

‘Crippling’ the University and Abolitionist Educational Access: A Possible Roadmap to Reimagine and Redesign Disability Services

“‘Crippling’ the University and Abolitionist Educational Access”: Une feuille de route pour re-imaginer et reconceptualiser les services pour les handicaps

David Jaulus, PhD

Faculty Associate, Arizona State University
djaulus@asu.edu

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that colleges and universities must continue to move beyond the framework of ‘reasonable accommodations’ as the primary approach to disability service provision for students, faculty, and staff with both apparent and non-apparent impairments, whether these educational community members identify with the label of ‘disability’ or not. Drawing from a larger study, involving interviews with students and staff with disabilities at a large public university, as well as a theoretical analysis of what access might mean, I offer the alternative framing of critical access studies and design justice as one potentially fruitful alternative for expanding the horizon of disability service provision as it currently exists to bring about fundamental systemic change within the Academy.

Résumé

Dans ce texte, je propose l’argument que les collèges et les universités doivent se distancier du traitement du cadre des « accommodations raisonnables » comme l’approche principale qu’ils prennent pour les services provisoires qu’ils offrent pour les étudiant.e.s, la faculté et le personnel avec des déficiences visibles et non visibles, peu importe si ces membres de la communauté s’identifient avec l’étiquette du « handicap ». En m’inspirant d’une étude plus vaste qui implique des entretiens avec des étudiant.e.s et des membres du personnel avec des handicaps à une grande université publique et d’une analyse de théorie concernant le sens de l’accès, j’offre le cadre alternatif des études critiques sur l’accès et de la justice de l’esthétique industrielle (« the alternative framing of critical access studies and design justice ») comme une manière potentielle que l’on peut étendre l’horizon des services provisoires pour les handicaps dans sa forme courante dans le but de déclencher un changement systématique fondamentale à l’intérieur de l’académie.

Keywords

Abolitionist educational access, non-reformist reform, accommodations, accessibility, universal design, universal design for learning, universal design for instruction, abolition, design justice, Crip Theory, critical access studies, disability justice

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

Mots clés

L'accès éducatif abolitionniste, la réforme non réformiste, les accommodations, l'accessibilité, le modèle universel, l'utilisation du modèle universel pour l'apprentissage, l'utilisation du modèle universel pour l'instruction, l'abolition, la justice de l'esthétique industrielle, la théorie « Crip », les études critiques sur l'accès, la justice pour le handicap

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

This article is based on a doctoral study conducted at a large, public Research 1 university in the southwestern United States. The study broadly asks how to make universities more accessible to students and staff with disabilities. When I refer to disabilities, I include both those that are apparent (or visible) and those that are non-apparent (or invisible). To reframe conceptions of access and accessibility in higher education, this article draws on interview data that offers practical suggestions for making universities, as institutional formations, more accessible to people with disabilities, whether or not they identify with the label.

Theoretical Perspectives

The study also draws from theories related to critical access studies, design justice, and abolition, including non-reformist reform. Non-reformist reform has its roots in ideas of alternative forms of government, such as socialism, and the abolition of the carceral state in the United States (Gorz, 1964; Mathiesen, 1974; Gilmore, 1991; Ben-Moshe, 2020; Kaba, 2021). I also propose my own theory, which I am terming *abolitionist educational access*.

In attempting to reframe access or accessibility, this paper necessarily engages with questions regarding which bodies were imagined to be present or privileged within the institutional formation of the University. I argue that ableism, or the “privileging of able-bodiedness and able-mindedness” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 7), undergirds many existing accessibility policies. Ableism is likewise connected to ideas of individual productivity. In proposing *abolitionist educational access*, I ask us to move away from individually centered notions of normalcy and productivity. Put another way, *abolitionist educational access* shares three features: collectivity, interdependence, and an understanding of the

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/
DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

process as intentionally cyclical and subject to missteps and remaking (Mingus, 2011; Agid, 2014).

My theory holds that access is fundamentally an iterative process that necessarily involves cycles of success and failure. This principle represents the beginnings of what I would argue is an abolitionist structural analysis of the barriers to access. Through my proposed theory, I ask us to consider how to/reconstruct the University from both a theoretical and practical perspective, in such a way that removes, or at least undermines, the existing hierarchies of value inherent in, for example, neoliberalism and ableism. I choose to use the framing of 're/construction' in a nod to Robert McRuer's (2006) idea of de/composition, which comprises the core principle of my theory. The theory of *abolitionist educational access* is not only about tearing down or deconstructing oppressive systems but also about building (or conditioning the possibility of) alternative systems of power relations.

Finally, and relatedly, this paper asks you, as the reader, to fundamentally reconsider what it means for universities to be considered 'accessible' or 'inclusive'. Put another way, how would we implement a proactive process of disability service provision? The question of reframing access and inclusion is fundamentally tied to undermining systems of oppression, such as ableism, and the hierarchies of value inherent in these systems. I contend that the existence of oppressive systems, such as ableism, limits the ability of universities to be truly accessible and inclusive to all students and staff. Therefore, while we propose practical steps toward inclusion, we must also consider how to undermine problematic norms within the university's institutional formation. *Abolitionist*

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

educational access, as a theory and practice of alternative social relations, offers one potential tool for beginning or continuing to disrupt such oppressive systems.

Positionality and Methods

The study from which this article draws comes out of my own personal experience of the limitations around current systems of disability-support services within universities and the fact that many members of my disabled campus community were also negatively impacted by these limitations, as some of them describe throughout this article. The study offers practical suggestions for expanding the scope of disability services beyond the current checklist mentality and diagnosis-based frameworks.

I come to this research as a self-identified person with a disability who keenly understands what it means to be treated as less than fully human. It took until I reached college to really begin to find my own voice as a whole person. Throughout much of my primary and secondary school experience, I felt marginalized by those in positions of authority and seen merely as someone to push through the school system rather than educate. That being said, as a middle-class, straight, white male, I recognize my own privilege.

I would be remiss if I did not also touch upon the role that the COVID-19 pandemic played in the genesis of this research. My research stems from a deep desire for community in response to the isolation we all recently experienced. I have also come to recognize in myself a desire to help engender meaningful social change. Along with this recognition comes a coexistent awareness that simply writing about issues of educational equity is not enough. The words of Abigail Boggs and colleagues (2019) resonate with me particularly when they write, “abstract oppositionality and critique may in fact

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

unwittingly reproduce accumulation regimes by offering their practitioners the sense of moral supremacy and social exteriority necessary to imagine knowledge production as a form of change in itself” (p. 28).

I read this quotation as a call to utilize my unique knowledge and life experience, as a former graduate student and current faculty member with disabilities -- with both cerebral palsy and visual impairment -- to empower others to work towards building a version of the university, academia, and eventually society at large, that views all people as fully human.

This represents the larger aspirational goal of this article and my continued community work within the academy. In the following pages, I turn to a discussion of how I hope to achieve this goal through a theoretical analysis of the limitations and potential of disability service regimes as possible sites for broader systemic change within the University, both as a living academic community and as a social construction. In other words, the University is necessarily both a site of learning, growth, and academic analysis and a socially constructed space, specifically in terms of which bodies are envisioned as ‘belonging’ within it. Importantly, the work is not mine alone but can only be imagined in community with others – specifically, students, faculty, and administrators.

