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Diversifying Consultant Skill Sets: Refiguring Peer-to-Peer Feedback through Feminist Disability Pedagogy

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This paper posits a new way of training consultants in communication and writing centers to provide the most effective feedback for clients with disabilities. I explain how I first came to this research and analyze the current literature regarding how we train our consultants to interact with these clients. Then, using my background as a feminist rhetorician, I propose two specific methods for giving consultants the confidence to engage ethically in providing feedback to their clients with disabilities while avoiding ableist practices. The first is a critical awareness of subjected identities in society, academia, and the Centers, and the other is rhetorical listening. After examining these approaches, I relate a case study in which I have employed these strategies over the past year with a client of mine who has disabilities. My interactions with this client have been successful and ongoing. Ultimately, this type of critical awareness and ethical engagement should be an important aspect of training in regards to marginalized bodies in our centers.

Backstory and Beginnings

As a graduate assistant at a mid-sized state university, I deliver workshops about public speaking to diverse audiences. These workshops mostly consist of strategies to understand and improve organization and delivery competencies. One morning, however, I was giving a workshop on the elements of public speaking delivery, and was just finishing up the spiel on managing anxiety, when a young woman raised her hand and asked, "But what do you do if you just have an anxiety disorder in general?" It was in this moment I realized just how much I had fallen

short in identifying the ableist language that could weave itself into our theories and practices as multiliteracy scholars and advocates.

After this workshop, while back at my desk, my mind reeled with similar instances I had barely noticed before: giving a workshop on methods of utilizing space with individuals in the audience who were in wheelchairs or walked on crutches, explaining adequate public speaking volume to a deaf woman, emphasizing the importance of posture to people in the audience with motor neuron disabilities, etc. In short, I felt small; I felt like I had egregiously failed an already marginalized population. I was walking into these classrooms as an authority and a liaison for the student-empowerment-centered space of the University Communication Center, yet while spouting research and theories on what makes a "good" public speaker, I ignored the binary I was creating between students who could practice the things I said they should do and students who could not. As Center participants and innovators, we must take these moments of failure and reflection seriously. We are responsible for the space of authority and rhetorical meaning-making we create when consulting clients. As such, we must not let able-bodied normativity be our default for the feedback we give students and train consultants to give students.

I began to investigate this problem in the physical space of our Communication Center and quickly realized that I was not alone in my sentiments. The undergraduate students that I train and who work under my leadership were also experiencing moments of perceived failure to meet the needs of students whose bodies did not fall into academically normative categories. I told them my frustrations, and they released a torrent of similar circumstances they had also encountered throughout their time as consultants. In some of these situations, they came to me or another member of the leadership team in the moment of the consultation and said, frazzled and anxious, "I don't know what to tell them!"

These consultants have gone through a semester-long class where they learn the importance of peer tutoring, student empowerment, and meeting people where they are. They closely adhere to the hallmarks of communication center theory that say it is a space of equality and "a site wherein students can better meet the educational outcomes of communication while avoiding...the traditional hindrances of power that are inherent to a conventional classroom setting" (Pensoneau-Conway and Romerhausen 39). Every single trainee must read and write on a

series of essays that posit Communication Centers as what Sandra Pensoneau-Conway and Nick Romerhausen have dubbed "Critical Sites of Intervention and Empowerment." This phrase means that Centers should intervene in the traditional pedagogical method wherein students act as sponges that soak up whatever information the instructor disseminates and then squeeze it out later on a test. Instead, centers are in the unique position of encouraging students to exercise their own powers of thinking critically and epistemologically, and resist a structure that values certain bodies over others. These consultants in the Communication Center know and practice this theory of intervention, so they know something is not right when faced with meeting the needs of clients who have disabilities. The following article will detail potential practical and customizable ways consultants can better meet the needs of students with disabilities in the Centers.

Introduction and Argument

Subscriptions to "isms," racism, sexism, ableism etc., both subtle and overt, are not uncommon occurrences in higher education. For years, feminist organizations on campus and off have fought tirelessly against the exclusion of marginalized bodies in academia. Two groups in particular that have made a massive impact on creating a safe and non-judgmental environment on campus are the University Communication Center and Writing Center. These centers, while being resources clients can visit for peer feedback on various oral and written projects, are also spaces of dialogue and community. For example, Ward and Schwartzman write that, in the space of a Center consultation, clients should "see their consultants more as partners in building supportive relationships rather than as superiors dictating instructions" (371). One purpose of this article is to explore how consultants can help cultivate this supportive relationship with clients who have disabilities by interrogating their own potential ableism in the moment of the consultation. These strategies will enhance consultants' awareness of hegemonic discourse that could arise in consultations, as well as how to silence these biases in order to create a more ethical, feminist environment for all parties. In this environment, differences are celebrated and feedback is rooted in a growth-oriented mindset instead of a mindset that juxtaposes clients with a rigid, ableist standard of what a successful writer or speaker should look like. For the purposes of this

research, I will focus mainly on Communication Center consultations, but these strategies can apply to Writing Centers as well.

