ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: DISABILITY, EMBODIMENT, AND RESISTANCE: THE RHETORICAL STRATGIES OF DISABILITY ACTIVISM

Ruth Osorio, Doctor of Philosophy, 2018

Dissertation directed by: Associate Professor, Jessica Enoch, English

"Disability, Embodiment, and Resistance: The Rhetorical Strategies of Disability Activism" argues that disability activists channel their experiences of disability at each stage of organizing and delivering activist rhetoric. This dissertation deepens rhetorical studies' understanding of activism and citizenship by identifying collective caregiving and embodied difference as sources of activist invention and delivery.

For my first chapter, "Disabling Citizenship: The Embodied Rhetorics of the 504 Sit-Ins," I investigate the 1977 504 sit-ins, when one hundred disability activists occupied a federal building in San Francisco for twenty-four days to demand federal protection from discrimination. Examining personal and news photographs, oral histories, and news articles, I argue that disability activists displayed the civic power of disabled bodies by displaying the disabled body as resistant, connected, and resilient.

In Chapter 2, "Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera's Rhetorical Survival: An Ecological Perspective of Disability Activism," I examine the disability activism of Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, two disabled transgender women of color and prominent activists in 1960's and 70's gay rights organizing. I assert that behind-the-scenes survival work and caregiving functioned as critical forces behind their enactment of disability activism within gay liberation.

My third chapter, "I Am #ActuallyAutistic, Hear Me Tweet: The *Topoi* of Autistic Activists on Twitter," explores the rhetorical implications of contemporary online activism in the autistic community. In my study of almost 2,000 #ActuallyAutistic tweets collected during Autism Awareness month in 2016, I argue that the #ActuallyAutistic activists on Twitter leverage the affordances and constraints of Twitter to challenge dominant, and often dehumanizing, perceptions of autism in popular discourse.

For my fourth chapter, "Creating an Accessible Legacy: Professional Writing as Disability Activism within the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)," conducted interviews with authors of the 2011-2016 CCCC Accessibility Guides, which notes the accessibility challenges and features of the selected conference city and venue. In my examination of these interviews, I argue that the guides' authors craft and circulate a policy document that ultimately moves CCCC toward greater disability awareness.

DISABILITY, EMBODIMENT, AND RESISTANCE: THE RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF DISABILITY ACTIVISM

by

Ruth Osorio

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2018

Advisory Committee:
Professor Jessica Enoch, Chair
Scott Wible
Chanon Adsanatham
Shirley Logan
Stephanie Kerschbaum
Damien Pfister

Acknowledgements

This project is a testament to my community: its love, its devotion, its activism.

To my parents, for working so hard for so many years, so I could have the opportunity to pursue my own path. Mom, you imbued me with a love of stories and advocacy from the beginning. I will never forget joining you on the picket line—you showed me democracy in action when I was just in elementary school! Dad, you've always been in my corner, cheering (often literally) the loudest for me. You taught me to believe in myself no matter the obstacle I face. Roxanne, I am so grateful for your friendship, support, and love during all these years.

To my little brother Ryan, for being bold, funny, and irreverent, especially when situations demanded otherwise.

To my UMD community, for sharing your wisdom and laughter. The brilliant rhet/comp scholars who came before me—Elizabeth Miller, Martin Camper, Heather Lindemann, Lindsay Dunne Jacoby, and Cameron Mozafari—you all introduced me to the field and generously shared so much with me (cover letters, reading lists, wisdom). Danielle Griffin and Elizabeth, you brightened the AWP office with our off-topic conversations about pop culture, the job market, and dogs. Tim Bruno, I am grateful for your solidarity in all things and great taste in beer. Justin Thompson, thank you for spending your free time with me and June, so I could write and get the inside scoop on Tawes life. Abbey Morgan and Emily Perez, I always seemed to find you exactly when I needed a hug, a shoulder, or a laugh. Andrea Knowles, your friendship was my anchor in the program. We went through everything together—

grad school milestones, pregnancies, MLA—and I am so grateful to have you as a friend and a sister far beyond our time at UMD.

To my mentors—formal and informal—for your guidance and support. Jane Donawerth showed me how to seek out new voices and expand the boundaries of what we consider rhetorical theory. Pamela Vanhaitsma empowered me to know my worth and demand it. Disability Rhetoric scholar-teacher-activists, especially Margaret Price and Elizabeth Brewer, warmly welcomed me into this awesome scholarly and activist community.

To Capital City Cheesecake (now Capital City Confectionary), for your natural light and, of course, cheesecakes.

To the women who cared for my children, Sue, Damaris, Jennifer, Yesenia, and Yadira, for your time, love, and devotion. I was only able to work because I knew my babies were safe and nurtured.

To my advisor, Jess, for modeling feminist values in everything you do. You pushed me to grow as a scholar, writer, and teacher, all while supporting my wellbeing as a human and a mom. Thank you for your mentorship, your rigor, and your advocacy. (And for reading all the drafts, every time, so many times.)

To my committee, for your guidance throughout this process. Chanon, you have been a great mentor and friend—thank you for your thorough feedback and support, especially during the job market. Shirley, I had so much fun discussing feminism and rhetoric during our joyful independent study all those years ago. Scott, you often led me to unexpected scholarship that ended up being so generative and central to my work. Thank you for sharing your enthusiasm. Stephanie, I'm so

grateful that you shared your expertise with me and the entire committee. Also, you give the best hugs. Damien, thank you for teaching us all about the history of the word citizenship in a way that helped me rethink a central part of my project.

To Eleanor and June, for reminding me about the importance of joy, dance parties, and cuddles. You both have great timing—you napped when I needed to write as often as you forced me to take much needed breaks.

To Ryan, for everything. Six years ago, I asked how you felt about moving across the country so I could pursue a PhD, and you said, "sure, sounds good!" You have put so much work into this dissertation—trouble-shooting technical questions, managing the house when I had to focus, listening to me go on and on about my research, proofreading whatever I needed, and most importantly, believing in me every step of the way. I'm so lucky to have you as my partner in work, family, and life.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

We won doing everything the way we had succeeded as disabled people: we created an interdependent support system, we relied on knowledge and expertise of other disabled people, we worked cooperatively, we came to our decisions by consensus, and we created the opportunity for everyone to participate.

--Corbett O'Toole (67)

On April 28, 1977, hundreds of disabled people and their nondisabled allies celebrated outside a federal building in San Francisco. They had just completed the longest nonviolent occupation of a federal building—a title they still claim as of 2018—and their demands were met. For twenty-four days, the activists lived within the federal building located in the city's United Nations Plaza, demanding that the federal government enact and regulate Section 504: the first ever federal legislation barring discrimination against disabled people. Within those twenty-four days, the activists retrofitted the building, transforming air conditioner vents into refrigerators for medicine, sinks into showers accessible for wheelchair users, and freight elevators into quiet rooms for people to rest. American Sign Language (ASL) became a universal tool that allowed the activists to subvert law enforcement and communicate with the outside world. Organizers built extra time into meetings built to facilitate different forms of communication—oral English, ASL, letter board and pointer (in which the person uses a pointer on their head to point to letters and spell out their words).

When reflecting upon her participation in the 504 sit-ins, Corbett O'Toole writes that they succeeded because they approached activism in a *disabled* way. Protesters integrated the wisdom they learned as disabled people into each stage of organizing and delivering their activist rhetoric. In a world where disabled people are thought of as weak, lazy, dependent, and pitiful (Dolmage *Disability Rhetoric* 35; Linton 25), the 504 sit-in protestors tapped into their lived experiences of disability as sources of knowledge and strategy. My dissertation examines this site and three others, and in each case study, I discovered a theme: that disability activism rejects narratives of shame and stigma that surround disability and instead embraces disability as a lived experience, an activist standpoint, and a rhetorical identity.

As this dissertation will demonstrate, disability activism is rooted in the survival strategies of disabled people—strategies needed to navigate an ableist world that has historically sought to disenfranchise disabled people. To provide an extensive history of disability and ableism in the United States is beyond the scope of this introduction chapter, but in order to understand the exigence for their activism, it's critical to note the myriad of barriers disabled people face in their daily lives:

- In 2015, 20% of disabled people lived in poverty; in contrast, 12% nondisabled people do (Institute on Disability/UCED 23).
- One-third to one-half of people killed by the police are disabled, many of whom are disabled people of color (Perry and Carter-Long 4).
- In 2014, 60% of disabled high school students enrolled in college, but only one-third of them completed college within six years (smith).

- The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that disabled people are three times more likely to be victims of serious violence than nondisabled people (Kozlowska).

These are just four statistics—four numbers that generalize the various ways disabled people are marginalized in US society. Despite their limited scope, the numbers paint a picture of lives as disabled people in the United States: they must contend with violence and discrimination in many spheres of life—queer/trans and disabled people of color even more so—thus, disability activists have had to develop dynamic tactics to counter ableism in its many forms.

For these reasons and more, disability activists gather—in person and virtually—to advocate for a world that not only includes disabled people but celebrates and affirms their differences. I define disability activism as the rhetorical processes that aim to liberate disabled people from ableist oppression, and the people who produce such rhetorics are disability activists. My definition borrows from bell hooks' definition of feminism; in *Ain't I a Woman,* she defines feminism as "liberation from sexist role patterns, domination, and oppression" (195). I find the parallel between feminism and disability activism generative, in that both focus on systemic injustice and how it impacts the daily lives of women and disabled people respectively. Furthermore, the definition leaves open the possibility that nondisabled people can participate in disability activism. As the following chapters detail, nondisabled allies, such as caregivers, loved ones, American Sign Language interpreters, are often critical activists within these struggles. However, disability activism centers on the stories, needs, and experiences of disabled people. Disability

activism operates on a core mantra: Nothing About Us, Without Us.[1] The slogan responds to a history of disabled people being excluded from policy, educational, and daily decision-making related to their lives. Thus, the disability activists I study demand that no decision about disabled people be made *without the voices of disabled people* centered in the conversation. Disabled people, then, are not just the cause but also and critically the leaders of disability activism.

In this dissertation, I explore the rhetorical processes and strategies disability activists employ in making these arguments. Because disability activists are diverse, I study four distinct manifestations of disability activism:

- Chapter 1: the embodied rhetorics of the 1977 Section 504 sit-ins in San Francisco
- Chapter 2: intersectional survival work by Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, disabled activists in early gay liberation
- Chapter 3: the cultivation of autistic *topoi* by autistic activists on Twitter
- Chapter 4: institutional activism by the Conference on College Composition and Communication Disability Issues Caucus

Though these chapters analyze a variety of approaches to disability activism, an underlying thread connects them: in each site of disability activism, disability

[1] Reportedly originated in South African disability activism, the mantra migrated to the United States in the 1990's. In James I. Charlton's book *Nothing about Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*, Chartlon reflects on the significance of the slogan to disability activism, writing that,

> The DRM's [disability rights movement] demand for control is the essential theme that runs throughout all its work, regardless of political-economic or cultural differences. Control has universal appeal for DRM activists because the needs of people with disabilities and the potential for meeting these needs are everywhere conditioned by a dependency born of powerlessness, poverty, degradation, and institutionalization. (3)

activists cultivate appeals, argumentation, and civic engagement practices that destabilize assumptions of who can lead, who can argue, who can participate in public and civic life.