This essay draws from a larger study, conducted from February to October 2023, in which I interviewed students and staff with disabilities and analyzed documents related to disability issues at our university. I include quotations from my interviews intermittently throughout the article to bring student and staff voices to the center of the discussion.

I conducted 17 semi-structured individual interviews: 4 remotely via Zoom and 13 in person on my campus, a large public Research 1 university in the southwestern United

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

States. All my interview participants were part of my university community, either as students, employees, or recent alums.¹ Nine of my interviewees identified as graduate students, five as undergraduates, and three as university employees who hold both faculty and administrative roles. I consented each participant individually. In terms of the actual interview procedure, individual interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, depending upon the depth of the responses to the questions. The research questions that guided my study were as follows:

- How has ableism at the University shaped the current climate for students and staff with both apparent and “non-apparent impairments” (Evans, 2017)?
- How do students and staff with these functional limitations experience the University campus, and why and how do students and staff with disabilities access, refuse, or negotiate related services?
- How do students and staff with apparent and “non-apparent impairments” imagine an alternative University that would recognize us as fully human (Evans, 2017)?

Topics covered in the individual interviews also included, but were by no means limited to, the participant's personal background, including preferred identities, and the participant's relationship to the label of disability, whether the participant identified with it. Continuing with the theme of identity, I asked my participants whether their university recognized and respected their various identities.² Then, I embarked on a series of

¹ All study participants have been given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Pseudonyms are used throughout this article each time that a participant is mentioned.

² See Appendices A & B for a fuller description of participant demographics, research questions, as well as individual and focus interview questions.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

questions about disability service provision at their university. My last line of inquiry related to ideas of inclusion or exclusion for students with disabilities at the university. Among these questions related to inclusion or exclusion, I most importantly asked my participants to provide suggestions, based on their lived experience, for how to make universities more inclusive, in line with their stated commitments.

I conducted a follow-up focus group, which, since I do not consider myself as 'owning' the research, I viewed as a potential opportunity for the participants to add to and enrich the 'data' collected in the original interview process (Birt et al, 2016; Candela, 2010).

Following each interview, I took detailed notes of potential emergent themes (also known as memos) related to the research questions guiding the study and identified commonalities between the interviews. My memos represented raw, unedited self-reflections meant to aid my memory of our conversation, alongside my interview recordings (Charmaz, 2014). These notes were part of my memoing process, along with my open coding strategy. I utilized open coding to code each transcript. I attempted to keep each label 3-5 words, but some were longer when the quotation involved multiple interconnected themes. This strategy allowed me to capture emergent themes from my interviews without risking predetermining my findings.

Research Limitations

Turning next to the question of limitations, or confines, of my study, there were two principal areas in which my design, and specifically its generalizability, were restricted. I had only the time and resources to interview 17 participants, all of whom either study or work at a large public university in the southwestern United States. The small number of

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

participants limited the range of experiences I could document. Although my research partners certainly provided rich insights and stories, a larger number of interviews would have allowed me to capture a broader range of experiences. This limitation is methodological, though I contend that my participants' suggestions for change could be applicable across universities.

I want to emphasize that the goal of my work is not to be 'finished,' but rather to leave something behind for others to build upon. Three core principles guide my research. The first is that the work must be done in the community. Secondly, I center, to the greatest degree possible, the voices and experiences of students with disabilities at a large public research university in the southwestern United States. Importantly, all my interviewees have and are impacted by disabilities, either apparent or non-apparent. Lastly, change is not a linear process and, as such, gradual adjustment is acceptable and expected, so long as these changes serve to create a vision of the University as an institutional formation that recognizes all 'bodyminds'³ and life experiences as fully human.

Full Humanity

In my view, full humanity refers to respecting and valuing the life experiences, life choices, and beliefs of those who are typically devalued, specifically people with lived experience of disability and ableism and/or other forms of systemic oppression, along, for example, racial or ethnic lines. This definition then implies the lack of a hierarchy of value, such as that inherent in ableism. This lack of hierarchy then necessarily means that all people are understood as valuable and worthy of inclusion in society. This is obviously an aspirational

³ I utilize the term "bodymind" following noted Mad Studies scholar Margaret Price to indicate the interactive nature of the body and mind. The body affects the mind and vice versa. Price herself picked up the term bodymind from the field of trauma studies (Rothschild [2000](#); Price 2014).

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

goal, but to truly deconstruct ableism, society must reach a point where all people are provided not only with the opportunity to succeed but also with the resources necessary to do so.

To develop a theoretical foundation for the concept of full humanity in an educational context, I place the work of Paolo Freire in conversation with Arturo Escobar's understanding of design outlined above. Freire understands education as "the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p. 69). While recognizing the problematic nature of Freire's framing for including only two gender categories (male and female), the larger point of his framing still holds. Like Escobar, Freire's understanding of students as autonomous subjects within the University provides those in an academic context with agency to alter their experience. It is this agency that lies at the core of full humanity.

What we need in my view and what my project seeks to accomplish is to shift, or at least begin to shift, the University's understanding of access in a more communal direction, centering care and necessarily both understanding and seeking to undermine systemic oppressions.^{4 5} This would align with the institution's own commitment to "being connected to social needs." I argue that a sense of community, which manifests through the cocreation of knowledge, represents another core social need alongside access to

⁴ To be clear, accommodations will always be necessary because as Roxanne succinctly put it during our focus group, "in my opinion, it's virtually impossible to be entirely accessible for every single person because people have conflicting needs, and something that may make something more accessible for one person may make it less accessible for another person which is why you will always need things like accommodations."

⁵ Roxanne is a Ph.D. candidate in engineering and identifies as a disabled woman. Although she has been formally diagnosed and received disability accommodations the majority of her life, the identity of being "disabled" was one that caused her internal conflict, since all of her disabilities are non-apparent.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

and full inclusion within the University. These three social needs taken together represent the foundation of full humanity within the institution.

To be more fully human, then, is to become a co-creator of knowledge rather than simply a passive consumer of that knowledge. Freire writes, “To be more fully human is to struggle against the objectification of human beings as things to be known and acted upon. It is a march towards becoming a subject who knows and acts” (Tan, 2018, p. 371). Specifically, regarding students and staff with disabilities, I argue that the keys to full humanity for these populations within the University are not only physical presence but also active participation, full inclusion, and access to the University. In other words, when I mention equality here, I am referring to the aspirational goal that every person in society, regardless of their identity, has truly equal life chances and finds themselves on a level playing field. Necessarily, this would require the dismantling of such belief systems as racism, sexism, and ableism, to name a few. This is not possible over a brief period but rather represents a horizon for which society should strive. This understanding of equality as an aspirational goal aligns with my abolitionist analytic, which views equality and full humanity as goals to be achieved gradually through the construction of alternative institutions and relations of power.⁶ Put another way, abolition as I utilize it here, understands itself as a process of gradual social change or adjustment. These minor

⁶ For such alternative institutions and relations of power to exist and flourish within the university, this would require the disruption of currently existing top-down market-based decision-making. Although neoliberalism, as embodied through these features, constitutes a portion of my analysis, beginning to think about how to disrupt the larger economic/capitalist system is beyond the scope of the current analysis, although as noted above, disrupting this oppressive economic system and the many other systems which support it is unquestionably necessary.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

changes are necessary, as long as they serve the larger goal of more widespread social change. (Kaba 2021; Gorz 1964).