This article will use Jay Dolmage's definition of ableism from his book Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education. According to Dolmage, "[a]bleism renders disability as abject, invisible, disposable, less than human, while able-bodiedness is represented as at once ideal, normal, and the mean or default" (7). This particular definition is significant in that it articulates the hegemonic framework inherent in how society categorizes and values bodies. This is not to say that consultants automatically see clients with disabilities as abject or disposable, but this definition does expose and articulate how ableism could sneak its way into a consultant's feedback.

Investigating the Literature

Writing center scholars Sharifa Daniels, Rebecca Day Babcock, and Doria Daniels posit disability accessibility as a key component of writing centers' theoretical and practical mission. They assert that,

> Writing centers, if we are true to our ethos and values, should be at the forefront of tirelessly working for policies that take disability into account . . . We should constantly monitor, evaluate, and re-examine our practices. Writing centers therefore have a dual charge: claiming that the writing center is a place where students with disabilities can feel at home and that our pedagogy can meet their needs, and then to make sure that it does. (26)

My article expands upon this research and demonstrates how a rhetorically collaborative approach to tutoring students with disabilities can be applied across Multiliteracy Centers. There is very little written about disability in Communication Center theory and pedagogy, and much of what is written does not provide adequate space to explore the innovative possibilities of working with students who have disabilities. For example, Kathleen J. Turner and Theodore F. Sheckels's cornerstone work Communication Centers: A Theory-Based Guide to Training and Management devotes only two pages to "disabled speakers." Also, the disabilities Turner and Sheckles delineate privilege specific physical disabilities over less visible ones by focusing only on "those who are

wheelchair bound, those who are deaf, and those who are blind" (153). These limited, specific cases do not leave room for an organic, customizable, holistic approach to consulting clients with disabilities. It is not to say this book is not a well-conceived, useful "guide to training and management"; many Communication Centers, including mine, utilize its methods and advice in real time. However, we as consultants and directors should be critical of this unfortunate lack of space devoted to students with disabilities.

Also, Turner's and Sheckels's explanation of disabilities assumes a systematic expectation on the part of the consultant about what these clients with disabilities are going to need help with before they even sit down and start having a conversation. This kind of blanket approach to feedback is problematic if the goal is to have a dialogue with the client. Moreover, the feedback advice they propose seeks to reconfigure bodies with disabilities to "seem" less disabled or to accommodate the expectations of the able-bodied students in the audience. For example, they write that, "A blind student can create the illusion of eye contact by sensing where the audience is. The student can angle his or her head up or down and move it side-to-side so as to bring the eyes in line with where the audience is" (154, my emphasis). This method of faking able-bodiedness for the sake of the audience can have detrimental effects on both the client's ethos and their speaking confidence.

Of course, one could argue that not faking able-bodiedness could also damage this client's ethos with their audience, but the role of the Communication Center is to provide a space of dialogue and collaboration with the client, making sure to listen to their needs first instead of stigmatizing and diagnosing their shortcomings as an able-bodied society would. Taking the time to hear the client communicate their own experiences as a speaker or writer before going into a predetermined feedback spiel will help improve the quality of both the consultant's feedback and the ethics of their interpersonal competence. A client with disabilities should never leave a consultation with any feelings whatsoever of inherent inferiority or defect.

