Margaret Price, Amy Vidali, and Jay Dolmage. The notable publication of *Disability and the Teaching of Writing* (Lewiecki-Wilson and Brueggemann) in 2008, much like “Becoming Visible,” marked a pivotal moment for the application of disability to composition pedagogy, and many of the scholars highlighted above are excerpted in the collection. Taken together, these scholars suggest that we need increased awareness and application of disability (as identity marker, as critical modality, and as programmatic responsibility). More recently, Shannon Walters’s *Rhetorical Touch: Disability, Identification, Haptics* and Jay Dolmage’s *Disability Rhetoric* explored the ways in which rhetorical theory can be meaningfully enriched by accounting for disability and disabled ways of knowing. In similar fashion, the *Kairos* web text “Multimodality in Motion” brought disability perspectives to bear on multimodal composing, arguing that “multimodality as it is commonly used implies an ableist understanding of the human composer” (Yergeau et al.). Efforts to more fully take disability into account challenge some of our field’s most deeply held assumptions about normalcy, ability, and pedagogy.

Yet, while the contributions of DS scholarship to our field are substantial, their impact (or lack thereof) on the classroom experiences of disabled students is not well documented. The data available on accommodation and accessibility experiences of students in higher education emerge primarily from the social sciences (see, for example, Salzer et al.; Barnard-Brak et al.; Lombardi and Murray). Therefore, my own research hopes to both draw on and support the rich body of scholarship in the disability/writing studies nexus by seeking out the perspectives of disabled students in college writing and writing-intensive classrooms.

While the futility of common accommodations served as the initial “problem” my research agenda sought to address, as I progressed through the design of a research project to confront that question, it occurred to me that inventing “new” accommodations for writing classrooms might only serve to uphold an accommodation system that is heavily informed by the medical and legal models of disability: individual-based fix-its applied to specific students in specific situations. Scholars such as Dolmage (“Mapping”) and Dunn (*Talking*) have forwarded forceful critiques of such approaches and offered alternative pedagogical frameworks such as the use of universal design and multiple literacies. Thus, I aimed to explore how conceptual frameworks emerging from DS and from disability communities might productively reshape the philosophies and values of a

college writing classroom. Such work is extraordinarily complex because unlike some other pedagogical approaches, it is beholden to powerful external forces. That is to say, the instructor's will may be at the mercy of a larger legalistic framework: institutional compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. While it may seem counterintuitive to suggest that pedagogical work aiming for access runs contrary to the administration of campus accommodation services, the trouble lies in the moment a disability studies-centered pedagogy invites ad hoc accommodations or improvisational relationships between instructor and disabled students. Nevertheless, the argument I offer here draws on theoretical perspectives from DS, namely crip time and compulsory able-bodiedness, in order to forward a pedagogical approach to (re)conceiving time in college writing classrooms. I share findings from a qualitative research study that solicited perspectives on access from disabled students in writing classrooms at a large midwestern research university in an effort to interpret and expose the normative underpinnings of college writing pedagogy, as well as to imagine new possibilities for excavating such ableist undertones from our conceptualization of student performance.

Crippling Time

A consideration of time is a top concern for disability services, and while extended time on exams is one of the most frequently used accommodations, extended time on assignments is far less common. In fact, while working in the writing program at the university at which this study took place, I requested a meeting with campus disability services staff. 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 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," manipulative student seeking accommodation-as-advantage is a disability myth, a trope with deep rhetorical roots. In *Disability Rhetoric*, Dolmage taxonomizes the many myths that inform rhetorical constructions of disability, arguing, "We have always had disability myths, and these myths have always been rhetorically significant

and rhetorically contested” (11). The accommodation-as-advantage myth is important to keep in mind throughout this discussion, particularly in relation to the problematic and frequent rhetorical association between *extra* time and *unfair* advantage.