In this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of my project by fleshing out the three core concepts that are echoed in my title: disability, the rhetorical body, and activism. These concepts reappear throughout my project and are critical to understanding the complex ways disability activists engage with difference and embodiment to an activist end. I then outline the methods and methodology that guide my research and analysis, describing how I leveraged disability, queer, and feminist theories and practice to study my primary artifacts. I conclude with more thorough chapter summaries and their central arguments.

A brief but important note on terminology before I move on: there is a long-running debate about respectful terminology for disabled people. Person-first language—person with a disability—gained popularity in the 1990's, especially by nondisabled parents and educators of disabled children. Advocates of person-first, such as Kathie Snow, argue that it recognizes the person before the disability. However, many disability activists are critical of person-first language. Cara Liebowitz writes, "The idea of separating the disability from the person stems from the idea that disability is something you should want to have separated from you, like a rotten tooth that needs to be pulled out." She, and many other disability activists advocate for identity-first language instead: disabled people (Brown "The Significance of Semantics"; Sequenzia; Egan). And yet, despite the strong preference of disability activists, no consensus exists in the disability community as a whole. I

alternate between person-first and identity-first language throughout this project, a way of recognizing the different perspectives of the diverse community I study. When the activists I study do state a preference—such as the autistic activists in Chapter 3—I follow their lead and use the terminology of their choice.

Disability

A central rhetorical practice of disability activism is defining disability. Disabled people's lives are shaped by legal definitions and medical diagnosis criteria of disability, and these definitions wield significant power in determining whether disabled people receive educational accommodations, employment protections, social security benefits, and appropriate medical treatment. These definitions, powerful as they may be, conflict with disability activist understandings of disability. Law and medicine often frame disability as an individual deficit, impairment, or pathology—something to be cured by medical intervention or minimal accommodations in the workplace (Shakespeare). Thus, a significant project of disability activism in all settings I study is to offer broader, more affirming models of disability that emphasize the social and political factors of disability. In this section, I provide a brief overview of how disability studies and disability activism—two branches of knowledge that often overlap—understand the category of disability.

Early disability activists complicated dominant definitions of disability by differentiating between impairment—the physical or mental difference—and disability—a social construction. In 1976, the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, an activist group from England, declared,

> We define impairment as lacking all or part of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body and disability as the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities. (3–4)

Within the social model, disability is not a deficit, but rather, the socially constructed oppression of disabled people (Young; L. Davis; Shakespeare; Kafer). For instance, nothing is wrong with a wheelchair user's legs in the social model. What is wrong is the building that lacks a ramp or elevator—and the assumption of society the architect that only people who walk will want to enter the building. As Alison Kafer writes in her book *Feminist Queer Crip*, "the problem of disability no longer resides in the minds or bodies of individuals but in built environments and social patterns that exclude or stigmatize particular kinds of bodies, minds, and ways of being" (6).

Disability activism is grounded in the social model of disability. By framing disability as a social issue rather than a medical one, the social model of disability provides an avenue for disability activists to organize. Through a disability activist lens, the solution to the "problem" of disability, then, isn't a medical cure but rather a political—and often material—solution, a re-imagining of the world to make space for different "bodies, minds, and ways of being." To refer back to my example above, the social model of disability pushes activists to advocate for installing a ramp rather than "fixing" the wheelchair user's legs. The social model was born out of activism and continues to direct the goals and rhetoric of disability activists. Indeed, the

disability activists I study focus on the institutional, cultural, and political barriers that disabled people face.

While examples of how the social model of disability manifests often focus on architectural barriers for disabled people, scholars have also noted how larger social forces have contributed to the construction of disability. To emphasize the social construction of not just disability but also ableism, disability studies scholars draw from the writings of Erving Goffman on stigma (Garland-Thomson *Extraordinary Bodies*; L. Davis; Nussbaum; Shakespeare; Wendell). Goffman describes stigma as "the phenomenon whereby an individual with an attribute which is deeply discredited by his/her society is rejected as a result of the attribute. Stigma is a process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity" (6). He frequently uses examples of disabilities as stigmatized attributes. Goffman's definition has been useful for disability studies scholarship, as he locates the problem of stigma—and thus social isolation—not in the attribute or difference but in society's reaction to it. Thus, ableism does not just reside just in built environments but also cultural attitudes about disability, attitudes that threaten to isolate disabled people from public and civic life. Because of this, disability activists have taken up targeting cultural attitudes about disability.

However, both disability studies scholars and activists have noted the limitations of the social model: mainly, that by separating impairment from disability, the social model erases the lived, material disabled body and whatever discomfort it experiences. Though I will be discussing embodiment more thoroughly in the next section, I also address it here too because the body is central to disability theory.

Disabled poet Cheryl Marie Wade argues for the importance of talking about the disabled body in candid ways:

> To put it bluntly—because this need is blunt as it gets—we must have our asses cleaned after we shit and pee. Or we have others' fingers inserted into our rectums to assist shitting. Or we have tubes of plastic inserted inside us to assist peeing or we have re-routed anuses and pissers we do it all into bags attached to our bodies.... We rarely talk about these things, and when we do the realities are usually disguised in generic language or gimp humor.... If we are ever to be really at home in the world and in ourselves, then we must say these things out loud. (88-89)

For Wade, acknowledging the pain, mess, and discomfort of disability does not distract from disability activism but rather emboldens it by allowing disabled people to be "at home in the world and in ourselves." In order for disabled people to be comfortable with themselves as disabled people, Wade argues, they should candidly describe their realities—and this rhetorical work leads to self-empowerment, an activist goal in itself (Gregg). Tobin Siebers and Kafer similarly link the acknowledgement of frailty, pain, and vulnerability to disability activism, with Siebers arguing, "The most urgent issue for DS [disability studies] is the political struggle of people with disabilities, and this struggle requires a realistic conception of the disabled body" (68).

It is important to note that this emphasis on the body does not exclude mental disability. In fact, many leaders in both disability studies and disability activism reject

the mind-body split so predominant in Western cultures (Price "The Bodymind Problem; Yergeau "Clinically Significant Disturbance").[2] In a disability activist framework, there is no hierarchy and separation of the mind/body, but rather, an awareness that the mind is an essential part of the body, and that mental disability manifests itself in embodied ways. In contesting mind/body dualism, Melanie Yergeau writes,

> As an autistic person, I am well aware of the ways in which my 'neurological disorder' manifests itself in and through my muscles and sinew, the ways in which autism rolls off my tongue, transforms my gait into autly bounce, stiffens the contours of my face as my eyes survey a room. Autism is embodied; my embodiment is autism. ("Clinically Significant Disturbance")

In much of Yergeau's writing, she uses the term "autistic mind/body," illustrating the embodied nature of what is so often considered solely a mental state. Blurring the distinction between the body and mind is critical in an activist setting, as hierarchies that place the mind above the body position physically disabled people above mentally disabled people (Dolmage *Disability Rhetoric* 46). Thus, in order to build cross-disability solidarity, disability activists inside and outside of the academy have challenged dualism in an effort to both represent the complex lived realities of disabled people and to build an equitable disability community. In this dissertation, I

[2] Price writes that she first saw the term bodymind in trauma studies but notes importantly that "non-Western philosophies took up the subject of bodymind prior to the later trauma-oriented approach" ("The Bodymind Problem" 280). Indeed, Buddhist philosophy promotes "the notion that we can refer meaningfully, if tentatively, to 'mind' and 'body,' but ultimately the two are so fully integrated that they should also be considered one" (Price "The Bodymind Problem" 280).

study activists with both mental and physical disabilities, many of whom have multiple and overlapping disabilities. Each chapter describes not the official diagnoses of the activists but rather describes how they identify (or don't) as disabled and what political needs they rally around.

The Rhetorical Body

Just as in disability studies, rhetorical studies has long grappled with the role of the body in producing rhetoric. My project analyzes how disability activists leverage their disabled body as rhetorical texts, and in doing so, I draw from the vast writings on embodied rhetoric in our field. Here, I provide a brief overview of the role of the body in rhetorical history and theory to situate my dissertation in the centuries-long conversation about the role of the body in creating meaning and rhetoric.

In classical rhetorical theory, the body was approached as the medium of delivery. In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle notes the dramatic effects of delivery, which he defines as "volume of sound, modulation of pitch, and rhythm" (*On Rhetoric* 1403b 30). Still, while he admits that a skilled delivery can move audiences, he sees discussions of delivery as distracting from the substance of rhetoric, the invention of the argument itself. He writes, "delivery is—very properly—not regarded as an elevated subject of inquiry" (*On Rhetoric* 1403b 35). Thus, while Aristotle notes the body's role in delivering rhetoric, he does not see the body as a worthy site of study.[3]

[3] Despite Aristotle's dismissal of the body as a critical site of rhetorical production, the body played a significant role in Ancient Greek rhetorical instruction, as Debra Hawhee reveals in *Bodily Arts*.

Later teachers of rhetoric would focus more on how to train the body in terms of voice and gesture, noting the ability of the body to conjure emotion in the audience (Harrington; Donawerth *Rhetorical Theory*). Cicero provides advice for the modulation of voice and the deployment of gesture (*Orator*), and Quintilian follows suit, arguing,

> Indeed, as words have much power of themselves, and the voice adds a particular force to thought, and as gesture and motion are not without meaning, some great excellence must necessarily be the result when all these sources of power are combined. (346)

Thus, delivery becomes a means of training the body to amplify the words of an argument. The body, then, can be trained to cultivate meaning and eloquence. Centuries later, in 1806, Gilbert Austin would expand upon traditional approaches to delivery, publishing the extensive *Chironomia; or, A Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery*, which illustrates and describes the various possible gestures in a speech and their impacts on argumentation.

For centuries, the body was seen as rhetorical but only in its role as a medium for delivering rhetoric. However, contemporary rhetorical studies scholars have drawn attention to the role of the body in producing knowledge and language. In the introduction of the 1999 edited collection *Rhetorical Bodies*, Jack Selzer argues that "language and rhetoric have a persistent material aspect that demands acknowledgement, and material realities often (if not always) contain a rhetorical dimension that deserves attention: for language is not the only medium or material that speaks" (8). For Selzer, and the authors of the essays that follow his introduction,

rhetoric is material in its conception, delivery, and impact. More recently, Kristin Arola and Anne Frances Wysocki's collection *Composing (Media)=Composing (Embodiment)* insists that rhetoric, media, and digital texts are created by and through the material body. Their argument is especially important in analyzing digital disability activism. In the "Introduction," Wysocki writes,

> Your body is your primary medium—taking *medium* here in its grounding sense of that which is between, in the middle. Without our bodies—our sensing abilities—we do not have a world; we have the world we do because we have our particular senses and experiences. (3)

Wysocki and Arola's book pushes against the assumption that bodies are erased in digital media and digital writing, and they alongside the contributors pointedly describe how bodies figure in each step of composing media: invention, drafting, revision, and circulation. In Chapter 3, I argue that autistic activists on Twitter using the hashtag #ActuallyAutistic to cultivate autistic *topoi*, or lines of argument. In their tweets, autistic activists evoke the body in their affirmations of autistic ways of moving, demonstrating that the body is present even in digital work.