A person's status as a fully human subject begins to undermine the core principles behind hierarchical ideas such as ableism. Put simply, the intellectual foundation for my project understands my interviewees as co-creators who have the capacity and knowledge, both intellectually and in terms of lived experience to participate in the construction of an alternative vision of the University that understands all students and staff members, notably including those with both apparent and non-apparent impairments, as fully human – that is to say, as subjects participating in the intellectual and built environment of the University.

Next, I turn to a discussion of the current disability services paradigm and attempt to demonstrate how it could be altered or reimagined to better serve the aspirational goal of full humanity for all people within the University, specifically those who identify as people with disabilities. Necessarily, this goal will never be fully achieved or completed. As such, an abolitionist framing of educational access best describes what I am trying to achieve.

Abolition as Conceptual Framework

My definition of access in a university context relies upon the theoretical construction of abolition. A project like mine understands itself from an intentionally abolitionist perspective, by which abolition represents not only the destruction, disruption, or tearing down of problematic institutions and related social constructs, but also the creation or construction of alternative institutions and social relations. I do not focus here on abolition in the traditional sense of the abolition of chattel slavery, nor even on the abolition of the

carceral state in the United States.⁷ This paper offers one potential conceptual genealogy of abolition as a theory and practice of *alternative social relations* as applied to the institutional formation of the University.

Abolitionist Educational Access

There is no concrete definition of abolition in an educational context. Many of the suggestions provided by my research partners are both aspirational, in the larger sense of calling for fundamental change to power relations within the University, and eminently practical. It is this mixture of practical and aspirational suggestions that gives the research I am conducting an abolitionist character. To adapt the question asked by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2013):

What is the difference between this and slavery? What is, so to speak, the object of abolition? Not so much the abolition of... [the University] but the abolition of a ... [University 'that could have' ableism] and all of the other systems of power which serve to uphold hierarchies of value within the institution (p. 42).

These goals are clearly aspirational and beyond the scope and ability of a single article to accomplish. However, there are practical steps that can be taken now to move closer to these objectives.

As such, I view our project as a process of re-making or re-imagining disability services. Of particular importance to this endeavor is Agid's (2014) understanding of abolitionist practice as comprising "component" parts. Through the understanding of component parts, *abolitionist educational access* is constitutive, in that it draws from each of the theories discussed above, with particular emphasis on ideas of non-reformist reform, in terms of intentionally understanding itself as an iterative, gradual process of

⁷ However, abolition as a concept does have significant roots in struggles to abolish the carceral state (Ben-Moshe 2020; Gamez, 2021; Gilmore, 1991; Kaba, 2021).

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

social change that seeks to undermine hierarchies of value inherent in systems of oppression, such as ableism. Tabitha⁸ succinctly encapsulated my understanding of *abolitionist educational access* when she stated that, fundamentally, concepts of access must center “a valuing of everyone, an equal valuing of everyone, and an equal expectation of participation and contribution and meaning.”

How Do We Include? Reasonable Accommodations, Universal Design, and Critical Access Studies

Here, I address the question of how to practice inclusion from a practical, on-the-ground perspective and, in so doing, continue to construct a vision of higher education that respects all bodyminds and life experiences as fully human. Inclusion is a term we often hear but rarely define. For me, inclusion means intentionally centering the needs of people whose voices the University does not usually prioritize. Specifically, here, I am referring to students and staff with disabilities as well as other intersectional marginalized identities. This section also draws productively on the idea of “non-reformist reform,” outlining a specific example in the educational context – namely, the broader application of universal design for instruction (UDI), discussed in detail below.

To begin exploring the broad question of how to practice inclusion, I draw on theory and the experiences and insights of my interviewees. First, let me say that none of the theories that I utilize are meant to constitute a one-size-fits-all or ‘universal’ solution. Instead, each theory and its associated practices have both benefits and drawbacks, but

⁸ Tabitha is on the faculty of a Research I university who has worked with children for more than 30 years and whose happy place is always outdoors and anywhere in the company of dogs. (All names of interview participants are pseudonyms.)

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

each, in its own way, is useful in working toward the aspirational goal of inclusion for staff and students with disabilities. I view inclusion as a necessarily iterative and never fully complete process which, in line with the definition of abolition offered above, requires failure and corresponding adjustment.

I begin with a detailed discussion of one of the practices that the University most often utilizes to promote inclusion for students and staff with disabilities. This is the concept of reasonable accommodations, along with its benefits and drawbacks. Reasonable accommodations are defined under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as

[A] modification or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done during the hiring process. These modifications enable an individual with a disability to have an equal opportunity not only to get a job but successfully perform their job tasks to the same extent as people without disabilities. (Office of Disability Employment Policy, n.d., p.1)

This framework originated in an economic context and has been adapted to higher education. However, problematically in my view, accommodations are sometimes referred to as 'productivity enhancers' (Office of Disability Employment Policy, n.d., p. 1). This, in turn, connects to ableist ideas of productivity, which serve to re-entrench hierarchies of value within the University. Productivity is inherently an ableist concept because it places greater value on bodies commonly understood as productive – i.e., those that are able-bodied and able-minded (Dolmage, 2017). Put another way, people whom society understands as 'normal' (able-bodied and able-minded) are inherently thought to have greater potential for productivity. Leonard Davis and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson outline and critique the idea of 'the normal body' (Davis, 1995; Garland-Thomson, 1997). Labaree (1997) then expands upon their work, noting that one specific

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

goal of the university is to create economically productive citizens. Ideas about productivity and which bodies are considered productive, I argue, drive many university policies related to disability services.

For example, one emergent theme from my individual interviews concerns the idea that the University, as an institution, needs to move beyond reasonable accommodations that require people with disabilities to conform to what the University considers a 'normal' body. Currently, this is the primary framework for how the university provides services to students and staff with disabilities. In making this argument, I do not mean to imply that accommodations themselves are entirely unhelpful or unnecessary. In fact, I utilize accommodations to great effect, and they have allowed me to succeed throughout my career in higher education. The literature around accommodation, however, as well as the experiences of some of my interviewees, foreground the problematic idea that these supports can too easily fall into a checklist, by which a student with a particular disability is provided with only certain accommodations that 'should work' for that student, given their disability diagnosis. The idea of certain services being provided to students with a certain type of disability disregards the reality that disability is a spectrum, and what works for one user may not work for another with a similar diagnosis.

Put another way, while accommodations can be helpful, they can also lead to the trap of teachers, students, and staff failing to think beyond diagnoses and symptoms (Wood et al., 2014). Akosha⁹ underscores this point, stating

⁹ Akosha is a sophomore majoring in criminal justice. She plans on attending Law School in the future. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her cat, betta fish, and tarantulas. Is this the location of the study?

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

In my view, access should be seen as essential accommodations provided because they are necessary, not as one of those things institutions like to tick off a little checkbox. I feel like access should be accommodations that stem from genuine care, because otherwise, these accommodations are not as accessible to people in need as these institutions think.