Study participants had considerable experiences to share that focused on their relationship to time; many expressed a desire for flexibility with

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deadlines and with processes of writing, along with a resistance to timed writing. This raises the question of whether 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, disabled students 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 disability culture that “refers to a flexible approach to normative time frames” (Price, *Mad* 62; see also Zola). 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). 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 able-bodiedness (27). Robert McRuer’s work on compulsory able-bodiedness, which is itself indebted to Adrienne Rich’s “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” heavily informs Kafer’s theorization of crip time.

Extending McRuer, 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 able-bodiedness as the ultimate, ever-desirable end. Crippling 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. The qualitative project explored in this essay draws on the perspectives of disabled students in an effort to engage in such inquiry.

Methodology: Nothing about Us without Us

I elected for a qualitative approach to this study because I wanted the perspectives of students themselves to inform any argument I intended to make regarding the improvement of access for disabled students in college writing classrooms. In “Disability Studies Methodology: Explaining Ourselves to Ourselves,” Price asserts that “[DS] lacks a unified methodology” (159), and she reviews two decades of DS research in order to propose “four areas of productive tension—contact zones—that both characterize and are given particular shape by DS methodology” (160): access, activism, identification, and representation (165). Disability researchers (like many qualitative researchers) are deeply resistant to “speaking for” participants in a given study, and critical self-reflection is paramount to testing the limitations of our positionality as researchers.

One such example of said reflection is offered by Brenda Jo Brueggemann, when she reports on a “crisis of representation” she experienced when struggling toward publishing the findings of a qualitative project conducted at Gallaudet University. Chronicling these efforts in the article “Still-Life: Representations and Silence in the Participant-Observer Role,” she provided a cautionary tale for the fallout of the choices we make as we begin to speak for or about students. She explained, “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). More recently, Shannon Walters likewise reflects the necessity of foregrounding disabled voices and perspectives and the concomitant critical self-reflexivity required. In her case study work with two students who self-identified as having Asperger syndrome, Walters reflected that in her own practice of listening to the recordings from her interviews, she became more aware of her “own positionality and neurotypical standpoint” (“Toward” 344). In a later publication, Brueggeman observed, “What we say and do and believe about disability suddenly begins to be what we say and do and believe about ourselves” (“Enabling” 794).

Price's own self-reflection likewise revealed a "crisis of representation" related to "a quandary on [her] part about how to respect [her participant's] views while also acting effectively as her teacher—not to mention as the researcher who would represent her" ("Disability" 177). Other disability/composition scholars such as Paul Heilker likewise warn of the dangers and pitfalls of "speaking for." Heilker—discussing our discipline's interrogation of neurodiversity—emphasized the ethical demand for soliciting the perspectives of students themselves, 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" (Heilker 320). He reflected poignantly that "we are all guilty here of speaking for, about, and through the people on the spectrum rather than with them" (320).

For scholar-researchers such as Brueggemann and Price, methodological approaches to any study on disability must be keenly sensitive to issues of representation. "Nothing about Us without Us" (see Charlton) is one of the most powerful mantras of the disability rights movement. Thus, the perspectives of disabled students must be included or, better yet, foregrounded in all discussions of pedagogies aimed at improving access and inclusion. My own study attempts to temper the emergence of a "crisis of representation" by grounding my findings in the voices of the students I interviewed, drawing from their experiences, perspectives, and suggestions in order to offer innovative pedagogical approaches that both acknowledge the need for accommodations and attempt to reimagine access in ways that resist the "tyranny of the norm" (Davis 6).

The initial study design called for interviews with twenty students with registered disabilities, but due to an abundance of interest the number eventually increased to thirty-five student participants, both registered and unregistered.¹ Using purposive sampling in my recruiting process, I conducted interviews with students from a wide range of disciplines (both undergraduate and graduate) as well as from a wide range of disabilities.² Most of the interviews lasted approximately one hour, but some lasted over two. During these interviews, I asked participants a series of semi-structured interview questions, all of which focused on their experiences and perspectives on disability, access, and college writing.