Scholarly investigations of activism,[4] in particular, have deepened awareness of the rhetorical function of the material body. For example, Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook reveal how activists manipulate space through strategic placement and movement of the body:

[4] Kevin DeLuca, Joshua Prenosil, Isaac West, and Josue David Cisneros, among others, have published on the body's role in activist rhetoric, studying the body-as-activist-text in environmental activism (DeLuca), civil rights movement (Prenosil), queer and disabled student organizing (West), and immigration rights (Cisneros).

> Not only are the bodies of protesters place-based rhetorical performances, but places are embodied rhetorical performances. During a protest event, human bodies interact with the physical structures to change a place, allowing it to take on significance that might otherwise remain unrealized. Further, place in protest acts on those bodies that encounter the march—they may have to move to avoid the march, be touched or spoken to by the protesters, get a headache from the noise, become distracted from work, or be moved to join the protest march. (263)

Endres and Senda-Cook draw attention to the ways bodies rewrite meanings of space and vice versa, and furthermore, how activists leverage and revise meanings of both bodies and space in the act of protesting. Such re-writing is especially prominent in occupations of forbidden spaces, such as the 504 sit-in. In Chapter 1, I illustrate how the disabled body became the means of persuasion at the sit-in, demonstrating the seen and unseen boundaries that excluded the body's entrance into public and civic life.

While the body is indeed rhetorical, different bodies convey different meanings in different contexts—and thus have different rhetorical impacts. Within disability rhetoric, scholars seek to situate the disabled body within the rhetorical tradition. Dolmage argues that the *disabled body* is the heart of rhetoric: "disability shapes our available means of persuasion. Embodied difference can actually be read as the very possibility of meaning" (*Disability Rhetoric* 289). In her book *Rhetorical Touch: Disability, Identification, and Haptics*, Shannon Walters similarly envisions

an approach to rhetoric that privileges disabled bodies in the form of rhetorical touch. She writes, "people with disabilities writing and communicating about disability who use touch as a rhetorical strategy resist a rhetorical tradition in which singular, able, and independent rhetor is valued and preferred" (17). For both Dolmage and Walters, the disabled body— especially how the disabled body interacts with other bodies— is the foundation of rhetorical potential. To define rhetoric according to disabled bodies, Dolmage and Walters—as well as Lewiecki-Wilson, Brenda Brueggemann, and Tanya Titchkosky—broaden the rhetorical tradition to include the performing, positioning, and moving of disabled bodies. I extend their arguments by noting the ways disabled bodies are not only rhetorically powerful but also politically powerful, revealing how disability activists leverage the lived, material disabled body and its various needs to re-imagine justice, civic engagement, and rights.

Activism

My project emerges from decades-long discussions about the importance of studying social movements and activist writing. Traditionally, Communication Studies and English Studies have focused on slightly differing aspects of rhetorics for social change. Social Movement Studies (SMS), housed primarily in Communication Studies, provides tools for studying social movements—collectives that "express opposition, agitate for change, inspire and signal cohesion, and project visions of a transformed social order" (Hauser and mc clellan 24).[5] On the English Studies side,

[5] SMS in Communication Studies began as a scholarly focus in 1952, when Leland Griffin argued:

> the recommendation has been made, for example, that we pay somewhat less attention to the single speaker and more to speakers—that we turn our attention from the individual "great orator" and undertake research into such selected acts and atmospheres of public address as

scholarly examinations of activism often focus on the *processes* of composing, delivering, and circulating activist writing. I contribute to these ongoing conversations about activism and social movements a focus on disability and how the presence of disability shapes the rhetorical processes and products of activist movements.

While scholarship that studies activism and social movements often focuses on the product (the speech, the protest), increasingly, scholars of activist rhetoric have noted the importance of studying the behind-the-scenes work that fuels activism. Marilyn Bordwell DeLaure's study of Ella Baker's role in the Civil Rights Movement, for instance, argues, "the very process of organizing itself enacts the foundation principles of democracy by inviting people to engage in that struggle" (24). Rhetorical studies has thus broadened its view of activism to include behind-the-scenes organizing—not limited to recruitment and training, as Baker facilitated, but also meeting minutes (Mattingly; Rivers and Weber), casual conversations among activists (Hauser and mcclellan), coalition building (West). Such an expansion invites scholars to explore the hidden, less glamorous rhetorical work and actors that, though critical to social change, are often overlooked by history books. I further this line of research by studying how the presence of disability shapes the process of composing activism: within disability activism, caregiving, interdependence, non-normative expression all become central modes of organizing. This focus is most pronounced in

---

> would permit the study of a multiplicity of speakers, speeches, audiences, and occasions. (184)

Griffin, then, opened space within rhetorical studies to explore polyvocal political movements rather than produce biographical-based studies of individual orators. Rhetoricians followed Griffin's work by outlining different definitions and frameworks of social movements frameworks for classifying social movements (Stewart; Zarefsky; Hauser and McClellan; Mattingly; Beisecker). For more information about the history and trajectory of social movement studies, see Sharon McKenzie Stevens and Particia M. Malesh's introduction chapter in *Active Voices: Composing a Rhetoric for Social Movements*.

Chapter 2, in which I investigate the rhetorical significance of behind-the-scenes survival work for mentally disabled trans activists of color. The remaining chapters also feature analyses of the processes that enable public rhetoric, investigating how behind-the-scenes caregiving and collaboration are both vital in the creation of disability activism.

Rhetoricians have also increasingly paid attention to the ego function of activist rhetoric. So often, activism's success is determined by its influence on outside audiences, especially people in power, such as policy makers. But scholars of activist rhetoric have argued that activism is often self-directed. In the "Ego Function of the Rhetoric of Protest," Richard Gregg shines light on this central goal of activism: "the primary appeal of the rhetoric of protest is to the protestors themselves, who feel the need for psychological refurbishing and affirmation" (74). Gregg calls this the ego-function of activism, to define and affirm the activist's identity and community on their own terms, often in contrast to dominant (and disparaging) definitions (74).. Scholars have since mapped Gregg's concept onto specific movements, establishing the importance of affirming the self in feminist (Campbell; Sowards & Renegar), American Indian (Lake), civil rights (Sanger), and queer (Christiansen and Hanson) activism. I extend this work by identifying how disability activists cultivate arguments that speak to themselves and other disabled people. Disabled people are often assumed incapable of producing activism, so when they engage with activism, disability activists illustrate the political resilience of their community to themselves and other disabled people. Much of the rhetoric they produce is overtly self-

addressed, rejecting the stigma associated with disability and embracing their identities as disabled people.

I am not, of course, the first disability rhetoric scholar to study an activist moment. Brueggemann examines the 1988 Deaf President Now protests at Gallaudet University, Walters investigates the 504 sit-in, and Peter Wayne Moe analyzes Michael J. Fox's congressional testimony about Parkinson's. These studies have primarily focused on disabled approaches to traditional forms of activism (Isaac West's analysis of disability and queer coalition-building in student activism is a notable exception). I contribute to these scholarly conversations by studying disability activism in both traditional *and* overlooked modes of activism. I assert that activism can take place not only in rallies, occupations, and speeches but also in behind-the-scenes survival work, digital writing, and policy writing. Chapter 4, for instance, examines the crafting and circulation of the annual CCCC Accessibility Guide as a site of disability activism. I argue because the guide has, over time, shifted the culture of CCCC to greater disability awareness, the guide and the process behind it are activist texts. By expanding the boundaries of activism to include diverse disabled forms of expression, I model a more inclusive framework for identifying and studying activism.

Methods and Methodologies

Because disability activism manifests in various modes, methods, and movements, I engage with multiple methods and methodologies throughout this dissertation. For each chapter, I analyze a different forms of data, thus requiring

different approaches to data collection. In chapter 1, I examined oral histories, news photographs, and memoirs from the 504 sit-in including, HolLynn D'lil's *Becoming Real in 24 Days: One Participant's Story of the 1977 Section of 504 Demonstrations for Disability Rights,* Corbett O'Toole's *Fading Scars*, The Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability's virtual exihibit *Patient No More*, and Fred Pelka's *What We Have Done.* For Chapter 2, I conducted archival research at Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center archives and the New York Public Library archives as a means to analyze interviews with Rivera, Johnson, and their friends. In Chapter 3, I collected thousands of #ActuallyAutistic tweets and coded the data through a grounded theory approach. And for my final body chapter, Chapter 4, I conducted seven interviews with the CCCC Accessibility Guide authors from 2011-2016.

To analyze and make sense of these various primary texts, I wove together feminist, queer, and disability methodologies. Disability rhetoric is a booming field, with numerous books, journal articles, conference panels, and professional organizations devoted to the study of disability and rhetoric. Despite its proliferation, the field "lacks a unified methodology," which Price claims is both to its benefit and disadvantage (Price "Disability Studies Methodology" 159). Thus, scholars of disability rhetoric tend to blend multiple methodologies, a practice I similarly deploy. Queer, feminist, and disability studies all suggest subversive and creative ways of thinking about, collecting, and analyzing data which I practiced in this dissertation. In *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch describe critical imagination as a feminist approach to reading the silences and absences in

historiographies of women's rhetorical practices. They write that critical imagination involves "think[ing] between, above, around, and beyond [existing] evidence to speculate methodically about probabilities, that is, what might likely be true based on what we have in hand" (71). Critical imagination, then, acknowledges that gaps exist when studying women writers and provides a strategy for filling in those gaps. Queer approaches to research, as proposed by scholars such as Charles Morris, K.J. Rawson, and José Muñoz, similarly advocate for side-ways approaches to rhetorical scholarship and historiography. Morris notes "hush of the archive" that surrounds queer sexuality in rhetorical history and calls for rhetorical scholars to be "archival queers" by queering historical research—the "tireless cruising in vexed pursuit of the elusive artifacts of our queer histories" (148). Then, queer methodologies push researchers to relentlessly search for queer voices and rhetorics in unexpected places.

I see rich overlap between the feminist methodological approach of critical imagination, the queer approach to the archives, and *mētis,* which Dolmage describes as a disabled way of moving, thinking, and communicating. Dolmage describes *mētis* as "the craft of forging something practical out of possibilities, practicing an embodied rhetoric, changing the world as we move through it" (*Disability Rhetoric* 149). As Debra Hawhee writes, *mētis* was a celebrated value in Ancient Greek society, "a modality of response, an affinity for tricks and disguises, a twisting and turning movement, all of which—however differently—return to the body as the place where *mētis* becomes apparent" (57). For Dolmage, *mētis* is inherently connected to bodily difference, as the side-ways and ingenious movement requires a deviation from expected—and thus typical—movement. *Mētis* is often described as a

rhetorical strategy, but Dolmage suggests it could also be used as a methodological approach to studying disability, prompting scholars to question dominant readings of disability to instead "open up the possibility of situating disability as strength, as fit for a world that is also cunning, changing, and changeable" (*Disability Rhetoric* 187).

Taken together, critical imagination, queering the archive, and *mētis* have enabled me to seek disability and disability activism in unexpected places. For like other marginalized identities, disability is often unnamed in the archives and history books. Furthermore, disabled people often developed activist tactics that are not recognized as conventional forms of activism. Given these two erasures, I practiced *mētis* by thinking about disability and activism in expansive ways in order to fill in the silences in the historiography of disability activism. For my first two chapters, a *mētis* approach to disability research inspired me to look for—and find!—disability and disability activism in movements not typically associated with disability: the Black Panther Party and early gay liberation. In my third and fourth chapters, I located activism in overlooked rhetorical acts: celebrating autism on Twitter and drafting disability policy documents in academic professional organizations. In doing so, I captured the many forms disability activism takes, in particular, forms that are accessible to disabled people in ways that marching and public protests aren't.