Kirstin Bone (2017) similarly contends that accommodations serve as after-the-fact band-aids that cover up problems and systemic inequities rather than addressing their root causes. When I refer to root causes in this context, I aim to spotlight once again the prevalence of ableism and related ideas of normalcy and productivity within the Academy.

What Bone, Garland-Thomson, Wood, and colleagues instead ask us to consider is how to make the process of inclusion “dynamic, recursive, and continual... rather than mere troubleshooting” (Wood et al, 2014, p. 148). Troubleshooting is the process of addressing problems as they occur. Alternatively, a dynamic, recursive, and continual process calls for proactively seeking solutions to problems before they arise, involving impacted stakeholders and recognizing that strategies and potential solutions will evolve as circumstances change. This example represents an approach to disability inclusion that combines proactivity and reactivity, which, in my view and from the perspective of many of my participants, exemplifies exactly what is needed.

Linnette¹⁰ stated:

[Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services] SAILS¹¹ The bureaucratic process actually creates a disparity for students with disabilities because, as I was

¹⁰ Linnette was an undergraduate student at a large public university in the southwestern United States and a member of the Accessibility Coalition. She was majoring in Special Education and was an advocate for people with disabilities.

¹¹ Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services (SAILS is a program at Linnette’s university that provides accommodations to students with documented disabilities. The disability accommodations process for faculty is separate from the student process.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

told by [my university's] SAILS department, they cannot just do a blanket set of accommodations, which I kind of understand because each class is different. However, if we're not able to ask for proper accommodations until we actually get into the class, now I have to get in class, struggle for a week or two, to then find out and ask for additional accommodations, which are then not backdated to the original date of me starting that class because their process of streamlining the accommodations is not fair and equitable.

This quotation points to the need for faculty members to be increasingly involved in the disability service provision process, by, for example, meeting with students with disabilities prior to their entry into a particular class. While this would increase faculty workload in terms of time needed to meet with individual students, it would also allow students and faculty to proactively plan for each student's needs. Such a process of proactive meetings would be easier to implement in response to the pandemic, given the proliferation of virtual meeting technology. While there would unquestionably be more faculty labor on the front end of such a process, the goal would be to reduce the need for additional course adjustments to address unique disability needs once a course begins. This hypothetical scenario connects to abolition because, if such preemptive conversations, as I am suggesting, were to occur more regularly, they would begin the iterative process of figuring out which supports work for students in a particular course. This is not to say that students' needs will not change as a course evolves. However, such a proactive process of open communication begins to address issues that students may experience and, in providing the potential for a virtual meeting option, this addresses some of the potential disability impacts experienced by faculty because virtual environments can allow for people to potentially engage in practices of self-care, in specific ways, while also participating in the larger academic community of the university.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

Linnette's experience tracks with my own experience of disability service provision at my university. The faculty members I have worked with during my graduate career, while extremely supportive, have only become involved in providing accommodations for me when I initiated communication (for example, to request a book list in advance of the start of the semester) or once I entered the class itself. This represents a reactive rather than proactive strategy for disability service provision because, as Linnette notes, the needs of particular students can change once they enter a course. A student can, for example, read the course syllabus before class and think they know what the instructors expect of them, but once they enter the class itself, the expectations or how the course operates can differ. This then changes the needs of the individual student requiring accommodations, often leaving them at a disadvantage in meeting their specific needs.

In the following section, I turn to a discussion of the evolution of the concept of Universal Design (UD). If accommodations represent a useful starting point, but not the be-all-and-end-all, as many university disability services offices view them, what are the alternatives? One frequently offered substitute lies in the vision and models of universal design. To be clear, when I refer to universal design, I mean three distinct but interrelated concepts. These are:

- Universal Design (UD), which commonly addresses questions of accessibility in the built environment and consumer products (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology [DO-IT] Center, 2023, para. 1)
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which adapts the principles of universal design to a classroom context (Black et al., 2014; Bone, 2019), and

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

- Universal Design for Instruction (UDI), which represents the practical application of the theoretical principles of UDL to an actual on-the-ground classroom context (Black et al., 2014; Bone, 2019).

Universal Design in Theory & Practice

In 1985, disabled architect Ronald Mace first introduced UD as a theory and practice. Mace defined the term as follows: “Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (DO-IT, 2023, para. 1). Prince¹² similarly understood accessibility through the lens of Universal Design and specifically emphasized the core principle of usability for the broadest possible spectrum of users. He defined accessibility in the following terms:

What I do for a living is I make sure that the facilities -- the built environment -- are accessible for anyone who wants to use that space, that built environment. So to me, accessibility is, in that context, allowing anyone of any background type, creed, you know, religion, whatever it might be, disability, it [doesn't] matter to me. You're going to be able to use that product as it was intended to be used.

Here, Prince is speaking from within a professional, on-the-ground context. He fundamentally agrees with Kirstin Bone (2019), who further defines Universal Design from a scholarly perspective, writing, “Universal Design (UD) is a theoretical approach to designing material objects and spaces so they are widely accessible, without regard for [for example] age, gender, or ability” (p. 6). The central tenet of usability-for-all within Universal Design represents, in my view, both the primary benefit and the primary

¹² Prince is an alum and current employee of a large public university in the southwestern United States, with a strong commitment to making campus physically accessible for everyone. In his spare time, he is a huge hockey fan, especially of the Washington Capitals.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

drawback of UD as a theoretical and practical construct. Although on its face, the idea of usability-for-all may seem inclusive, it leaves open two key, interconnected theoretical questions. The first of these is who exactly decides what is 'universal?' Relatedly, which bodies and life experiences are included at the proverbial table when conducting the iterative process of trying to implement Universal Design?

Health Studies scholar Inger Marie Lid begins to grapple with these questions, writing, "The democratic potential for UD lies in recognizing all people as equal" (Lid, 2013, p. 203). As noted above, the idea of equality is a contested and at times problematic formulation. For purposes of my argument here, I understand equality as all human subjects, most notably people with disabilities, having agency over their lived experience, the built environment, and the University's classroom spaces. As such, I understand equality as intimately connected to full humanity.

This understanding then allows for the conception of Universal Design as not only a set of core principles based on the accessibility and usability of the built and academic environments for all people, particularly people with disabilities. Instead, Universal Design, as a theoretical construct, when understood through the lenses of equality and full humanity, relies on situated, lived, or experiential knowledge as its core principle. However, as I acknowledge below, this situated knowledge or lived experience is limited by the disability experience of a particular practitioner. In other words, no one person or group of people decides what is universal, but rather a more fully developed theoretical and practical understanding of universal design is "to be informed by situated knowledge from a great variety of perspectives" (Lid, 2013, p. 210). The framing just offered complicates the understanding of the concept of universal. The definition changes from a

hegemonic understanding that one opinion carries the day to a more open understanding of the concept of universality in which, rather than being foreclosed, it is actually open to a variety of different perspectives, which could ultimately lead to many definitions of Universal Design rather than one 'universal' definition.