I elected to manually code the data, following Johnny Saldana's advice 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). During this process of “initial coding” (Saldana 100) or what others have referred to as “open coding” (Merriam 178), I began to break down my qualitative data into “discrete parts,” noting patterns as I moved through my analysis. After identifying a wide variety of emergent codes during initial coding, I moved into what Merriam refers to as “axial coding” (229) and determined several core categories under which most of the initial codes could be placed. During both the initial and axial coding processes, I ensured that all assigned codes (and subsequent categories) emerged from the student’s contributions. That is to say, I wanted the codes to connect directly to the language of the participants themselves. These methodological efforts attempt to de-emphasize my own expectations and interpretations of the data and strive to foreground the themes that emerged organically. That said, some of the dominant codes that emerged reflected the language of the questions themselves, so my own “crisis of representation” may be the manner in which semi-structured interview design predetermined students’ opportunities to speak for themselves. For example, one of my questions asked students, “What types of help work best for you when completing a writing task?” The underlying assumption of such a question is that “help” is needed, and because the recruitment flyer made it clear that the interview would be about accommodations, such a question may have inflected the response with an inauthentic representation of the necessity of accommodation.

For my purposes in this essay, I present one of the most compelling and prominent core categories from the study: *time*. Notably, the word *time* did not appear in any of my interview questions but emerged from the responses across all study participants. Drawing on interview data from thirty-five students (over 2,000 minutes of audio, over 200,000 words worth of transcript), I argue that one way (not *the* way) to increase accessibility in composition classrooms is to rethink our conceptions of time. Because accommodation models are so heavily tied to time and considering that the most common accommodations (extended exam time) are often futile in writing classrooms—we need a paradigmatic shift in the ways we construct time for our students.

The following three sections examine the barriers to access that such time strictures construct for disabled students. I focus on timed writing during class, what Price might refer to as “spontaneous” performance,

but also on the writing assignments themselves. Finally, I look at specific moments in my interviews in which students reported contradictory relationships to time, inconsistent and often conflicting notions of being and performing in time. These contradictions expose the fissures between crip time and academic time, thus revealing academic resistance to the crippling of time, a resistance grounded in ableist notions of intelligence, performance, and ability.

Timed Writing

In the introduction to this essay, I emphasize that extended time on exams does not typically apply to writing classrooms. However, such an acknowledgment does not elide the frameworks of time that structure student production in writing courses. Just as disability services is heavily concerned with time, study participants offered extensive narrative accounts regarding their experiences and challenges with time in writing coursework. Amber,³ 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. Kafer theorizes this collision of expectation with (disability) reality, writing, "Crip time is flex time not just expanded but exploded; it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of 'how long things take' are based on very particular minds and bodies. . . . Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds" (27). In the experiences that Amber and Andy share, the former construction of time is evident. They are required to bend

their minds to meet the clock, and that bending might be characterized as a barrier to access.

And yet, Andy also informed me that one reason he didn't think he needed accommodations in writing classes was the fact that the bulk of 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 crippling time due to the fact that so much work occurs on the student's own time. However, later in our interview, I asked Andy how his disability impacts him as a student, and he again reiterated time, saying,

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.

The belief that student writers, given a set amount of time, have an equitable opportunity to perform in a way that suits their cognitive style and pace relies on an assumption of normativity. While one may argue that acknowledging the illegitimacy of this assumption simply calls for securing an accommodation for Andy for extra time on in-class writing, I would argue there are two problems with such a response. First, it places the burden of access on the individual rather than on the institution or system, and second, it ignores the pedagogical fallout of receiving such an accommodation. If timed in-class writing is a common practice for a given instructor, and he or she receives an accommodation request to allow extra time for in-class writing, how would such a request play out logistically? Indeed, addressing this issue requires fundamental paradigm shifts in classroom practice—a shift in the ways we structure the time it takes to write and a shift in the assumptions we have regarding student cognitive pacing. In short, the issue requires crippling time, approaching

the construction of time in writing classrooms in such a way that doesn't rely on compulsory able-bodiedness.