Feminist methodologies shape my work in two other profound ways. The first is embracing rhetorical listening as I read and write about disabled activists, many of whom are non-white and queer. Krista Ratcliffe describes rhetorical listening as a stance of openness when listening to people who are different from us. As a strategy for rhetorical listening, Ratcliffe encourages *standing under other's discourses* rather

than striving for mastery or dominance: "letting discourses wash over, through, and around us and then letting them lie there to inform our politics and ethics" (205). Thus, as a white, currently nondisabled, cisgender woman, I strive not to speak for but instead listen to and speak *with* the activists I study. I stand under and sit with their words, meditating on how they describe their identities and experiences. To the best of my ability, I listen carefully to their rhetorical work and attempt to represent their arguments faithfully in my own writing.

In addition to critical imagination and rhetorical listening, I integrate intersectionality into my research process. In 1991, Kimberle Crenshaw named what black women had been discussing for centuries: that gender and race are not isolated categories, and thus, black women experience intersectional forms of oppression, distinct from the experiences of white women and black men. Since Crenshaw's original article, scholars have debated the boundaries, usefulness, and potential of intersectionality as a theory, an application, and a method (Davis K.; McCall; Crenshaw; MacKinnon; Yuval-Davis). Sumi Cho, Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall assert that intersectionality's power as a methodological approach lies in the questioning of categories and power:

> what makes an analysis intersectional . . . is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power. This framing—conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created

> by dynamics of power—emphasizes what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is. (795)

Crenshaw and McCall's theorization of intersectionality as methodology can be seen especially in the work of disability and race scholars, such as Nirmala Erevelles, Andrea Minear, Dolmage (*Disabled Upon Arrival*), Sami Schalk, Christopher Bell, and Moya Bailey, who interrogate how race and disability co-construct one another. In these works, race and disability—two identity categories under-researched and often ignored in disability studies (Bell; Schwalk; Kafer)—are not seen as static or separate identities.

I center intersectionality in my recovery, identification, and analysis of disability activism, reflecting on the ways that anti-racist, feminist, and queer activisms interweave with disability activism. My intersectional methodology can be seen in my case study selections, in which I seek out disability activism in other movements and gender, race, and sexuality within traditional manifestations of disability activism. This methodology steers my entire project but is most evident in Chapter 2, in which I specifically set out to recover trans disabled women of color as disability activists, women who have been overlooked within disabilities studies' predominant focus on white activists. Though I approach my project through an intersectional lens, I also acknowledge the gaps in my project. I focus solely on disability activism in the United States, neglecting to address how nationality and disability co-mingle or how non-Western forms of disability activism align, differ, and/or inspire disability activism in the United States. While this absence is a

weakness of my project, I hope by calling attention to it, I move future scholars of disability activism to actively examine the intersections of nationalism and ableism.

Chapter Descriptions

For my first chapter, "Disabling Citizenship: The Embodied Rhetorics of the 504 Sit-Ins," I investigate the 1977 504 sit-ins, when one hundred disability activists occupied a federal building in San Francisco for twenty-four days to demand federal protection from discrimination. I begin my project here because the 504 sit-ins are often portrayed as one of the starting points of disability activism in the United States. I analyze the ways protestors embraced and centered their disabilities at the 504 sit-ins, presenting the citizenship, political, and rhetorical agency of people with disabilities. Outside the building, activists made disability present through their bodies and symbols of disability—wheelchairs, American Sign Language, canes. Inside the building, I argue, the activists cultivated disabled habits of citizenship that centered disabled bodies and minds. Since this protest was by its very definition embodied—disabled bodies and minds occupying federal space—the 504 sit-ins provide a foundation for thinking through the disabled body's relationship to rhetoric and activism.

For my second chapter, "Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera's Rhetorical Survival: An Ecological Perspective of Disability Activism," I depart from the traditional narrative of disability rights to explore how disability activism animated the emerging trans liberation movement. I argue that, as mentally disabled trans women of color, a critical aspect of Rivera and Johnson's public arguments for

disabled queer people within the gay rights movement was their rhetorical ecological work. I expand the traditional conception of rhetorical ecologies, defined as the system of smaller-scale interacting elements that shape and enable the rhetorical process and product, to include survival work. I focus on two ways Rivera and Johnson built their rhetorical ecology in their trans-focused activism in the 1960's and 1970's gay liberation movement: (1) their renovation and maintenance of the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.) House that provided shelter for transgender youth who also often, like Johnson and Rivera, lived with mental disability (2) and the embodied rhetorics of their interdependent caregiving for disabled and vulnerable bodies. I assert that these two rhetorical projects enabled their survival, and thus functioned as critical forces behind their enactment of disability activism within gay liberation. Furthermore, I move to identify queer, trans, and non-white disability activists who have been overlooked by the field of disability studies.

My third chapter, "I Am #ActuallyAutistic, Hear Me Tweet: The Topoi of Autistic Activists on Twitter," shifts gears by looking at the rhetorical implications of online activism in the autistic community. Since discussions about autism often feature the voices of non-autistic people, autistic activists created the #ActuallyAutistic hashtag to carve out a space for autistic people to connect, affirm each other's identities, and educate the non-autistic public about autistic people and culture. In my study of almost 2,000 #ActuallyAutistic tweets collected during Autism Awareness month in 2016, I argue that the #ActuallyAutistic activists on Twitter cultivate three autistic *topoi*: prioritizing experiential expertise, embracing neurodiversity, and documenting ableism. In doing so, autistic activists leverage the

affordances and constraints of Twitter to challenge dominant, and often dehumanizing, perceptions of autistic people in popular discourse.

My fourth chapter, "Creating an Accessible Legacy: Professional Writing as Disability Activism within the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)," documents the disability activism within Rhetoric and Composition. For this chapter, I focus on the crafting, circulation, and impact of the annual CCCC Accessibility Guide, which notes the accessibility challenges and features of the conference city and venue. I conducted interviews with authors of the 2011-2016 CCCC Accessibility Guides. In my examination of these interviews, I argue that the guides' authors leverage institutional critique to craft a document that ultimately moves CCCC toward greater disability awareness. By recording and analyzing the stories of disability activists in my field, I uncover how scholars deploy disability activism in professional settings and how Rhetoric and Composition as a field can continue to develop more nuanced and radical notions of accessibility.

Chapter 1: Disabling Citizenship: The Embodied Rhetorics of the 504 Sit-In

you didn't know what you would give birth to. occupying the department of rehab. making out

reaching to us almost forty years later. all our sweet drooling

brokenbeautifulugly danger. a cosmos of crip story, all these moments are stars in the disabled genius sky.

-- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

In 1977, hundreds of disabled people across the country entered a federal building in San Francisco with one goal in mind: to urge the Carter administration to sign regulations and enforce Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, landmark legislation that barred institutions receiving public funds from discriminating against disabled people. For twenty-four days, protestors occupied the Health, Education, Welfare (HEW) building, with supporters and fellow protestors maintaining support and visibility outside. Thirty-eight years after the sit-ins, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha writes about how the protest shaped her evolution as a disability activist. Though she was not present at the sit-in and was only two-years-old at the time, Piepzna-Samarasinha celebrates the occupation of the HEW building (to which she refers as the department of rehab) as the birth of disability activism and an ongoing source of pride for disabled people.

It's no surprise that the 504 sit-ins continue to inspire young disability activists. The occupation is legendary within disability activist circles, especially

since the protest produced several images of disabled people as strong, powerful, and resistant. News footage circulated across the nation of disabled people—many of whom are visibly disabled or marked as disabled by protest signs—caring for each other, demanding equal treatment under the law, and celebrating their community and culture. For example, the April 11, 1977 issue of the *New York Times* featured an image of a woman communicating in American Sign Language to dozens of protestors in wheelchairs (see Fig. 1.1). In this picture, bodies are marked as disabled in multiple ways: the woman signing signals the presence of deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the audience, and the sea of people in wheelchairs demonstrates the large contingent of protestors with mobility disabilities.

This *New York Times* image was not an isolated phenomenon: news and personal photographs from the sit-in placed disabled bodies at the center. This is not surprising. First, protests are inherently embodied, so naturally, images would feature the bodies of the protestors. The 504 sit-ins, lunch counter sit-ins, Occupy Wall Street, and the occupation of Alcatraz, among other examples from United States history, were all protests in which people positioned their bodies in forbidden spaces as an act of protest. Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook underscore the centrality of relationship between the body and place in activism, writing that "during a protest event, human bodies interact with the physical structures to change a place, allowing it to take on significance that might otherwise remain unrealized" (263). Indeed, when othered bodies enter and occupy forbidden spaces, the bodies visibly highlight unjust and discriminatory policies and change the definition of the space.

Second, the images emphasized the bodies of the protestors because the bodies themselves were newsworthy. In a culture where people with disabilities are seen as "more dependent, childlike, passive, sensitive, and miserable and are less competent than people who do not have disabilities," the 504 sit-ins depicted the disabled body as political, agentive, and interdependent with other bodies (Linton 25). At the sit-in, embodied difference was the norm: many protestors used wheelchairs, communicated via American Sign Language, and walked with walking sticks. This was protest carried out for and by disabled bodies, something that had not occurred on a large scale in the United States before 1977.

The protestors were not only arguing for the enforcement of Section 504; by occupying a public, civic space with disabled bodies, they were actively redefining citizenship, and their bodies were the means of persuasion. In this chapter, I look at the 504 sit-ins to study how disabled people use their bodies as rhetorical tools to subvert expectations of normativity, passivity, and independence. I argue that through embodied rhetorics, the 504 protestors disrupted the dominant disability narrative and tropes about citizenship. Rather than accepting pervasive and longstanding cultural myths that people with disabilities are pitiful, miserable, passive, or isolated, and thus should be removed from the *polis,* the protestors introduced a new story: disabled people as an active, interconnected, and civic community. By stressing that the disabled bodies were in fact the means of persuasion for the protestors, I illustrate the disabled body's rhetoricity as a site of meaning and resistance.

I do so by analyzing personal photographs, news coverage, and oral histories from various sources. HolLynn D'lil's book *Becoming Real in 24 Days: One*

Participant's Story of the 1977 Section of 504 Demonstrations for Disability Rights is a self-published archive full of over two-hundred personal and news photos from the event, official agendas, and press releases, as well as her own notes and reflections from the sit-in. I also examined news photos I obtained from the Library of Congress newspaper collections, as well as video footage and recorded interviews from The Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability's virtual tour *Patient No More*. These texts, combined with personal accounts from Corbett O'Toole's memoir *Fading Scars* and oral histories collected in Fred Pelka's *What We Have Done*, allow me to analyze the multiple ways protestors leveraged their bodies rhetorically and argued for inclusion and justice.

I begin by outlining varying frameworks for understanding citizenship and the multiple ways disabled people have been excluded from citizenship. Then, I provide historical background for the protest, specifically the promise and then disappointment of Section 504 that catalyzed disabled people across the nation. Using photographs, oral histories, and video footage, I then move to my analysis of embodied rhetorics 504 sit-ins. In this section, I examine four main warrants that support the activists' claims of agency, rhetoricity, and citizenship: (1) disabled people are present, (2) disabled people cultivate strength, (3) disabled people embody citizenship, and (4) disabled people build coalitions. These warrants, which decidedly contradicted with dominant ideologies of disability, provided the foundation for the activists' rhetorical success.