Communication studies scholarship is just beginning to focus on students with disabilities in the classroom, and I believe their observations can extend to a center's space as well. Bettina Brockmann and Michael S. Jeffress in their article "Unleashing Disability Perspectives in the Public

Speaking Course" offer strategies for ethical awareness and pedagogy in the classroom. For example, they write about "unlearning" the "uncertainties" and social fear we have when discussing disabilities or communicating with someone who has disabilities:

> Unlearning means stepping out of our comfort zones . . . Instead of succumbing to fear, we should model how to introduce and communicate new and complex subjects. This does not mean that we must have all the answers. It means . . . exploring these issues together. Through this process, all participants are involved in an encompassing and rewarding experience of producing knowledge. (208-209)

By admitting our uncertainties and allowing ourselves to engage in a vulnerable space with a person who has disabilities, we create an environment of radical empowerment and a rhetorical meaning-making that emphasizes equality. Also, Brockman and Jeffress call on bell hooks's "engaged pedagogy" to further an idea of ethical openness with students who have disabilities. They assert that we must be "open to learning from people who are different from us ... [and] 'that empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks'" (209). Therefore, we can see that in the past year, communication instructors have been giving critical thought to radical, pedagogical engagement in the classroom. I believe these same concepts, combined with the feminist disability concepts I will discuss shortly, are readily transferable to consultations in the Communication and Writing Centers.

Feminist Disability Pedagogy
Effective, accurate feedback is vital, but the multiplicity of the disability experience should be celebrated, not silenced or condemned. So, the feedback consultants give ought to be critical and applicable yet avoid ableist language. Our Centers must be spaces where consultants and clients can engage in a dialogue that undoes societal oppression instead of reinforcing it. They should know how to elicit and uplift the uniqueness of communication and writing styles that every single body offers. To this end, I propose we adopt a feminist disability perspective for how we train consultants to give feedback.

What do I mean by a feminist disability perspective? Kim Q. Hall's Feminist Disability Studies posits disability as a methodological framework for doing ethical, feminist work, which, as we have seen, is the ultimate goal of a communication and writing center. A feminist disability studies perspective undoes the one-dimensional identity that society and university politics tend to ascribe to individuals with disabilities. Instead of categorizing the disability as defective or a hurdle to overcome, this perspective frames disability as epistemological, as a potential avenue for innovative methods of knowledge production and ways of interpreting the world. A feminist disability framework upholds the feminist work of communication and writing centers by giving consultants the tools to value the client as they are and listen to the client's own experiences, identities, and goals when it comes to their disability and academic identity, all in the short space of a consultation.

Why is this feminist perspective of equality important? Ward and Schwartzman investigate the phenomenon of trust as it relates to a successful Communication Center consultation. They argue that a consultant's interpersonal intelligence and ability to connect to the client as a person, not just as another appointment, is what allows for a meaningful, effective conversation to take place between the two parties. Comparatively, in Writing Centers, Thomas Newkirk delineates the importance of the "first five minutes" of any writing consultation. He says that the "opening minutes of the conference are critically important in giving the conference direction . . . The student's contributions in these opening minutes need to be used to give the conference a mutually agreeable, mutually understood direction" (327-328). In a society that already sees individuals with disabilities through countless screens of stigma and limitation, it is crucial they are able to sit down with a consultant who is aware and critical of these biases, and who consistently asks for the individual's insights on the direction the consultation needs to go, instead of relying on their own assumptions. There are several strategies that comprise conducting a successful feminist consultation with individuals who have disabilities. For the purposes of this research, I will focus on two: critical awareness of subject identity formation and rhetorical listening.

Subject Identity Formation

Rhetoric scholar Kenneth Burke, in his influential Language as Symbolic Action, coined the phrase "terministic screens" to theorize the epistemological way that we interact with, and assign value to, the objects and people around us. He argues that we place interpretive screens over them in an attempt to understand and categorize our relationship to them. For example, giving the term "disabled" to a body that cannot perform a certain normalized or expected task in society, such as walking, and assigning value to that body accordingly. However, Burke asserts these screens are completely discursive, and rely solely on the participation and propagation of the larger public. To echo Foucault's Madness and Civilization, the abled/disabled binary is not a natural law; it is constructed based on the overarching value systems of a society. In writing and communication centers, consultants constantly use terministic screens of what "good" writing, speaking, etc. looks like in order to provide their client with feedback. Therefore, a critical understanding of how these screens are being employed, and how to recognize when a particular screen may be harmful, is vital.

Kim Q. Hall gives terministic screens a disability context. She writes in her book Feminist Disability Studies that disability is a pivotal, intersectional crossroads of race, gender, sociopolitics, and public/private spheres of identity and performance. However, as aforementioned with Foucault, disability is a constructed term. She says it is nonetheless crucial we recognize disability and its multifarious, intersectional forms in the narratives of oppression we encounter so that we do not wax complicit. This oppression includes relegating people with disabilities into a loop of the "overcoming narrative" where they must always be in the process of being "cured" or "fixed" or where disability is socially rationalized as always "burdensome" and the marker of "a diminished quality of life" (2-3).