In addition to the ways in which strictures of time reveal compulsory able-bodiedness, the connection between time and anxiety further complicated my analysis, particularly in terms of how and when anxiety might be considered a "normal" part of the writing process and when it might be more productively understood as a barrier to access. The topic of anxiety emerged frequently throughout and across all my interviews, resulting in part from one of my semi-structured interview questions (asking whether writing invoked feelings of excitement or anxiety), yet also in response to questions about students' own processes, their advice for writing teachers, and their experiences with particular writing assignments over the course of their academic careers. Discussions of writing anxiety are abundant throughout our discipline's history, with claims offered from numerous angles. John Daly argued that writing with high apprehension would produce lower-quality writing, and researchers such as Eric Bell and Alan Price (drawing on Daly) conducted studies to assess whether grade delay would reduce anxiety, and yet findings revealed the opposite: anxiety increased with grade delay.⁴

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).⁵ Scholars often point out the negative effects of anxiety, but some have argued 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 *disability*. Mike Rose's benchmark article "Rigid Rules, Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language" 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."⁶ Continued research on writing apprehension needs to account for the ways in which normative, compulsory time frames may contribute to or unproductively exacerbate anxiety. The data from my study suggest that students' anxiety might be alleviated through crippling time, increasing flexibility, avoiding rigidity, and lowering the stakes of writing (particularly in the beginning stages of a course). These suggestions echo

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 possible goal but an ethical (and sometimes legal) responsibility.

However, efforts to avoid such barriers to access (with or without the backing of the legalistic framework of an "official accommodation") are deeply complex. In order to ascertain faculty attitudes regarding such complexities, I supplemented my interview data with an instructor survey, administered to all those teaching in the English department and writing program. While only 10 percent reported that they would *not* provide any accommodations without documentation, this small group reflects attitudes that pervade much of the discourse of disability accommodation in higher education. For example, 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." However, these attitudes were in the minority; 69 percent 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." By and large, instructors seemed flexible and dedicated to ensuring access to all students, with respect for (but not wholesale reliance on) disability services but with a sensible understanding of the complexities of disability documentation, disclosure, and the nature of accommodations in writing classrooms. This seems to suggest (at least in this context) that an openness to *crip time* might be plausible.

Navigating faculty attitudes and dealing with the material conditions that mediate diagnosis, disclosure, and documentation are but a few of the complexities of access that emerged consistently in my conversations with students. James explained how his experiences with multiple disabilities create a thorny relationship 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 feels 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, describing how OCD routines impact his performance:

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 (in part) 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." Echoing George, Marie said, "If I'm put on the spot in the classroom . . . 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 shaped 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 . . ." Marie paused. 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 faced with timed writing suggests that disabled students' relationship with time exists in contrast to the ways in which composition classes (and academia, more generally) construct and value time.

Where this conflict exists, barriers to access arise as a result of compulsory notions of able-bodied composing processes, particularly as they manifest during class time. And yet, as Dunn has argued in her research, disabled students often possess a sophisticated metacognitive awareness of how to navigate the strictures they face in the classroom (*Learning*). Crip-

ping time means tapping into that awareness and harnessing its potential, not only for particular students but also for the greater possibility that it may release our own pedagogical approaches from the limiting constructs of normativity. Moreover, critical analysis of our classrooms' compulsory notions of time allows us to imagine what "flexible approaches to normative time frames" (Price, *Mad* 62) may yield in terms of pedagogical theory and practice. As Dolmage argues, "Crip time has generally been interpreted as responsive. . . . [t]ime marches on, and we can refuse to roll with it. But in arguing that a standard and obedient response to time and timing actually overlooks unique opportunities for making meaning, we can also situate crip time as an epistemology" (*Disability* 165n13). Crippling time should be regarded as a generative epistemological shift in writing studies pedagogy, as I discuss further in the following section. Allowing such a shift to take place should be the starting point for some creative and access-centered pedagogical imagining.