Disability and Citizenship: A Background

Citizenship is a complicated and contested term. Traditionally, citizenship has been thought of something bestowed upon individuals by legal institutions: to be a citizen of a nation, to have civil rights protected by the court, to be guaranteed the ability to vote. Disability studies scholars have argued that disabled people have historically been denied admission to this traditional model of citizenship. After all, the dominant liberal concept of citizenship is based on the *ability* to participate in the *polis*—a *polis* that typically is set up for normative bodies and minds. Nirmalla Erevelles explains that in a capitalist society, disabled people are seen as unable to contribute to society, and thus are "reduced to the singular role as consumer [and] deemed parasitic; their role as autonomous agents challenged, and therefore their right to citizenship" (167). Similarly, Stacy Clifford Simplican and Allison Carey examine the ways people with intellectual disabilities in particular are positioned outside of citizenship, with Carey arguing that "when judged by the standards of the ideal citizen, the person with an intellectual disability may appear unworthy, at best, and a threat to the nation and himself or herself, at worst" (1). Citizens must demonstrate the capacity to serve the *polis* in order to be granted civil rights (Simplican 5).

The exclusion of disabled people from traditional forms of citizenship has played out in a myriad of ways. Early twentieth century immigration policy "denied entry to anyone judged 'mentally or physically defective, such mental or physical defect being a nature which may affect the ability of such alien to earn a living'" (Baynton 26). Thus, disabled immigrants were literally denied the possibility of attaining United States citizenship. Additionally, before Section 504 was passed,

federal buildings were not required to provide accessible entrances, thus, prohibiting people with certain disabilities from entering court houses, post offices, and state assemblies. [6] Such exclusions made it almost impossible or very difficult for disabled people to enter to important decision-making spaces, and they were thus denied their ability to contribute to the direction of the nation. This legacy of stripping disabled people of their citizenship fueled the 504 sit-in protestors. They were ready to claim their rights as citizens, and Section 504 finally promised to an avenue to do so.

However, a history of disability and citizenship that focuses solely on disabled people's relationship to the state overlooks the complex and seemingly mundane ways citizenship plays out in people's day-to-day life. As Amy Wan explains, political, legal, and rhetorical scholars have come to understand "citizenship as cultural identity, standing and status, civic virtue, everyday habits, and participatory action" (Wan 23). Emerging definitions of citizenship have emphasized *belonging* and *relationality*. For instance, Juan Guerra defines citizenship as "a negotiated relationship between the state and individuals, as well the social or cultural groups to which they belong" (100). Guerra also asserts that citizenship is flexible and fluid—people can be treated as citizens in some contexts but not other. For Danielle Allen, citizenship is enacted by habits, everyday practices that guide our interactions with each other. She argues,

> Political order is secured not only by institutions, but also by "deep rules" that prescribe specific interactions among citizens in public spaces; citizens enact what they are to each other not only in

[6] Even in 2015, there were reports of post offices with no ramps (Crandall). The issue of inaccessible public buildings persists.

> assemblies, where they make decisions about their mutually intertwined fates, but also when, as strangers, they speak to one another, or don't, or otherwise respond to each other's presence. (10)

Allen and Wan refer to these deep rules as *habits* of citizenship. As an example, Allen points to photographs of racial tension during the Civil Rights movement, arguing that white violence—taunting, cursing, throwing objects—against black people were habits that attempted to "police the boundaries of the public sphere as a 'whites-only' space" (5). Thus, these everyday interactions, in heightened moments of protest but also in casual encounters, cultivate or refuse belonging: in addition to legal status, material realities, cultural norms, and community values all regulate which bodies are granted citizenship in a given space.

Wan's, Guerra's, and Allen's understandings of citizenship as everyday interactions between people that generate or deny belonging—habits of citizenship—shed light on why civil rights granted by the state are not enough to ensure that everyone has equal access to the *polis*. Disabled people are routinely cast aside by dominant habits of citizenship. Consider the way nondisabled people often stare at rather than engage with people with visible disabilities (Garland-Thomson "The Politics of Starring"). This habit creates a distance between the disabled and nondisabled, furthering disabled people's access to full belonging in society. The concept of habits of citizenship is critical for understanding the rhetorical significance of the 504 sit-in. As the rest of the chapter will demonstrate, the protestors not only demanded legal civil rights, but within the walls of the federal building, they also modeled disabled habits of citizenship. For instance, meetings were structured to

allow multiple forms of expression (spoken English, written English, letter board, American Sign Language). All people, no matter how they communicated, *belonged* fully in the micro-society of the occupation. At the occupation, disabled people achieved full citizenship through disability-affirming habits of citizenship, habits that removed the physical and metaphorical gaps that often separate disabled people from others.

Section 504's Promise

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 offered the promise to more fully incorporate disabled people into civic life. The law intended "to empower individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society," specifically focusing its efforts on institutions that receive federal funding (29 United States Code. Section 701). The addition to the Rehabilitation Act read:

> No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in section 705(20) of this title, shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance or under any program or activity conducted by any Executive agency or by the United States Postal Service. (29 United States Code. Section 794)

In just one sentence, Section 504 promised to open doors previously nailed shut for disabled people in the United States. Interestingly, no one can recall who added the

sentence to the bill (Shapiro 65). Though the sentence borrowed language from the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 was not the result of an activist effort. Rather, the sentence was added to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 with little to no fanfare, likely because lawmakers did not recognize the significance of the inclusion. Furthermore, in a move of constitutive rhetoric, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 transformed a previously fragmented group of individuals into a unified class. Until 1973, disability communities were segmented; for example, deaf people did not politically organize with blind people nor people with mental disabilities. By envisioning people with disabilities as a unified class, Section 504 indirectly prompted decades of cross-disability activism, community-building, and culture.

Although the Section 504 is significant because it was the first federal policy to address people with disabilities as citizens deserving of opportunities and access, it was not immediately implemented and offered little details or infrastructure to regulate and enforce accommodations. Judith Heumann, a seasoned disability activist who advocated for access and independent living for years before the sit-in, explains that the disability community always understood the potential and flexibility of Section 504: "we recognized very early that it was a twenty-six word law that was going to have to get interpreted" (qtd. in Pelka 263). That absolutely proved to be the case. By 1977, people with disabilities were frustrated with the lack of follow through and action from the federal government. Although Jimmy Carter had campaigned to people with disabilities as a part of his election strategy, he deferred all decisions about Section 504 to the HEW secretary, Joseph Califano. Califano admitted in a private meeting with disability activists that he had no intention of signing in any

regulations; both Carter and Califano were concerned about the public outcry if "alcoholics, drug addicts, and homosexuals [would] claim protection under the new law" (Shapiro 66).

Once it became clear that Califano had no intentions of signing regulations, disability organizations began to organize. On March 18, 1977, the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD) released a nation-wide call to "make April 5, 1977, a national day of reckoning for HEW" (Pelka 263). Their demand: that Califano sign Section 504 regulations, effectively making HEW the official enforcer of Section 504. The ACCD instructed people with disabilities to take over HEW offices in ten cities. Kitty Cone, key figure in the sit-ins and writer of the ACCD's call for action, understood that a sit-in would be especially powerful. She and her colleagues were inspired by the sit-ins of the Civil Rights movement and saw occupying HEW buildings as a way of drawing the parallels between disability rights and civil rights (Pelka 267). Cone explains,

> At every moment, we felt ourselves the descendants of the civil rights movement of the '60s. We learned about sit ins from the civil rights movement, we sang freedom songs to keep up morale, and consciously show the connection between the two movements. We always drew the parallels. About public transportation we said we can't even get on the back of the bus. A high point was Julian Bond's visit to the building. (Cone "Short History")

Another similarity between the disability activism sit-ins and the Civil Rights Movement was the importance of cross-group solidarity: in addition to

representatives from various disability groups coming together to advocate for 504, the Black Panthers, labor unions, gay men's groups, and churches came out in support of the sit-ins. Indeed, as I will discuss later, the support of the Black Panthers was critical to the success of the 504 sit-in.

Although the sit-ins began in ten cities, very quickly, only the San Francisco contingent remained.[7] However, in San Francisco, the narrative of people with disabilities as objects of pity actually helped them survive the first day.[8] In addition to those who camped out in the building, demonstrators with signs were outside everyday with protest signs and bullhorns, directing attention from passersby and the media to the protest; inside the building, protestors hung giant signs out of the windows of HEW offices. This dual-space protest—the occupation of the inside and the rally on the outside—allowed the protestors to disseminate their message across the nation to both disabled and nondisabled audiences. Almost everyday of the sit-in, the *San Francisco Chronicle* featured a write-up about the protest, and each day, the articles became longer, the pictures became larger, and the stories moved closer to page one—until they were on the front page.

Embodying Disabled Citizenship: An Analysis of Four Warrants

In this section, I analyze how the protestors cultivated disabled citizenship through their leveraging of embodied rhetorics. My analysis is divided into four

[7] In Washington, D.C., over three hundred people overtook Califano's office. His secretary, outraged by the disruption, prevented food from entering the building. Thus, the protestors were starved out within twenty-eight hours (Shapiro 66).

[8] Once the protestors set up camp in HEW offices—the fourth floor of the federal office building—HEW officials served the protestors "cookies and punch, as if they were school children on a field trip" (Shapiro 66). Such a condescending act threatened to infantilize the protestors, but they would rage on—for twenty-four more days.

warrants that were central to the protestors' claim that disabled people deserved equal participation in public and civic life: (1) disabled people are present, (2) disabled people cultivate strength, (3) disabled people embody citizenship, and (4) disabled people build coalitions.

Warrant 1: Disabled People Are Present

The sit-in did something never seen before in the United States: it made, on a national level, disability activism, and thus disability itself, present. Presence, as Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbretchts-Tyteca explain, is an "essential factor in argumentation" (116). For them, "by the very fact of selecting certain elements and presenting them to the audience, their importance and pertinency to the discussion are implied. Indeed, such a choice endows these elements with *presence*" (116). Disability was always present at the protest site itself, with visibly disabled people occupying the building inside and rallying outside. But it was also present in the homes of people reading newspaper articles or watching news programs. The mere presence of the protestors—especially those visibly marked as disabled by their assistive technology—performed an important argumentative function, as articulated by oral historian Fred Pelka:

> the sight of people in wheelchairs, people who were Deaf or blind or who had multiple disabilities, willing to risk their health and even their lives to make a political statement brought national media attention. It also catalyzed disability activists across the country and around the world. (262)

After centuries of silence surrounding disability in day-to-day life, the activists forced people to acknowledge the presence and prevalence of disability by gathering together and marking themselves as disabled.