Drawbacks of Universal Design

Universal Design, even understood holistically as outlined above, is not without its drawbacks, as alluded to in the prior section. Here, I continue this discussion in greater depth. One of the most stringent critiques of this formulation centers on who decides what is universal. Alternatively, the usefulness or efficacy of Universal Design in practice is limited by the disability experience of the person attempting to implement it. Put another way, Universal Design is necessarily bounded by the lived experience of the person implementing it. Specifically, Bone (2019) writes, "While instructors with personal disability experiences were more able to enact disability-friendly policies, they were usually only able to enact UDL/UDI to assist those with disabilities the instructors were familiar with" (p. 54).

Rory¹³ echoes the sentiment regarding the importance of familiarity with disability to practice inclusion when she stated,

Probably because if you don't have a disability or you're close to someone who does, you don't really think about it and you just go about your everyday life. So maybe they don't think to include it if they don't – if it doesn't come to mind.

¹³ Rory is a graduate student at a large public university in the southwestern United States, studying forensic psychology. In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends and being outdoors with her camera. She has used the SAILS accommodations since transferring to her university in 2019.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

The issue that Rory is addressing here helps explain why Universal Design, while a useful and often practical construct,¹⁴ represents only one necessary facet of a larger discussion of concepts related to access and accessibility. In my view, what Rory is signaling is the need for greater relationality. Arturo Escobar (2018) similarly argues that “There is an imperative need to fight over governments, universities, and spiritualities by reimagining them through the lens of relationality” (p. 227). Here, Escobar is calling for, in my view, a more communal understanding of the University as an institution, which precipitates the need for a wide variety of stakeholders – including students, faculty, and administrators - - to be brought to the metaphorical table when we are thinking about questions, challenges, and solutions related to access and accessibility.

Another commonly cited critique is that utilizing Universal Design (UD), and particularly the idea of usability ‘for all,’ de-centers disability. People with disabilities actually created many products that enact the principles of UD, but in an effort to mass market these products to ‘all,’ the centrality of disability in their creation became lost or

¹⁴ For example, curb cuts on sidewalks represent one practical architectural example of universal design in practice. These features are not only beneficial to people with disabilities such as those who utilize wheelchairs, walkers, canes, and other physical mobility aids, but are also commonly utilized by other populations, such as parents transporting young children in strollers, etc. Another example of universal design in practice in the classroom that Rory herself mentioned was professors putting class online prior to class. This can assist someone with a disability who, for example, cannot handwrite, or struggles to read handwriting, to understand the content of a lesson prior to the beginning of class. It also gives a student like Rory an accessible resource to which to return when, for example, studying for an exam. Admittedly, such a practice as the one that Rory is suggesting does require additional labor on the part of faculty who can be themselves disabled. This explains the need for more infrastructure to support faculty in making their classes accessible to the greatest number of students. For example, the university could have a team of people whose only job is to assist with accessibility issues, either for students or faculty with disabilities. Admittedly, this is not a perfect solution, as no one individual or group of individuals, no matter how well-trained, can have familiarity with all types of disability and unique needs. However, budgeting for the existence of such a role would represent a proactive step on the part of the university in furtherance of efforts toward disability inclusion.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

overshadowed (Williamson, 2018). In response to these critiques, throughout the remainder of this section I seek to begin the process of opening the concept of Universal Design so that we can productively draw upon it in service of inclusion for students and staff with disabilities.

Toward A Practice Of “Relational Design”: Critical Access Studies and Design Justice

One potential benefit of universal design, broadly conceptualized to include UD, UDL and UDI, could be that access would become ubiquitous within institutional foundations. As Tabitha succinctly put it, in relation to Universal Design and questions of access:

When I think of access, I think access should be invisible. By that, what I mean is, it should be everywhere. And if it's everywhere, then nobody has to worry about it because it's already there. And if it *were* already there, it would be so available that it just really truly wouldn't be a thing. It would just be there... It would just exist.

The creation and maintenance of access require labor on the part, for example, of architects and engineers. However, in making access invisible, it is not reproducing negative hierarchies of value, such as those inherent in, for example, ableism, but rather, reconstructing the system to intentionally center people with disabilities. Put another way, the intentional centering of disabled experience would mean that “access has risen to the heights of social acceptance, disabled people have ascended the hierarchy of value because they are expected to participate fully in the everyday activities of life.” In this way, disability is viewed not as a human condition to be fixed or cured, as is the case under the medical model, but rather “as a continuum of human difference [and] a measure of varying experiences.” (Tabitha, university faculty, email message to author, Sept 25, 2025.)

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

Constantine¹⁵ added on to Tabitha's sentiment, noting, "I think access is really about ensuring that everyone is able to participate to the fullest extent and not leaving out people de facto by the fact that our institutions aren't set up to accommodate them."

Harriet¹⁶ echoed a similar view stating,

When I think about access as an intellectual, I think of it, not just in manifesting as material things, but as a value, and so as an instructor, I think of access in the classroom... I think of access all the time, but I rarely define it because it can be defined as so many things that I'm always open to different interpretations of access by my peers and my students, so it evolves and it changes often.

Harriet's quotation gestures again to the iterative nature of the project of access, which is why, in my view, abolition, understood as an iterative process of social change, pairs so well with the concept of access. Access looks different for everyone and, as such, manifests differently across academic and social spaces. This then helps explain why I am not offering one concrete definition of access but rather multiple potential frameworks, all of which open different possibilities when we are thinking about making a more accessible university and society at large.

Universal Design, broadly conceptualized, also avoids one of the major pitfalls related to accommodations -- namely, the need for students to disclose their disabilities to receive services. If Universal Design, as I have conceptualized it throughout this article,

¹⁵ Constantine is a transfer student at a large public university in the southwestern United States, who is currently in her final year of her Bachelor's degree in History with a double minor in Justice Studies and Sustainable Food Systems. She became disabled at age 8 and, now 22, has spent the last few years working on projects that increase disability visibility, especially in relation to invisible disabilities like Type 1 Diabetes.

¹⁶ Harriet identifies as queer and disabled (both physically and in terms of neurodivergence). They further identify as a first-generation college student from a lower-class background, now in their late 20s. In addition to their work within disability activism, they are also situated within disability studies as an academic.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

were implemented, this disclosure would not be as necessary because accommodations would already be built into the classroom, curricular, and built environments. However, it is impossible to anticipate everyone's individual needs and circumstances, and as such, accommodations and the disclosure process required to attain them will always be necessary to some degree.

For example, a student could suddenly acquire a disability during the semester. Under the concept of Universal Design for Instruction, for example, specific accommodations could already exist for that student, such as flexible assignment deadlines. The existence of these accommodations would then limit the need for disability disclosure (and related stigma) in one respect.¹⁷ However, suppose the student were to experience additional health impacts from their newly-acquired disability, for example, limiting their ability to attend class in person. In that case, they may need to request disability accommodations through the formal university process and also request a flexible attendance accommodation. This hypothetical example illustrates how the provision of accommodations should have both proactive and reactive characteristics, and, as such, would necessarily be iterative and potentially abolitionist in character. Furthermore, in my view, Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) is regularly applied within the University's built and classroom environments. Roxanne¹⁸ provides several examples

¹⁷ For a further discussion of the stigma that often comes with disability disclosure, see the work of Barbara S.S. Hong (2015).