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Writing Assignments

Up to this point, this analysis has focused primarily on modes of timed writing that occur within the classroom space. However, in addition to the normative pressures of time inherent during timed in-class writing, the duration of assignments themselves also warrant interrogation as to the ableist barriers constructed through manifestations of temporality. Several research participants described the ways in which embodied disability experiences disrupted their writing processes, 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: "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: "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 to explain:

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 assignments 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.” 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. . . . 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. Crip time serves as a generative alternative to this limited and individualistic accommodation model. Petra Koppers, disability artist, activist, and scholar, writes, “To many disabled writers, writing in crip time becomes a sanctuary. . . . These moments in time, out of productive, forward-leaning, exciting time can become moments of disability culture politics” (29). The successful and “timely” completion of a writing project and the writing sanctuary Koppers

describes—a sanctuary characterized by crippled time—run the risk of being paradoxical projects when writing instructors are overly committed to normative time frames or overly optimistic (perhaps even naively so) in their attitudes toward the assurances of access propagated via traditional accommodations. The former seems to negate the possibility of the latter; as Alison Kafer warns, “disability is seen as a sign of no future” (3). Crippling time in composition classrooms imagines crip futurities, as Leah’s narrative helps illuminate. The kind of sanctuary Koppers describes, however, is typically occurring within a disabled community, or a community in which disabled people are surrounded by allies. Composition classrooms do not typically feel that way to disabled students. Although it is my overall aim to elucidate the generative potential of crip time, the shift in context for this theorization is important to recognize. The power-laden context of the first-year writing classroom makes this work more challenging, and the conditions of authority further constrain the potential for crip futurities.

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. Cultural anthropologist Cassandra Hartblay writes that crip time and crip embodiments “are always implicated in patterns of communication and sociality.” Writing instructors, therefore, ought to be mindful of the implications inherent in their constructions of the temporal unfolding of writing processes, as well as the penalties they enforce when students are unable to adhere to such normative “patterns of communication and sociality.”

The experiences shared by many of the study participants make this need for mindfulness concrete. 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?" Both James's and Diane's construction of the stop-time for a given assignment may run contrary to the expectations for timely performance. Anne McDonald, Australian activist and author, writes, "Crip time is pre-programmed, thought running ahead of communication; pre-programmed like crip lives, programmed with activities we did not choose, overwriting our own lives with other people's voices." McDonald draws attention to the ways in which crip time isn't always a choice that one can make; the adherence to a crip clock may be "pre-programmed," and yet in the context of a writing classroom, such an acknowledgment is not a possibility in the face of the seemingly inevitable and "normal" imposition and regulation of a due date.

The relations between student and instructor, and between student and disability services, are often filtered through negative (yet persistent) tropes of disability. Stephanie Kerschbaum argues that creating new anecdotal relations requires a "turn toward uncertainty," and that such an orientation "also means allowing students (and teachers) a sense of agency." One of my interviewees offered compelling insight as to the ways in which instructors might agentively negotiate crip time alongside students. Lillie described her 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, 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 crippling of time that resulted (for better or worse, depending on one’s perspective) in Lillie’s ability to adhere to normative time frames and actively resisted the notion that only disability professionals should mediate that negotiation.

Her story echoes what disability scholar Akemi Nishida explains in her discussion of disability communities: “Crip time reminds us of the importance of patience and flexibility as we work with each other . . . it is always collective, creative, and imaginative work to move forward and organize collectively” (154). Indeed, Nishida argues that such community care (actively attending and responding to access needs) is a “crucial form of micro-resistance: actualizing democratic practices and sustaining ourselves both in activism and academia” (153). As with Koppers, Nishida’s crip time must be understood contextually; a composition classroom is not the space to which she refers when she mentions crips working collectively. However, the student-teacher relationship Lillie explains allows mutual agency and an active (albeit improvisational) attendance to access, characteristics that enable her to sustain her presence in academia. This negotiation reflects the crip time that Nishida theorizes, a space in which the limits and potentials of time are flexible, and all members of the space have a voice in constructing the temporal means of participation.

Conflicts of Time

In the previous two sections, I explored the ways in which crip time challenges normative and compulsory structures of time during in-class writing and via the orchestration of writing assignments. But the discourse of time that emerged from the data didn’t always lend itself to a mere matter of extension. On the contrary, 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 also 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,

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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 an individual with ADD), this encouragement might be problematic in that it suppresses a component of her identity. Perhaps a better alternative would be to offer scaffolded exercises that

allow for freewriting or 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). Such an acknowledgment would substantiate what Price points out about crip time: it's not just about *more* time; it's about flexibly managing, negotiating, and experiencing time (*Mad* 62-63).