In addition to situating visibly disabled bodies in public settings, the protestors made disability present through the frequent and high-profile use of American Sign Language (ASL) throughout the protest. Considering the dominant negative attitudes about ASL and deafness,[9] the integration of ASL into the protest was significant. The language played a central role in the communication strategies of the protestors. Volunteer interpreters, including Jadine Murello, Lynette Taylor, Don Hester, and Joe Quinn, devoted countless hours to translating speeches and testimonies into ASL and English (D'Lil 78-79). As a consequence, images from the sit-ins often feature interpreters or deaf people signing. In the Associated Press photograph below (Fig. 1.1), dozens of wheelchair uses surround Taylor standing and communicating in American Sign Language. The picture was taken inside of the San Francisco HEW building early in the protest. The news article that accompanies the photo focuses on the history and controversies surrounding Section 504, so the reader is not given any information about the situation beyond the caption (which reads, "Woman using sign

[9] In 1880, educators of deaf children met in Milan and decided to unilaterally prohibit the teaching of ASL to deaf children. Thus, deaf educators were fired, and deaf children were taught how to lip read and speak ("History Behind DPN"). Alexander Graham Bell, famous in the hearing world for his invention of the telephone, dedicated much of his life to ending the use of ASL in deaf education and trying to eliminate marriages amongst deaf people. In 1884, Bell professed, "People do not understand the mental condition of a person who cannot speak and who thinks in gestures. He is sometimes looked upon as a sort of monstrosity, to be stared at and avoided" (219). Though Bell's lecture was more than ninety years before the 504 sit-in, the belief that ASL represented a deficit in thought remained pervasive. It wasn't until 1960, when linguist William Stokoe published research validating the linguistic richness of ASL in his book Sign Language Structure, that deaf education began to include ASL once more. These problematic attitudes toward ASL would be countered directly in the 1988 protests on Gallaudet University, Deaf President Now, when the students held a strike and multi-day protest in support of a deaf president who could communicate via ASL ("History Behind DPN").

language speaks to people sitting in in at Health, Education, and Welfare offices in San Francisco").

Associated Press

Woman using sign language speaks to people sitting in at Health, Education and Welfare offices in San Francisco

Fig. 1.1 Associated Press. "Handicapped Use Protests to Push HEW to Implement '73 Bias Law." Photograph. *New York Times* 11 April 1977: 12. Microfilm.

Though sign language is a visual language that often captures the attention of hearing people, deafness itself is not (necessarily) a visible disability.[10] However, ASL makes deafness, and thus disability, present where it was previously invisible.[11] In addition to the interpreters featured in news photos, Deaf activists themselves communicated in ASL. Evan White, a reporter for Channel 7 News who extensively covered the sit-ins, interviewed Deaf activist Eddie Jauregui on television. In the

[10] In *Lend Me Your Ear*, Breuggemann writes of the similarities between deafness and gayness in terms of visibility: "these bodies are different, but the danger lies in their deceptive possibilities. You can stand in line next to, even bump elbows with, a gay or deaf person all day and *never know*" (152-153).
[11] Hearing people often notice the use of ASL in public spaces, many watching interpreters with interest and curiosity. Corinna Hill commented on this phenomenon in her widely-circulated editorial titled "Angry that I'm Deaf," published in Gallaudet University's student newspaper, *The Buff and Blue*. Hill writes, "I'm just so sick of having people stare at me when I sign."

black and white photo below (Fig. 1.2), Jauregui signs “I love you” to Evan White and the camera while his two daughters sit next to him.

Fig. 1.2 “Occupier Eddie Jauregui signs to Channel 7's Evan White, who covered the sit-in in San Francisco and Washington D.C.” Photograph by HolLynn D'Lil from her book about the 1977 504 Demonstrations*, Becoming Real in 24 Days*.

In this interview, ASL was broadcasted into the homes of television viewers across the Bay Area. The sit-in occurred nine years before Deaf actress Marlee Matlin would win an Academy Award for Best Actress in the film *Children of a Lesser God* and eleven years before deaf students would take over and occupy Gallaudet University for several days. In other words, deaf culture and ASL were still a mystery to much of the hearing world, and by conducting a televised interview in ASL, Jauregui introduced viewers to the language in the comfort of their homes. Thus, deafness was made present for hearing people watching the program.

Deaf activists also taught hearing protestors ASL in their downtime. As a result, at rallies, hearing and deaf participants would sign “504” alongside their loud chants, as seen in footage broadcasted nationally on *CBS Evening News*. ASL was

interwoven into the culture and the rhetorical strategies of the 504 sit-in. The protestors were able to create an alternative world on the fourth floor of the federal office, and in this space, ASL was embraced and centered in a way not seen in the hearing world. By signing in Congressional testimony, on television, and in rallies, the protestors made deafness present where it had previously been hidden. Furthermore, these images framed ASL not as a lack, but rather, as a rhetorical asset for activism, inclusion, and community. Deafness was depicted as not only present but also central to the fabric of disability culture at the sit-in. By making ASL and deafness visible at the sit-in and rallies surrounding the federal offices, activists demonstrated habits of citizenship that included and embraced deaf people, language, and culture.

Furthermore, the protestors made disability present in not only affirming but also subversive ways that revealed the possibilities of disability presence, community, and communication. Early in the protest, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) turned off the pay phones in an attempt to cut communication off between the occupiers and the media. Disability activist and 504 participant Corbett O'Toole describes how the protestors embraced ASL to overcome the barrier. Protestors outside would get on stage with a microphone and an interpreter and ask for an update from the people inside. Then,

> someone from the communications committee would formulate an answer and one of the Deaf folks, usually Olin Fortney (disabled) or Steve McClelland (disabled), would sit on the deep granite windowsill and sign our answers to the interpretor on the stage, who would speak

> them into the microphone. It was an elegant solution that came directly from the disability experience and completely confounded the FBI with its simplicity and its effectiveness. (60-61)

Though much of the protest was focused on reversing negative stereotypes of disability and highlighting the presence of disability, the protestors also made rhetorical use of the ignorance of nondisabled law enforcement. The FBI had assumed that all communication between the occupiers and supporters outside would be aural, but in fact, ASL provided an opportunity to communicate even when phone lines were cut. This ignorance would be exploited again; once the FBI agreed to allow attendants and ASL interpreters into the building for safety reasons, Deaf protestors taught hearing protestors ASL, so they could pretend to be interpreters, and thus, leave the building and return with supplies. O'Toole remembers, "Since the security staff had no knowledge of American Sign Language, if someone needed to leave the building and come back we taught them enough signs to get past the security people" (59). Time and time again, the protestors took advantage of the FBI's lack of knowledge surrounding disability and displayed how disability itself provides rhetorical strategies not available to nondisabled rhetors.

Protestors also used disclosure to make invisible disabilities visible, and thus, present. On April 15, Congressmembers George Miller and Philip Burton held congressional hearings on the fourth floor. They had declared the space "a satellite office of Congress" and flew out to hear the stories of protestors ("Political Theater," *Patient No More*). The hearing featured several panels focusing on different aspects of living with disability in an ableist world, including panels on drug abuse and

alcoholism[12] (D'Lil 107). The inclusion of people with addiction was an important political move. The Carter administration was concerned about the possibility of Section 504 protecting drug addicts in federal workplaces. Addiction, an often invisible disability, is shrouded in stigma and silence. The 504 sit-in protestors knew of the administration's attitude toward drug addiction and refused a proposed compromise to rewrite Section 504 to exclude people dealing with drug addiction.

Though physical symptoms of drug addiction exist, most often, drug addiction needs to be disclosed verbally. The act of disclosure is a rhetorically significant one. Tara Wood, in her extensive research on student disclosure strategies in the writing classroom, explains that "stigma and shame play dominant roles in the choices that students make regarding whether to resist, embrace, or challenge their identity as 'disabled'" (33). Though the protestors were not students, Wood's observations can be applied generally to disabled people, who have to navigate disclosure in their day-to-day life. Joan Tolifson, one of the speakers who testified at the hearing, speaks to complicated factors that surround disclosure for people who struggle with addiction, arguing that they too deserve protection under Section 504: "I can't account for eight years of my life. There are no jobs. There is trouble if we lie. If we tell the truth, there is no hiring of former drug addicts" (qtd. D'Lil 119). Thus, drug and alcohol users face risks if they choose to disclose—or choose not to. Disclosure, then, is a rhetorically complex act, one involving a speaker, audience, and rhetorical situation. Furthermore, in an ableist world, disclosing a disability, especially one that is not visible, often comes with more risks than reward.

[12] The panelists on these two panels were Tom Rinwrick, Ralph Manfredi, Joan Tollifson, Jack McClosky, Bil Maher-Delancey, Jean Watson, Jack Gorey, and Steve Klein (D'Lil 118).

And yet, despite the dangers, five 504 sit-in protestors presented on two panels titled "Alcoholism Panel" and "Drug Abuse Panel" and shared their stories of abuse and discrimination with a packed room and two congressional representatives. Disclosing disability without shame became a habit of citizenship within the 504 sit-in, a rhetorical act that allowed disabled people to *belong* in the society of the occupation. By sitting on these panels and recounting their stories, the panelists claimed their disability verbally and rejected dominant narratives of shame. Tobin Siebers imagines masquerading, or the public claiming of disability, as a form of resistance to ableism. He writes, "exaggerating or performing difference, when that difference is a stigma, marks one as a target, but it also exposes and resists the prejudices of society" (118). In other words, to claim disability in public is to reveal and fight against narratives of shame and stigma that surround disability. The physical presence on the panel acted as a form of disclosure. Furthermore, these panelists were not simply outing themselves as disabled. In a debate surrounding whether or not those with drug and alcohol addiction are disabled in the first place, the panelists insisted on their disability identity. By claiming disability as a public identity, the activists argued for their right to the protections 504 offered and to be included in the greater disability community.[13]

The drug and alcohol panel invited people to disclose and insist on their disability identities, thus, verbally making their disability present. By rejecting the shame and silence that often surrounds addiction, the panelists introduced a disability framework of addiction to the public imagination. Claiming disability as a rhetorical

[13] Of course, disability disclose comes with risks: shame, discrimination, and even violence (Wood; Kerschbaum "On Rhetorical Agency"; Vidali). It is these risks, then, that make disability disclosure such a powerful act.

strategy reveals the political work of disability disclosure. For Siebers, narrative is the most powerful tool for resisting ideologies of ableism. He urges people with disabilities to disclose and voice their experiences to nondisabled audiences:

> Now disabled people need to introduce the reality of disability identity into the public imagination. And the only way to accomplish this task is to tell stories in a way that allows people without disabilities to recognize our reality and theirs as a common one. For only in this way will we be recognized politically. (48)

A narrative presence, then, can be viewed as an activist act. To their audience, the panelists addressed the disabling factors of addiction, telling stories of discrimination, stigma, and isolation. Steven Klein described the cycle of discrimination and abuse by referring to this own experiences, testifying, "I used drugs for about 10 years. Discrimination against drug addicts leads to further drug abuse and alcoholism" (qtd. in D'Lil 119). Stories like Klein's and the other panelists invited their audience to identify with drug users by recognizing their hardships and advocating for policies that protect people dealing with addiction. Furthermore, these stories did not preclude the panelists from being a part of the citizenry inside the building; rather, the act of disclosure enabled them to assume integral roles within the occupation.