To avoid this oppressive perspective, consultants should constantly interrogate the intellectual, rhetorical space of the Communication and Writing Center, as well as their own ideological and material subscriptions to potential biases. Furthering this notion of awareness concerning social constructions of disability, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson imagines a space of bodily difference where we scrutinize and "complicate our understandings of social justice, subject formation,

subjugated knowledges and collective action" (13). Garland-Thomson positions the ability/disability system as an outdated process society ascribes to in order to produce capitalistically agenced subjects by "differentiating and marking bodies" as abled and disabled (17). Garland-Thompson's ideas of a more nuanced approach to bodies mirrors aforementioned center ideologies concerning non-judgmental student empowerment. Thus, consultants must not see their clients as a one-dimensional label of "disabled", but should instead adopt a more intersectional approach that allows the client space to define themselves.

For instance, consultants develop the ability to swiftly read an individual client or a room full of clients and react accordingly. We need this Feminist Disability perspective and skill because hegemonic discourse is always waiting to sneak into our quick reads of people and situations, which is not the fault of the consultants, but rather a side effect of living in a patriarchal society. Communications scholar Dennis Mumby posits that

Communication/discourse is not simply the vehicle through which ideas, values, beliefs, etc., are disseminated in a culture, but is rather constitutive of a social actor's culture and meaning system...communication not only constitutes cultural meaning systems, but is also an intrinsic part of the means by which relations of domination are produced and reproduced. (293)

These dominating, marginalizing narratives accrue their power by the very fact that they are perceived as "intrinsic" and are therefore hard to detect. As an example, Emily Stones's article "Exploring the Intersection of Ableism, Image-Building and Hegemonic Masculinity in the Political Communication Classroom" also explores how insidious patriarchal influences infiltrate academic learning environments. She explains, "an understanding of disability . . . requires an understanding of the socio-cultural context in which it is evoked . . . Disability scholars and activists have long argued that culture informs our opinions, definitions and actions toward persons with disabilities" (189). One example she uses is the "supercrip" narrative, which is "the portrayal of a . . . person who unexpectedly overcomes disability and becomes successful despite their disability" (189). In educational settings especially, individuals tend to place expectations of "supercrip" or overcoming narratives on students who have disabilities by juxtaposing them with the rigid academic norm and judging their abilities against it. By being aware of all these societal

constructs in the space of a consultation, consultants can better detect and silence their own biases and expectations for a client.

Communication constitutes a site of epistemological discourse in writing centers as well. Kenneth Bruffee explains the importance of collaborative writing sessions in Writing Centers by describing them as a "social context" of action: "Peer tutoring . . . makes students--both tutors and tutees--aware that writing is a social artifact . . . however displaced writing may seem in time and space from the rest of the writer's community of readers and other writers . . . [it] continues to be an act of conversational exchange" (91). When a consultant sits down with a writer who has disabilities, they enter into a social conversation that engages with disability both individually and contextually. Thus, it is crucial they are aware of the social aspects of the writer's conversational exchange by engaging in a respectful dialogue about their personally and socially constructed identity as a writer with disabilities.

Ultimately, Garland-Thomson argues that "a feminist disability [perspective] denaturalizes disability by unseating the dominant assumption that disability is something that is wrong with someone" (18). "Denaturalizing" disability means that we expose the societal stigmas and constructs that affect our understandings of it. This critical perspective on representational structures, terministic screens, and subject identity formation must be a cornerstone for our work in communication and writing center praxis. Without it, our commitment to individual student empowerment is in danger of falling under hegemonic influence. My subsequent case study will display this method in action.

Rhetorical Listening

Writing and Communication Centers are beginning to theorize the importance of listening as an active and reflexive strategy inside and outside of the consultation space, but much remains to be said concerning the full implications of listening's rhetorical significance in the moment of a consultation. For example, in communication center scholarship, Cuny, Wilde, and Stevens, have coined the term "empathetic listening" as a practice that "requires listeners to refrain from judging the speaker and instead advocates placing themselves in the speaker's position. Doing so allows the listener to [try to] understand

the speaker's point of view" (217-218). Of course, a consultant should not assume they can know what it is like to live with a disability they do not have, but empathetic listening does train the consultant to place importance on the client's experiences and insights. In writing center scholarship, Romeo García emphasizes the value of consultant reflexivity and listening by positioning these acts as anti-racist and decolonizing strategies that expose and de-center hegemonic discourse in the Writing Center. I argue these perspectives, coupled with an intentionally explicit emphasis on listening as a feminist rhetorical act, can apply to anti-ableist consultant training in the Centers.