Such pedagogical designs should be negotiated *with* disabled students, not simply *for* disabled students. Allowing agentive control reduces the risk of imposing normative or compulsory modes of composing onto students in writing classrooms. Moreover, Justin's description of her communicative style—a style she attributed to her disability—echoes Heilker's insistence that we consider the discourse of those on the autism spectrum as a matter of Students' Right to Their Own Language. He argues that such a consideration would "force us to wrestle with the concomitant obligations to both 'affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language' . . . and to help them learn to use the languages of wider communication" (320). He goes on to say, "Doing so would allow us to take advantage of our long, although sometimes tortured, history of working with marginalized populations and the discourses of power" (320).

Like Justin, Veronica also expressed conflicting experiences with time, telling 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." She later clarified, however, 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:

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.

Veronica even told me that she uses a timer at home when she writes: "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 cognitive style. Put another way, Veronica needs to be in control of time, or it controls her.

Veronica's description of her process elucidates several of the claims offered by disability scholars. She not only exhibits the heightened metacognitive awareness to which Dunn's work alluded, but her narrative reveals the need for allowing students some agentive control over their own composing processes and the pitfalls of requiring spontaneous writing production. Assumptions of ability to produce spontaneously are couched in the discourse of normality, which McRuer ties to the origins of able-bodied identity in the nineteenth-century rise of industrial capitalism. He writes, "being able-bodied means being capable of the normal physical exertions required in a particular system of labor" (371). Sunny Taylor, artist and disability advocate, echoes this same claim in her essay on disability and work: "Capitalism has at its root the idea of an individual's worth being intrinsically linked to

Asking writing instructors to examine the systems of "normal" and "able-bodied" production they create in their classrooms initiates a type of crippling, critical self-reflection for writing pedagogy, a process capable of exposing the ableist underpinnings of some of our most commonplace assumptions about writing and the conditions in which it can and should take place.

their production value,” and the material conditions experienced by many (if not most) disabled people have the potential to radically challenge such conceptualizations of normalcy, value, and power. Asking writing instructors to examine the systems of “normal” and “able-bodied” production they create in their classrooms initiates a type of crippling, critical self-reflection for writing pedagogy, a process capable of exposing the ableist underpinnings of some of our most commonplace assumptions about writing and the conditions in which it can and should take place.

Yet another commonplace assumption that often circulates around access discourse is the notion of “leveling the playing field.” Once again, Veronica’s discussion of time and accommodations radically complicates such naive assumptions of accommodation equalizing student opportunities. One of her accommodations is being able to use a word processor in class, and she mentioned that most professors are fine with her using a laptop because everybody uses one. However, this creates an unexpected complication. She explained:

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 dangers of complete faith in the promises of traditional accommodation models. Moreover, while allowing everyone computer use in the classroom might seem like a positive step toward universal design, such access efforts might create additional complications for students who qualify for the conventional accommodation of using a word processor in the classroom.

Ultimately, these conflicting notions of time elucidate that we cannot build access via prescriptive checklists (Wood et al. 147) and that orientations of uncertainty (Kerschbaum) allow space for innovative approaches to negotiated access. Composition instructors have to recognize our agentic roles in that process. Crippling time in the composition classroom requires that teachers relax their hold on the boundaries of time that

define writing inside and outside the classroom. This, of course, requires some relinquishment of authority, but it may also function to enhance access through allowing disabled students to compose in their own ways, rather than by normative standards of performance and production—thereby resisting the compulsory curative imaginaries against which Kafer warns. By no means do I want to imply that this work will be clean or easy or generalizable across contexts or classrooms. I offer crippling time as a place to start thinking about how normativity may be privileged in some of the most commonplace pedagogical practices of a given writing classroom. Perhaps most importantly, crippling time animates how disability itself can profitably reshape the conditions of production in our classrooms, opening up the possibilities of nonnormative composing and imaginative student-instructor negotiations of time.