In addition to forging identification with their nondisabled audiences, the panelists' disclosure in a public and civic space argued for their belonging to both the disability community and society in general. Stephanie Kerschbaum writes that claiming disability "involves developing a disability identity and articulating disability as a minority stance—a form of coalition-building that can contribute to

social and political action" ("On Rhetorical Agency" 60). The panelists were actively claiming disability, which politicians had sought to deny. By doing so, they were developing a new disability identity and creating connections between their standpoints and people with other disabilities. Thus, disclosure is a core component in both community building and organizing; the denial of rights and respect forced people to publicly identify as disabled and then organize. In "Becoming Visible: Lessons in Disability," Brueggemann et al. draw attention to the connections between disability disclosure and civil rights:

> And it is only in often having to claim the rights that are due to us, to gain the access we are equal to, to enter the public space we are guaranteed, that we uncloak ourselves, turn 'passing' into 'outing,' turn discreditability into discredit (in Erving Goffman's terms for the assignation of *stigma*): it is no less than a civil rights frame that we become fully visible. (369)

Becoming visible as disabled people, the panelists argued for their inclusion in society and the disability community. They claimed not only their disability but also their belonging in public life. Instead of hiding in the shadows—an understandable choice given the cost of disclosure in public settings—the panelists "outted" themselves and made present disability where it had previously been invisible. Thus, the panelists embodied an alternative disability myth, one in which actively claim the disability identity as a marker of belonging, survival, and affirmation.

Warrant 2: Disabled People Are Agentive

In order to successfully argue for their rights, the 504 protestors had to contend with several negative stereotypes about disabled people. One of the most prevalent tropes they challenged was the stereotype that people with disabilities are weak. In terms of Dolmage's chart of harmful and pervasive disability myths, the protestors directly challenged "disability as object of pity and/or charity." Dolmage writes of this myth, "much of the language of disability relies on a semiotics of pity: myths of powerlessness that demand to be answered with charity" (*Disability Rhetoric* 40). Disabled writer and scholar Simi Linton similarly observes the negative stereotypes that surround disability that are played out in language, writing that

> Some of the stereotypes that are particularly entrenched are that people with disabilities are more dependent, childlike, passive, sensitive, and miserable and are less competent than people who do not have disabilities. Much of the language used to depict disabled people relates the lack of control to the perceived incapacities, and implies that sadness and misery are the product of the disabling condition. (25)

The myth of the weak, incapable disabled person validates the exclusion of disabled people from citizenship. By protesting and occupying a building for twenty-four days, the 504 sit-in protestors presented an alternative depiction of strength, one that emphasized interdependence and political resilience over physical strength.

One of the significant methods the protestors signified their political strength was their framing of the wheelchair as a symbol of activism. The meaning of the

wheelchair in disability history is complex and contested.[14] Since the adoption of the International Symbol of Access (ISA) in 1968 (Fig. 1.3), the wheelchair as universal symbol of disability has been formalized. Indeed, each possible draft of the ISA featured a wheelchair, revealing Western culture's conflation of the wheelchair with disability (Ben-Moshe and J. J. W. Powell 491).

Fig. 1.3 "The International Symbol of Accessibility." *Wikipedia Commons*.

Wheelchair users are often depicted as dependent on their wheelchairs—hence language such as "wheelchair-bound" to describe wheelchair users—and thus weak and passive. Carol J. Gill addresses this problematic trope, writing that "many people misunderstand wheelchairs, viewing them as symbols of helplessness rather than vehicles permitting mobility" (qtd. in Olkin 42). Because of the wheelchair's representation of disability in general, then, the meaning of the wheelchair is

[14] While, as L. Ben-Moshe and J. J. W. Powell review in their article, "Sign of Our Times? Revis(it)ing the International Symbol of Access," the ISA has been claimed and re-appropriated by many in the disability community as a representation of community, culture, and pride, others are frustrated with the centrality of the wheelchair as opposed to the person. Ben-Moshe and Powell summarize this critique, writing, "although the figure in the symbol refers to a human being, the contour represents mostly the wheelchair, which reinforces a common cultural misconception that people with mobility impairments are 'confined' or 'bound' to their wheelchairs" (498).

projected upon all disabled people. In other words, if wheelchairs are symbols of helplessness, then those correlated with wheelchairs— wheelchair users and all other disabled people— are by relation helpless.

The 504 activists embraced their wheelchairs while rejecting the wheelchair's correlation with weakness throughout their protest. Indeed, wheelchair users congregated both inside and outside of the building for the duration of the protest, and thus, were featured in almost every news photo of the image event. Oral histories confirm the prevalence of wheelchair users at the protest. Furthermore, as 504 participant Bonnie Regina reports, the leadership was largely wheelchair users: "I think the people in wheelchairs mainly ran the show, mainly the women" ("No Movement is Perfect," *Patient No More*). Thus, the wheelchair—and thus, the wheelchair user—was an integral part of the sit-ins. Rather than symbolizing passivity or weakness, then, the wheelchair's omnipresence at the protest suggested an alternative narrative of disability, one of agency, anger, and action. In the photograph below (Fig. 1.4), dozens of people are outside of the HEW building; San Francisco City Hall looms in the background. The far majority of the protesters are in wheelchairs; three or so protest signs are visible, including on leaning on a wheelchair that reads, "We Shall Overcome."[15]

[15] The organizers of the sit-in intentionally modeled much of their tactics after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, including the use of such as "We Shall Overcome." Kitty Cone, key figure in the sit-ins and writer of the ACCD's call for action, colleagues recognized, "that a sit-in was a tactic of the civil rights movement, and it was a way of drawing the parallels between this issue and the civil rights movement of the sixties. People all over the country were not thinking of people with disabilities as an oppressed minority or a group deserving of civil rights; they were thinking of people with disabilities as objects of charity, objects of pity, probably a group of people who were very weak. So a sit-in was a really good tactic to show that we were a civil rights movement and part of the whole history of struggling for progress for our community" (Pelka 267).

Fig. 1.4 Tusler, Anthony. "From left in helmet might be Frank Moore, in the Greek fisherman's hat is Dale Dahl, and Steve Dias with We Shall Overcome sign." *About Disability.*

The mere presence of the protestors—especially those visibly marked as disabled by their assistive technology—performed an important argumentative function:

> the sight of people in wheelchairs, people who were Deaf or blind or who had multiple disabilities, willing to risk their health and even their lives to make a political statement brought national media attention. It also catalyzed disability activists across the country and around the world. (Pelka 262)

In this way, the protestors embraced the contradictions surrounding their bodies and citizenship. In *Reading Embodied Citizenship: Disability, Narrative, and the Body Politic*, Emily Russell emphasizes the role corporeal difference plays in designating citizenship. She writes, "it is particularly those with visible bodily difference whose political participation is read as inescapably embodied. The features that exclude

those with anomalous bodies from full access to the national ideal are the same features that make their acts of citizenship legible" (4). Physical difference at once excludes disabled people from citizenship *and* highlights their embodied acts of citizenship. At the 504 sit-in, the protestors embraced their physical difference as a means to highlight their civic bodies. While an ableist society framed disability as a reason for removing disabled people from public life, the protestors leveraged their visible difference as a method for enabling citizenship.

To do so, the activists situated their bodies to create countless images of visibly disabled people—most often, in wheelchairs—creating visual and auditory displays of civic disobedience and participation. A news photograph captured by Susan Ehmer (Fig. 1.5) captures a moment of active protest by wheelchair users. In the image, about ten people are standing alongside the building holding signs. Half of the protestors are in wheelchairs; one wheelchair user is holding a megaphone. The caption reads: "In San Francisco, handicapped persons, some in wheelchairs, demonstrated at the Federal Building."

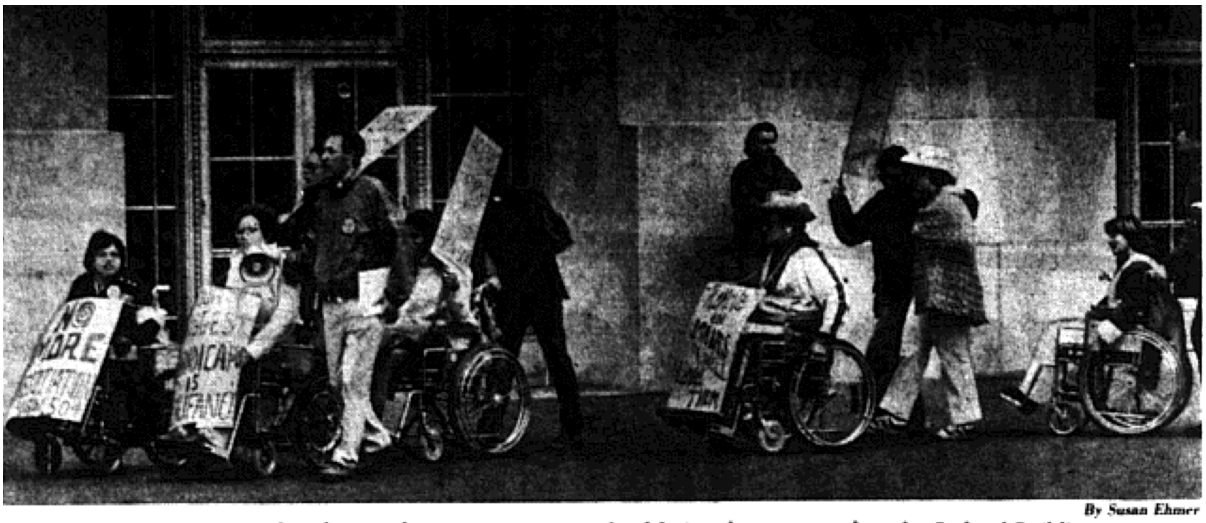

Fig. 1.5 Ehmer, Susan. "HEW Protest by Handicapped." Photograph. *San Francisco Chronicle* 6 April 1977: 9. Microfilm.

Both the image and the caption draw the reader's attention to the unexpected presence of the wheelchair at a protest, thus highlighting its spectacular nature. Here, people in wheelchairs are shown to be agentive, political, and resistant, displaying a radical departure of the traditional narrative of disability, which is wedded to the symbolic meaning of the wheelchair. As 504 protestor Karen Rose states, "this was a protest by people who weren't supposed to be able to protest" (qtd. in "Life inside the Building," *Patient No More)*. The impact was especially felt by people with disabilities: as the days went by, disabled people from "across the country were checking the newspaper with mounting astonishment and pride. 'They're still there!' they kept saying" (Fleischer and Zames 54).

The protestors were directly contradicting dominant understandings of wheelchairs—and thus, wheelchair users—as symbols of weakness and passivity. Furthermore, they introduced their audience to alternative understandings of wheelchairs as defined by wheelchair users themselves. In her article on the

wheelchair and performance art, Petra Kuppers writes in "The Wheelchair's Rhetoric: The Performance of Disability,"

> For some of us members of disability culture, the wheelchair is a cherished cultural object invested with a fascination well beyond what narration or function might warrant. As 'real' objects wheelchairs are transporters full of weight, texture, and sensation. On stage and screen, wheelchairs become rhetorical devices carrying narratives and marking identities. (88)

If we look at the 504 sit-ins as the stage, we can see how the protestors used wheelchairs as "rhetorical devices carrying narratives and marking identities." And importantly, on a national stage, people with disabilities authored their own narrative of the wheelchair. For the protestors displayed the strength, agency, and civic power of the people in wheelchairs, redefining the chair not as a metaphor for dependency but as a tool for activism and citizenship.