Feminist scholar Krista Ratcliffe defines rhetorical listening as "a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relations to any person, text, or culture" (17). This "stance of openness" is an important feminist intervention because it allows consultants and clients to collaboratively challenge the exclusionary, ableist discourses that would seek to undervalue and marginalize these students' abilities. By adopting a rhetorically open stance, the consultant will be able to better listen to the client's lived experiences with their identity, and gear the session towards a productive, growth-oriented dialogue. Rhetorical listening and openness help avoid a hierarchical, one-sided litany of dos and don'ts that emphasize the client's failures instead of celebrating the strengths they bring to their work. For instance, in a communication center or writing center session, rhetorical listening can consist of the consultant asking specific, yet open-ended questions of the client and listening openly and purposefully to the responses. They can ask questions about the client's identity as a communicator and writer, not regardless of their disability or as a consequence of their disability, but rather as a consubstantial facet of their disability, which I will detail later in the case study section.

By applying this strategy of rhetorical listening with the societal and academic implications of subject identity in mind, consultants can ask identity-oriented questions, such as What are your experiences, fears, and goals as a speaker/writer? Or What does written/oral success look like to you specifically? The consultant then listens, silently and strategically, keeping in mind that this person is not a disability that needs curing; they are human, and their existence deserves to be heard and validated. Thus, rhetorical listening can heighten consultants' understanding of intersectional subject identities and an individual's

experiences with these intersections, like disability and gender or disability and race. Ultimately, this feminist awareness trains consultants to better meet the needs of the diverse populations that come to the Centers seeking help.

By anticipating the help clients need in our feedback, we become complicit in oppressive, patriarchal discourse. Telling a blind client to fake eye contact or a client with cerebral palsy they do not have the posture of a "good speaker" does not let them be in control of their own growth and educational journey and also jeopardizes a consultant's role as an effective collaborator. These two strategies, critical awareness of subjective identity formation (especially in an institutional context) and rhetorical listening, have the potential to reverse this situation. We may not employ them perfectly at first, but that does not mean we should not try; in fact, it means quite the opposite. To show these strategies in action, I will now discuss a case study in which I attempted to employ a feminist disability perspective.

Case Study: Jerry

At my university's Communication Center, I have the privilege of working with a man who I will call Jerry. He has a passion for music that could classify him as an old soul, and his incredible catalogue of musical knowledge comes second only to his incredible desire to share it with you. To this end, he comes into our Center once a week to work on a music podcast where he practices his interviewing skills so he can interview local musicians about their craft. Jerry has been diagnosed with high-functioning autism and ADHD. He has been told he will struggle with interpersonal communication because of his disabilities, but he wants to show people that those with disabilities can do anything they are passionate about.

I have been having weekly recurring sessions with Jerry for almost a year, so I have had the opportunity to work with him collaboratively and see the evolution of these feminist strategies in action. For example, with a critical awareness of subject identity formation, I have to remain cognizant regarding the layers of identity Jerry embodies. For one example, Jerry's autism gives him ticks that come out in the form of phrases he has needed to use repeatedly throughout his life. When I challenge him to do something new, he will repeat "I don't know, this is

hard" over and over, and when he wants to tell me his thoughts or feelings about something, he says "Excuse me" repetitively until he can get his sentence out. These passive stem phrases reveal an internal regulator that he has cultivated over the years. These phrases also reveal an inherent doubt in his abilities and a need to regularly apologize for himself. When he enters into the power structure of a higher education space like our Communication Center, his ticks get worse. I coach him through these moments by asking him to explain why he feels something is hard or why he feels he needs to excuse himself. Together, we interrogate these stem phrases and come to a closer understanding of his anxieties and concerns as a speaker. This understanding has ultimately led to deeper conversations that have empowered him to lessen the use of these phrases and stop seeing himself and his disability as something he needs to apologize for.

In regard to rhetorical listening, Jerry and I have check-ins where we hold a coaching dialogue about his goals and progress as an interviewer. I also ask him to give himself feedback after each practice. I listen strategically and keep a running check of his developing perspectives on his growth as a speaker, making sure that he always has space to articulate his views on his skill development. This aspect of rhetorical listening ensures I never steamroll him or give him harmful or ableist feedback. For example, one main strategy Communication Center consultants are trained to use when tutoring clients is eye contact.