¹⁸ Roxanne is a Ph.D. candidate in engineering and identifies as a disabled woman. Although she has been formally diagnosed and received disability accommodations the majority of her life, the identity of being 'disabled' was one that conflicted her since all of her disabilities are non-apparent.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

of what she understands as Universal Design for Learning, which she sees as ways to mitigate barriers related to access in the classroom:

Ultimately, you still have a disability, so there are still going to be things that you experience, no matter how successful something is. However, the concerns, like not having a screen reader that can read your assignments or whatever, would be mitigated if you had accessible PDFs or captioning on videos. So those accessibility issues -- not things happening in your body, but things related to the classroom -- could be mitigated if you use universal design for learning principles.

I understand Roxanne's examples as potential practical manifestations of universal design for instruction in the classroom, alongside the existence of hybrid courses that allow students to attend class flexibly, either in person or via Zoom, which may eliminate the need to request a flexible-attendance accommodation and the related need for disability disclosure.¹⁹

Unquestionably, a flexible attendance policy such as the one I am suggesting would create difficulties for instructors, particularly in curricular planning. This is because the instructor may not know from one class session to the next how many students will attend in person versus virtually. There is no sure-fire way to 'solve' this difficulty, as the creation of a specific policy related to attendance would encounter the pitfall of not always being able to plan for disability-related health impacts on the part of a faculty member or a student. What would be required, then, is consistent, open communication between faculty and students regarding academic and personal health needs. This type of open

¹⁹ Again, I admit that citing the example of hybrid courses is not a perfect example of universal design for instruction, and any form of universal design is never truly universal and always partial because it necessarily requires the infrastructure to allow for such built-in supports, and this in turn requires significant expenditures on the part of the University.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

communication is admittedly difficult in a university environment that values productivity above holistic wellness.

I recognize the difficulties inherent in implementing UDI, such as flexible attendance policies, but I view these policies as fundamentally responsive to the needs and lived realities of disabled bodyminds. Here, I seek only to acknowledge the concerns related to implementing a campus-wide flexible attendance policy, rather than providing a 'solution' to them. Any solution to these issues, as noted above, would come from direct, frequent communication among students, faculty, and administrators regarding specific disability needs. Those of my interviewees who referenced "communication" pointed to a persistent theme: the lack of institutional communication on the part of my and their universities. Therefore, the solution, per se, would be a direct result of creating such an open line of communication, which would, in theory, generate multiple ideas and initiate the iterative process of change regarding attendance policies. If such an iterative process were to occur, it would be the first step toward applying an abolitionist lens to flexible attendance policies across the university.

In summary, my interviewees and I advocate for a fundamental reimagining of the University, built upon the implementation of the concepts of non-reformist reform and *abolitionist educational access*. These practices would allow for gradual change over time, as long as that change serves the ultimate goal of building or constructing a university, from a theoretical and practical perspective that understands all bodyminds and life experiences as fully human. The implementation of non-reformist reform and related *abolitionist educational access* in practice, through the expanded use of Universal Design for Instruction (e.g., flexible assignment deadlines, flexible attendance policies, or

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

hybrid courses), would limit the need for retrofits such as accommodations and the accommodation eligibility process. Instead, these supports would already be built into the fabric of the institution, and they would change and evolve as the bodies within the University changed and evolved themselves. When I refer to built-in supports, I am advocating for the implementation of a university-wide Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) practice, with notable alterations. Although these practices are unquestionably applicable, as noted above, none of them represents a sure-fire solution or a panacea.

The larger-scale implementation of UDI would represent a necessary step. However, this admittedly leaves open the question of whether faculty members themselves have the capacity, both in terms of potential disability and institutional support, to more broadly implement the practice. Where I differ from UDI, as currently conceptualized, is that it relies too heavily on instructors' ability to anticipate students' needs (Bone, 2019). To condition the possibility of a more proactive and inclusive classroom process for students with disabilities, we must adopt a more systemic, interconnected approach, as Senge and Sterman (1992) term it, "system thinking." To think in this systemic and interconnected way, we must first seek to disrupt neoliberalism and its related logics, which privilege certain bodies and ways of knowing. This necessary dismantling of systems of oppression represents a crucial step in the cyclical process of abolition.

What my interviewees and I are advocating is a broader application of the principles of co-creation of knowledge and shared governance to classroom and program

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

design contexts. Winston²⁰ highlights the need for alternative non-ableist ways of reimagining programmatic design, although he does not actually use the language of ableism, when he states,

We're just being poured into [molds for] cement... Again, it goes back to I'm right here... It's not that [my academic counselors] don't care, but there's no direct care toward helping me be successful in my own way. They want me to be successful in how they're doing it, and there's no other way around it.

What Winston is highlighting here is that the university, as currently constituted, especially within specific academic programs such as teacher education, understands pedagogy as a very much one-size-fits-all endeavor. He expands on this point, stating,

[E]ven with our [synchronous classes] where we meet for two hours, three hours, whatever the class length is, we're with an instructor and everybody else is online... for me personally, that interaction doesn't work because I'm an in-person learner. I have to have that interaction and not just through a screen.

In advocating for the broader application of co-created knowledge in the classroom, specifically, and in the university more generally, I adhere to the principles of critical access studies and, specifically, the subfield of design justice. Vanderbilt University professor Aimi Hamraie (2017) defines critical access studies as follows: “how we structure knowledge, interact with material things, and tell stories about the users of built environments matter for belonging and justice” (p. 3). I read this formulation as deeply connected to questions of which bodyminds have agency in particular spaces and which knowledges are centered in these discussions.

²⁰ Winston is a 35-year-old veteran, personal trainer, who has completed his master's degree in sports management and successfully completed a marathon in all 50 states. He has overcome and become self-accomplished on his own. His focus is on helping others with various disabilities.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

Interestingly, Hamraie also explicitly connects critical access studies to ideas of abolition, which in my view demonstrates the transformative potential of the field. Specifically, the author offers a provocation stating,

How could critical access studies be a commitment to abolition and creating the kinds of worlds that we want to exist and doing that in a way that also challenges how capitalism and structural racism shape who we understand to be disabled? (Hamraie, 2020, 57:12-57:31)

I understand critical access studies then as a field that asks us as scholars and those interested in fundamental change to move beyond traditional understandings of disability (i.e. the centering and privileging of visible disabilities), access/accessibility (i.e. ideas based in bare minimum legal compliance), and service provision (i.e., the checklist mentality based on adherence to a particular diagnosis). The question becomes: What formulation might critical access studies offer beyond those already discussed?

I contend that the most helpful concept in the field is Design Justice. Design Justice, as applied to my project, is anchored by the following four critical principles:

- We center the voices of those directly impacted by the design process's outcomes.
- We prioritize the design's impact on the community over the designer's intentions.
- We view change as emerging from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process, rather than as a point at the end of one.
- We believe that everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience and that we all have unique and brilliant contributions to bring to a design process (Costanza-Chock, 2020, p. 19).

The idea of co-creating knowledge specifically dovetails with the fourth principle of design justice: that all people have meaningful insights to contribute to the design process, based on their unique life experiences. For this principle to apply, we must first understand design as inherently universal, i.e., everywhere in our world, not just within the built and/or classroom environments as we traditionally understand design. Understanding design as

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

‘universal,’ or belonging to everyone, productively opens the concept. This represents the core principle behind what I am tentatively calling “relational design.” My understanding of design as inherently relational then dovetails with Arturo Escobar’s (2018) understanding of the concept. Specifically, the author writes: “We design our world, [and by extension our university] and our world designs us back” (p. 4). Therefore, I understand my/our project as explicitly centered in ideas of critical access studies and design justice.