Perhaps most importantly, crippling time animates how disability itself can profitably reshape the conditions of production in our classrooms, opening up the possibilities of nonnormative composing and imaginative student-instructor negotiations of time.

The significance of this study lies in challenging these conditions of production. As indicated in my opening comments, although I draw on the generative potential of a disability studies framework to elucidate the constraining normalization of writing performance in time, the implications of such work connect pointedly to several larger discourses within the field. Consider, for example, the recent publication of *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies*, in which Tony Scott writes that “awareness of writing as an ideological enactment has led to efforts to understand and take responsibility for the ideological assumptions and consequences of pedagogical practices” (50). Kevin Roozen similarly writes that “the act of writing, then, is not so much about using a particular set of skills as it is about becoming a particular kind of person, about developing a sense of who we are” (50). These acts of naming, of articulating anchoring content in our discipline, corroborate the claims I make throughout this piece. Investigating these “ideological assumptions” is the preliminary act for crippling time, and the stories shared from study participants showcase some of the “consequences” of normative ideologies. If Roozen is correct, then accounting for a denial of personhood (compulsory able-bodiedness) should be at the heart of our discipline. Doing this difficult investigative work requires listening not only to one another but also to our students,

drawing on their experiences in order to call our practices into question, and taking responsibility for our role in providing conducive conditions for the act of writing, conditions unhinged from the tyranny of the norm.

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Notes

1. During the recruitment process, I was flooded with interest (likely due to included compensation), and several factors complicated my initial understanding of registration. I came to understand that in addition to choosing to register their disability with campus disability services, some of my participants were registered with the state's Department of Rehabilitation Services. Some of my participants registered with the disability office but chose not to use accommodations. Still others had documented disabilities but chose not to register. Some had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) but chose not to register their disability in college. And still others had only recently been diagnosed and were in the middle of the registration process. Thus, I abandoned the narrow criterion of "registered disability."
2. Michael Quinn Patton writes that "the logic and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth" (169). I used a combination of three types of purposive sampling: maximum variation purposive sampling, convenience purposive sampling, and ongoing purposive sampling (see Merriam 79).
3. Understanding the disability identity, diagnoses, and demographics for the students that I interviewed is absolutely useful. Throughout this article, however, I mention them by pseudonym only and—for the most part—avoid describing them by their disability. I wanted to avoid introducing each of my participants by 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. To focus on individual disabilities works to systematize the retrofit: apply an accommodation to a particular disability, and all's well. Avoiding an over-emphasis on each participant's disability or diagnosis is my effort to move away from the individualization that permeates accommodation models. At times, I do include their disability if specificity of context is required for understanding. In terms of overall demographics, thirty-five students (undergraduate and graduate) from a wide range of disciplines participated in the study. Their reported disabilities ranged from mental disabilities (e.g., PTSD, bipolar disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder) to physical disabilities (e.g., Friedreich's ataxia and Usher syndrome). Some reported chronic illness such as migraines or HIV, while others reported learning/cognitive disabilities (e.g., dysgraphia, ADD). Ages ranged from nineteen to fifty-two, and gender was somewhat equally represented (nineteen females and sixteen males). In terms of ethnicity, 56 percent of participants were white, 21 percent American Indian, 8 percent African American, 8 percent Asian, and 7 percent Hispanic. Of the participating students, 63 percent were registered with campus disability services, 31 percent were not, and 6 percent were registered with state disability rehabilitation services. Three study participants were student-veterans.

4. For a summary of empirical studies of writing anxiety, see Smith.

5. I am not endorsing these (problematic) categorizations of anxiety, nor am I assuming these distinctions are fixed or stable. I'm merely noting the different ways of conceptualizing how students "have" anxiety.

6. While I'm pointing to the tacit dimensions of the linkage between disability and pathology in Rose's work, he thoroughly attends to such connections elsewhere, particularly in "The Language of Exclusion," in which he explicates the historic origins of the term *remedial*, itself linked with pathology, disease, and deficit.

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