However, Jerry told me he has trouble making eye contact with his interviewee and simultaneously keeping up with his train of thought. Therefore, instead coaching him to fake his way around his disability by forcing or feigning eye contact, we collaborated on other strategies he can employ to let the person he is interviewing know that he is engaged with them. After listening rhetorically to his lived experiences interacting with others as someone with autism and ADHD, we came up with adaptive, affirming strategies he is comfortable enacting, such as smiling in their direction and using verbal cues like "Ah yes." He is still communicating engagement, which was a goal of his as an interviewer, it just looks different.

Jerry also tells me his ADHD has a tendency to send his mind into various directions at a time. Thus, he had trouble initially with interrupting the interviewee when they were answering his questions. To

explore this occurrence, Jerry and I tallied the number of times he speaks on the whiteboard and the times his interviewee speaks on the same whiteboard. At the end of the interview, we discussed who had what amount of tallies, whether or not he thought this was a good balance for an interview, and things he can do that may help him interrupt less. For example, while the other person is speaking, we discussed tapping out the syllables of their speech on his arm so that he is focused more on what they are saying than what he is thinking.

We also discussed counting to three after the person stopped speaking to make sure they were finished with their thought before Jerry responded within his own. Ultimately, the various avenues Jerry's mind explored during the interviews was a tremendous strength for him as an interviewer. He was able to ask in-depth questions that the interviewees disclosed they had never thought about before or been asked before. By listening rhetorically to Jerry's experiences with his ADHD, we were able to celebrate his natural ability to think creatively and multifariously, instead of seeing it as a weakness. We also made this skill as effective as possible by collaboratively employing methods to time his responses. By avoiding giving Jerry feedback that invalidated him, we were able to explore the brilliant way his mind works to his ultimate advantage as a speaker and interviewer.

In the same way that rhetorical listening means embodying "a stance of openness," it also implies that whatever or whomever one is being open to possess inherent value and significance as is. Consultants should realize this inherent value in clients and strive to further diversify their feedback skill sets by being open to and critically aware of the client's nonnormative identities. Jerry's autism and ADHD do not mean he is a bad interviewer; on the contrary, it means he is an extraordinary one.

Conclusion and Future Implications

Learning how to communicate with those who are different from us is a daunting task, especially when one has to connect to, provide feedback for, and answer the questions of these clients all within the space of 30 minutes to an hour. This article has extended the work of feminist Center scholarship, and outlined a few ways consultants can champion the ethical feminist work of multiliteracy centers. Consultants can learn to be aware of the impact that institutional "isms," like ableism, have on

clients who embody diverse identities, and employ the rhetorical art of listening to better understand how these identities influence their clients as writers and speakers. These strategies allow the consultant and client to celebrate the client's identity and abilities, instead of perpetually pitting the client against an outdated set of institutional ideals to arbitrarily determine their ability and worth as a writer and speaker. Consultants must consistently reiterate to their clients with disabilities that what they write and speak matters.

This article does not mean to suggest that consultants should abandon the fundamentals of speaking and writing in their feedback, but rather they should seek to instill in clients a spirit of self-efficacy through the confidence that comes from being truly listened to in addition to learning the foundational tools of effective writing and speaking. Consultants and directors can also encourage programs where these writers have the opportunity to visit the center regularly to work on their goals. To reiterate Dolmage's assertions on disabled bodies in higher education:

> Academic ableism is a difficult thing to consider . . . [It] means questioning . . . our own privilege . . . So let's pay attention to how ableism occurs, and when, and to whom, and to what effect, and let's pay attention to how we might resist and refuse ableism, and what else ableism is connected to in history, in theory, in practice, and through teaching and research and service. (39)

The strategies outlined in this article can and have been applied to various situations by my colleagues and me, but they are only a few methods for approaching and redefining the definition of client service in the center. Also, as I mentioned in the beginning, this article is skewed to communication centers based on the researcher's experiences. We have yet to exhaust the theory, research, and consultant training Center scholars and directors can produce in regards to serving diverse populations in our Centers.

As multiliteracy centers continue to face new challenges in navigating university politics and making sure we have the resources necessary to say afloat, we must never forget that we are first and foremost sites of student empowerment. We exist to provide students the necessary tools to achieve their aspirations. Further research and scholarship on working with clients with nonnormative abilities will only strengthen our capacity

to connect more meaningfully and authentically with those who come to us seeking guidance on their paths to becoming more confident speakers and writers.

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