Both of Winston’s quotes above, in my view, speak particularly to the first, second, and fourth principles of design justice. The first principle is exactly what Winston is asking for. He is calling for his voice to be centered rather than devalued or cast aside. The second principle, likewise, applies to Winston’s situation. The creators of his online teacher education program were not attempting to cause harm or disruption to student learning, but, in Winston’s case, this was fundamentally the result of his department placing him in a fully online program. The fourth principle also fundamentally underscores what Winston is asking for – namely, to be involved directly in the process of programmatic design. Design Justice emphasizes that all people are designers, grounded in our unique lived experiences.

Conclusion and Provocations

In this concluding section, I discuss the current context of higher education, which is inextricably connected to the current political climate, and I discuss how to apply the principles of abolition and *abolitionist educational access* to the disability services environment. Put another way, what might it mean to truly adopt the principles of abolition, design justice, and critical access studies in a university setting? I do not mean to say

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/ DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

that there is any one-size-fits-all solution to these questions. However, instead, I invite my readers and those interested in establishing truly inclusive universities and educational practices into a larger discussion and thought experiment, framed from an intentionally abolitionist perspective, about how we might ultimately utilize disability services as either a starting point or continuation to build a more inclusive university as an institutional formation. This, of course, recognizes that every situation and every university is inherently different, facing its own unique challenges and opportunities. In line with my abolitionist standpoint, I view these questions as provocations rather than having concrete answers or as tasks to be 'finished' or 'completed.'

In posing these questions, I must acknowledge that the landscape in which universities operate has changed drastically in recent months, due to significant cuts to higher education initiated by the current presidential administration in the United States. Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, such as disability support services, have come under significant scrutiny, and in this landscape, implementing the changes I have suggested throughout this article may be more challenging. However, fundamentally, the greater inclusion of student and faculty voices in the redesign of disability services and in how we approach education in the classroom does not cost any additional financial resources. This intentionally inclusive practice will, in my view, bring us closer, from a theoretical and practical perspective, to building truly equitable universities. In my view, to broaden inclusion and inclusive practices, we must move beyond ideas of bare minimum legal compliance and toward human-centered (and specifically disability-centered) ways of engagement within the university. This then would necessarily require the reimagining of current social relations, which represents the ultimate goal of abolition

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/
DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

as a theory and practice. If we were to apply an intentionally abolitionist analytic to the institutional formation of the university, this would, in my view, lead to the dismantling of ableism and other structural forms of oppression.

References

- Agid, S. (2014). Making anyway: Education, designing, abolition. *Lateral*, 3.
- Ben-Moshe, L. (2020). *Decarcerating Disability: Deinstitutionalization and Prison Abolition*.
University of Minnesota Press.
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C. & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative health research*, 26(13), 1802–1811.
- Boggs, A., Meyerhoff, E., Mitchell, N., & Schwartz-Weinstein, Z. (2019, August). Abolitionist university studies: An invitation. *Abolition Journal*, 1(1), 3–29.
- Black, R. D., Weinberg, L.A., & Brodwin, M.G. (2014). Universal design for instruction and learning: A pilot study of faculty instructional methods and attitudes related to students with disabilities in higher education. *Exceptionality Education International*, 24, 48–64. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:56217886>
- Bone, K. M. (2017, April). Trapped behind the glass: Crip theory and disability identity. *Disability & Society*, 32(9), 1297–1314.
- Bone, K. M. (2019). *Where to begin: A pilot study of accessibility in the English composition classroom* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama].
- Candela, A. G. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *The qualitative report*, 24(3), 619–628.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Sage.
- Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). *Design justice*. The MIT Press.
- Davis, L. J. (1995). *Enforcing normalcy: Disability, deafness, and the body*. Verso.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/
DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

Dolmage, J. T. (2017). *Academic ableism: Disability and higher education*. University of Michigan Press.

Dolmage, J. (2017). From steep steps to retrofit to universal design, from collapse to austerity: Neo-liberal spaces of disability. In J. Boys (Ed.), *Disability, space, architecture: A reader*. Routledge.

DO-IT. Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology Center. (2023). Universal design vs. accommodations.

<https://www.washington.edu/doi/universal-design-vs-accommodation#block-menu-block-3>

Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds*. Duke University Press.

Garland-Thomson, R. (1997). *Extraordinary bodies: Figuring physical disability in American culture and literature*. Columbia University Press.

Gamez, G. (2021, February 27). Community Resiliency and Action: Recovery and Resurgence Across Arizona. [PowerPoint slides]. Local to Global Justice Forum and Festival, Tempe, AZ.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBh3OqemXEU&t=606s>

Gilmore, R.W. (1991). *Golden gulag: Prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing California*. University of California Press.

Gorz, A. (1964). *Strategy for labor: A radical proposal*. Beacon Press.

Hamraie, A. (2017). *Building access: Universal design and the politics of disability*. University of Minnesota Press.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/
DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

Hamraie, A. (2020, November 12). *Critical access studies* [Public Lecture at Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, MA].

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCL-EtS2F5k>

Harney, S. & Moten, F. (2013). *The undercommons: Fugitive planning and black study*. Minor Compositions.

Hong, B. S. S. (2015, April). Qualitative analysis of the barriers college students with disabilities experience in higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 56(3), 209–226. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2015.0032>

Kaba, M. (2021). *We Do This Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*. Haymarket Books.

Labaree, D. F. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34(1), 39–81.

URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1163342>

Lid, I. M. (2013). Developing the theoretical content in universal design. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 15(3), 203-215.

Mathiesen, T. (1974). *The politics of abolition*. Halsted Press.

McRuer, R. (2006). *Crip theory: Cultural signs of queerness and disability*. New York University Press.

Mingus, M. (2010, November). Changing the framework: Disability justice: How our communities can move beyond access to wholeness. *RESIST Newsletter*.

Senge, P. & Sterman, J. D. (1992). Systems thinking and organizational learning: Acting locally and thinking globally in the organization of the future. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 59(1).

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/
DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

Williamson, B. (2018). *Accessible America*. New York University Press.

Wood, T., Dolmage, J., Price, M., & Lewiecki-Wilson, C. (2014). Moving beyond
Disability 2.0 in composition studies. *Composition Studies*, 42(2), 147–150.

Appendix A

Participant Demographics and Self-Descriptions

TABLE 1. Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender/ pronouns	Race/ Ethnicity	Student/Staff	Disability Identity	Use of Univeristy Accommodations?
<i>Akoshia</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Undergrad</i>	<i>Non-apparent, but usually chooses not to disclose/ covers</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Constantine</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>white</i>	<i>Undergrad</i>	<i>non-apparent</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Dave</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>white</i>	<i>Undergrad</i>	<i>apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Harriet</i>	<i>non-binary</i>	<i>white</i>	<i>Grad student</i>	<i>non-apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Fannie</i>	<i>queer femme</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Grad student</i>	<i>non-apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Frankie</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>Mexican/black/ Native</i>	<i>Grad student</i>	<i>apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Linnette</i>	<i>female</i>		<i>Undergrad</i>	<i>non-apparent; does not self-identify with the label of disability</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Maddie</i>	<i>non-binary; animal-</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Grad student</i>	<i>apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/
DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

	<i>spirited, LGBTQ</i>				
<i>Manny</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Grad student</i>	<i>non- apparent</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Prince</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>white</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>apparent; doesn't identify as disabled</i>	
<i>Riley</i>	<i>trans non- binary</i>		<i>Grad student</i>	<i>non- apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Rory</i>	<i>female</i>		<i>Undergrad</i>	<i>apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Roxanne</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>white</i>	<i>Grad student</i>	<i>non- apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Sadie</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>white</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>non- apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Shelby</i>	<i>female</i>		<i>Grad student</i>	<i>non- apparent</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Tabitha</i>			<i>Faculty</i>	<i>apparent; does not always identify as disabled</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Winston</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>white</i>	<i>Grad student</i>	<i>non- apparent</i>	<i>No</i>

Notes: Table 1 breaks down the demographics of my participants.

TABLE 2. *Participants' Self-Description*

Pseudony m	Self-Description
<i>Akosha</i>	Akosha is a sophomore majoring in criminal justice. She plans on attending Law School in the future. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her cat, betta fish, and tarantulas.
<i>Constantine</i>	Constantine is a transfer student who is currently in her final year of her Bachelor's degree in History with a double minor in Justice Studies and Sustainable Food Systems. She became disabled at age 8 and, now 22, has spent the last few years working on projects that increase disability visibility, especially in relation to invisible disabilities like Type 1 Diabetes.
<i>Dave</i>	Dave self-identifies as an "undergrad student in my mid-20s... studying space exploration; I have a disability that affects my mobility."
<i>Harriet</i>	Harriet identifies as queer and disabled (both physically and in terms of neurodivergence). They further identify as a first-generation college student from a lower-class background, now in their late 20s. In addition to their work within disability activism, they are also situated within disability studies as an academic.
<i>Fannie</i>	Fannie is a current graduate student who identifies as "black, queer, femme, disabled" and is a strong civil rights advocate.
<i>Frankie</i>	Frankie is completing a master's degree in Justice Studies. His passions include music and sports. He is a visually impaired researcher focusing on the intersections between music, disability, and education.
<i>Linnette</i>	Linnette was an undergraduate student and a member of the Accessibility Coalition. She was majoring in Special Education and was an advocate for people with disabilities.
<i>Maddie</i>	Maddie has graduated from at least six different programs of study at her university and is a researcher and fellow worker with other disabled students within the university itself. She shares the goal of creating a more inclusive student environment.

CRITICAL DISABILITY DISCOURSES/
DISCOURS CRITIQUES DANS LE CHAMP DU HANDICAP 10(2)

<i>Manny</i>	Manny identifies as black and is impacted by ADHD. He is a university alum who studied engineering, and he also played football in high school.
<i>Prince</i>	Prince is a university alum with a strong commitment to making campus physically accessible for everyone. In his spare time, he is a huge hockey fan, especially of the Washington Capitals.
<i>Riley</i>	Riley is a 23-year old nonbinary Masters graduate. Riley earned their B.S. in the biological sciences with a concentration in genetics in 2022 and their M.S. in Biology and Society in 2023. Riley currently works in the behavioral health field.
<i>Rory</i>	Rory is a graduate student studying forensic psychology. In her free time she enjoys hanging out with friends and being outdoors with her camera. She has used the SAILS accommodations since transferring to her university in 2019.
<i>Roxanne</i>	Roxanne is a Ph.D. candidate in engineering and identifies as a disabled woman. Although she has been formally diagnosed and received disability accommodations the majority of her life, the identity of being “disabled” was one that conflicted her since all of her disabilities are non-apparent.
<i>Sadie</i>	Sadie is a faculty member, who grew up with hereditary hearing loss due to a dominant genetic mutation.
<i>Shelby</i>	Shelby is a university alumna who graduated with a masters of justice studies and a graduate certificate of disability studies. In her free time she enjoys embroidery and knitting in the comfort of her dogs Milo and Posy.
<i>Tabitha</i>	Tabitha is on the faculty of a research one university who has worked with children for more than 30 years and whose happy place is always outdoors and anywhere in the company of dogs.
<i>Winston</i>	Winston is a 35-year-old veteran, personal trainer, who has completed his master's degree in sports management, and successfully completed a marathon in all 50 states. He has overcome and become self-accomplished on his own. His focus is on helping others with various disabilities.

Notes: Table 2 is composed of self-portraits of my interview participants.

Appendix B

Research Questions

- How has ableism at the University shaped the current climate for students and staff with both apparent and “non-apparent impairments” (Evans, 2017)?
- How do students and staff with these functional limitations experience the University campus, and why and how do students and staff with disabilities access/refuse/negotiate related services?
- How do students and staff with apparent and “non-apparent impairments” imagine an alternative University that would recognize us as fully human (Evans, 2017)?

Individual Interview Questions for Students

- 1) How do you self-identify, or what are your primary identities?
- 2) What does access mean/look like to/for you?
- 3) Do you feel as though the University recognizes and respects your identity or identities? Why or why not?
 - 3a) Do you utilize accommodations from Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services (SAILS)? If so, could you tell me, in general terms, what accommodations you use?
 - 3b) How did you find the accommodations eligibility process? This is the process that everyone who registers with SAILS must complete.
- 4) If you do not utilize SAILS accommodations, can you please explain why you choose not to utilize these services?
 - 4a) Are there any services that you would like SAILS to provide that the program does not currently offer?
- 5) Are you familiar with the language of the our university charter as it relates to inclusion?
 - 5a) In your experience, do you find that our university lives up to its stated goals of equity and inclusion?
 - 5b) If so, what inclusive experiences have you had within the institution and if not what situation or situations do you wish would have been more inclusive?
- 6) From your experience, do you have any suggestions for making the institution more fully inclusive in line with its stated commitment?
- 7) How do you think the university as an institution would react to your suggestions?

Individual Interview Questions for University Staff

How do you self- identify or what are your primary identities?

What does access mean/look like to/for you, from both an institutional and personal perspective?

In your view, what is the most impactful improvement in the area of access that the University has made since you began working at the institution?

Are there any services that you would like to see SAILS have the resources to provide that the institution does not currently offer?

In your view, what are the institutional barriers to SAILS providing the additional services you mentioned in part A?

Are you familiar with the language of our university charter as it relates to inclusion?

In your experience, do you find that our university lives up to its stated goals of equity and inclusion?

If so, what inclusive experiences have you had at the institution and if not what situation or situations do you wish would have been more inclusive?

From your experience within the institution, do you have any suggestions for making the institution more fully inclusive in line with its stated commitment?

How do you think the university as an institution would react to your suggestions?

Focus Group Questions

- 1) What theme/s stood out to you from our individual interview?
- 2) Is there anything you would like to add that you did not have a chance to mention in our individual interview?
- 3) What does universal design mean to/look like for you?
- 4) What specific changes from a policy perspective would you recommend to make you feel more fully seen and included at our university?