Warrant 3: Disabled People Embody Citizenship

The protesters demanded their full inclusion into civic life and utilized the space to underscore their argument. In San Francisco, the HEW offices were located in the United Nations Plaza, just blocks away from San Francisco City Hall, which is featured in many of the photographs from the sit-ins (Fig. 1.4). The location of the sit-ins was steeped in civic iconography and meaning. Thus, the protestors embarked on what Endres and Senda-Cook call "temporary reconstruction." They argue that the meaning of a place is continually "reiterated, reinforced, or reinterpreted" (263). The

transitory meaning of place allows protestors to enact new interpretations, sometimes permanently or temporarily:

> we argue that many protests enact ephemeral fissures in the meaning of place. Ephemeral fissures in place refer to temporary (an hour, a day, a week, etc.) reconstructions of the meaning of a place. These tactical moves temporarily 'transgress the expectations of place' by positing an alternate vision. (263)

After centuries of being denied citizenship in the traditional sense—through immigration policies, inaccessible federal buildings, and voting restrictions— the protestors demonstrated their bodies' civic potential by repurposing a government building to accommodate their non-normative bodies. The inaccessible building was claimed by the protestors, and through their disabled habits of citizenship, they proved that their bodies *do* belong in civic space.

Not only were the protestors making arguments about their right to citizenship in the traditional sense—by demanding their inclusion in state-sponsored and nationalistic activities—but they also invented a disabled citizenship within the walls of the federal building through their disability-positive habits of citizenship. Again, I am using the term citizenship to connote the rules, or habits of citizenship, that dictate which bodies get to belong in a public space. Unspoken rules prescribe whether or not disabled bodies are allowed into various cultural spheres, and if they are allowed in, how those bodies should move and look. Outside of the sit-in, disabled people were excluded from everyday cultural practices, including religious worship and sexuality. However, the protestors created a disabled citizenship within the federal building,

wherein all the cultural practices were not exclusive but rather disability-centric. Thus, through their use of embodied and spatial rhetorics, the activists re-envisioned citizenship to actively center disability, offering a new model in disabled bodies form the habits of citizenship.

A core part of the occupiers' responsibilities was to transform the offices into living spaces. Though much of this work was done away from the onlookers, the remaking of citizenship still served an important activist function. Richard Gregg writes of the ego-function of protest rhetoric, arguing that, "the primary appeal of the rhetoric of protest is to the protestors themselves, who feel the need for psychological refurbishing and affirmation" (74). Indeed, inside the walls of the HEW office, the protestors affirmed the value and worth of their lives, countering dominant narratives of disability while composing a citizenship that welcomed and nurtured disabled people. One of their most innovative adaptions was the transformation of the freight elevator into a valuable living space used for needs not frequently recognized by mainstream society: sex and worship.[16] D'Lil recalls that the elevator "served as Judy Heumann's getaway place from the relentless demands upon her time" (D'Lil 62). As Heumann was a central leader in the protestors, she needed a quiet space to rest. However, the elevator served as more than just a place to sleep and recharge: Heumann explains about the elevator, "I had a boyfriend at that time, and that's

[16] Freight elevators are machines built to transport equipment rather than people, and yet before the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, freight elevators were often used to move disabled people from one floor to another (D'Lil 61). These elevators, then, represented a reluctant access: they were slow and uncomfortable but offered admission to disabled people. However, early into the protest, either HEW officials or the police shut down the elevator to prevent more protestors from gaining access into the fourth floor.

where we *went*," implying that is where she and her boyfriend had sex (qtd. in "Life Inside the Building," *Patient No More*).

Heumann's candor about how she used the elevator flips the dominant script about disabled people and sexuality. In the introduction to edited collection *Sex and Disability*, Anna Mollow observes that "rarely are disabled people regarded as either desiring subjects or objects of desire" (1). She follows this observation up with a question: "but what if disability were sexy? And what if disabled people were understood to be both subjects and objects of a multiplicity of erotic desires and practices?" (1). Within the elevator, and the fourth floor in general, people with disabilities were objects and subjects of erotic desire. Heumann's use of the elevator to have sex with her boyfriend—as well as the co-sleeping and sexual interactions that occurred throughout the fourth floor—answers Mollow's question by imagining a disabled citizenship that embraces sex and disability.

Judy's Room was not the only space that enabled intimacy between protestors. Before the FBI had denied access to the building, protestors and supporters brought supplies to the fourth floor to make the space more livable. Specifically, people brought sleeping bags and mattresses, so they could sleep more comfortably in the cold, hard offices. Pictured below (Fig. 1.6) is a black and white photograph of two people sleeping on a thin mattress on the bottom of a staircase. A wheelchair rests at the end of the mattress.

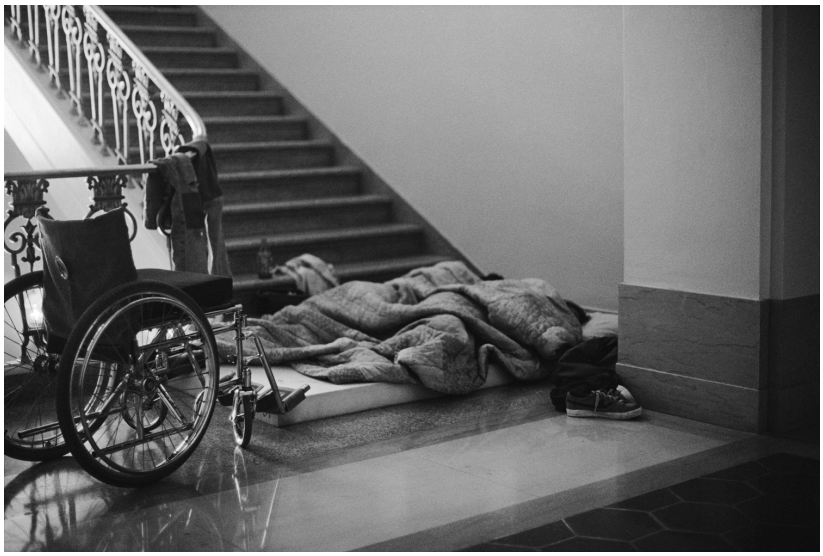

Fig. 1.6 “Two occupiers sleep together under blankets.” Photograph by HolLynn D'Lil from her book about the 1977 504 Demonstrations*, Becoming Real in 24 Days.*

The people photographed appear to be sleeping. The closeness of the bodies suggests an intimacy, whether sexual or not, between a disabled person and another person (it is not clear if both people are disabled in the photograph). Similar displays of physical closeness happened frequently. For Siebers, sexuality and intimacy are both tied closely to citizenship. He defines “freedom of association and intimate companionship” as a fundamental right that must be guaranteed to “citizens in a democratic society” ”—a freedom often denied to disabled people, who can’t always access spaces for sex or information about how disabled bodies can approach sex (156). By performing typically private acts—sex and co-sleeping—in a federal building, the protestors modeled disabled habits of citizenship that celebrated intimacy and desire for and from disabled people. Their activist project, then, was more than seeking legal rights but also articulating a model of citizenship that embraced the sexuality of disabled people.

The freight elevator was not only a place for rest and sex; the elevator also became the location for weekly Shabbat dinners (D'Lil 62). Disabled people have historically faced barriers in practicing religion. In *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability,* Nancy Eiesland identifies three themes of disability in religion: disability as punishment for sin, disability as virtuous suffering, and disability as needing charity (73-74). These themes echo the problematic disability myths that circulate in general society and create additional obstacles for religious people with disabilities. Furthermore, Section 504 focused on federal agencies and exempted churches, so in addition to exclusive theologies, churches themselves were not required to by physically accessible to disabled people. As Robert C. Anderson writes in his article "Faith in Access: Building Conversation between Religion and Disability," "many people with disabilities wish to participate in faith communities but face greater barriers than in the public sector." People with disabilities thus face exclusion from celebrating the rights and obligations of their faith without recourse of law.

Thus, outside of the federal building, disabled people of faith struggled to gain access to religious communities, especially ones that would treat them with respect. However, inside the encampment of the sit-ins, the freight elevator became a place for people to pray and celebrate together. If citizenship is constructed by "'deep rules' that prescribe specific interactions among citizens in public spaces," then the protestors created their own deep rules about disability and religious rituals within the walls of the federal buildings (Allen 11). Within the elevator, protestors could practice their faith in a way that affirmed their humanity and citizenship. Their

disability was neither sinful nor virtuous suffering. They were not isolated from other people of faith. Instead, the protestors remade the space of the elevator to serve their own needs as disabled citizens who wanted to make love and pray together.

Warrant 4: Disabled People Build Coalitions

Throughout the entire sit-in, protestors joined together—to have sex, to practice religion, to rally, to organize the next step of the protest, and to provide care—challenging one of the most pernicious disability myths: that disabled people are isolated and lonely. Dolmage writes, "people with disabilities in film and literature most often live in hospital and institutions, as though these are their natural habitats—they rarely have romantic relationships or enduring friendships, and often are left alone at the end of the narrative" (*Disability Rhetoric* 43). This isolation is rooted in the medical model of disability, which envisions disability as a problem within the individual rather than a socially constructed identity or state of being (Dolmage *Disability Rhetoric* 43). Siebers argues that disabled people are often painted as isolated narcissists only interested in their own pain, and this framing has high stakes:

> narcissism promotes a structure of blame where collective violence is concealed and victims are described as people divided against themselves. Narcissists bring themselves down, and we know nothing and can know nothing about it. A more sinister form of violence could not be imagined. (45)

By framing disability as individuated and dismissing people with disabilities as narcissists, ableist ideology abolishes society's responsibility to accept, value, or even tolerate disabled bodies, as disability is the individual's problem. Thus, the 504 sit-ins were significant in offering an alternative narrative of disability in their organizing and protesting. In their encampment, disability was not isolating, but rather, the cause and identity that brought people together. The protestors' survival and success was dependent on the coalitions they made with each other and with outside groups, coalitions built by the enmeshing of different bodies toward a shared goal: the enforcement of 504 and the beginnings of disability justice.

Though the rallies occurring outside of the building were the more visible manifestation of the protest, the sit-in itself was what demanded the attention of Congress and HEW officials. In order to sustain a twenty-four day occupation in an inhospitable office space, protestors had to build coalition across different disabilities as well as other activist groups. As a workplace, the fourth floor was not equipped for basic needs, like sleeping, eating, or bathing. And the floor was certainly not ready to accommodate the daily medical and support needs of people with disabilities. Thus, the protestors had to adapt the cold office space into a warm living space that met the needs of disabled people. Quickly, protestors and attendants established an infirmary, "an informal free clinic" (Pelka 277). In order to do so, the protestors had to practice creative problem solving, using the materials available to provide for their needs. O'Toole explains that "people brought materials they'd found on the street and we duct-taped them around the air conditioning unit to create a refrigerated space for medications [that needed refrigeration]. We set up a small medical center next to the

air conditioner" (57). The building, then, became a place to care for each other's medical and living needs alongside political organizing. For the protestors, their disabilities and medical care could not be separated from the working groups, congressional testimonials, or preparations for the next day's demonstrations and statements. Medical needs, then, did not preclude people from participating in the *polis* of the sit-in. Instead, caring for each other's bodies was an integral habit of citizenship, one that cultivate belonging for people too often pushed aside. In order to continue the sit-in, the community worked together to care for each other's disabled bodies, both affirming the value of those bodies and ensuring the protest's success.

Despite the retrofits, the protestors were often still uncomfortable inside the building. They lacked the same level of care that they were accustomed to at home. 504 participant Bruce Oka recalls the bedsores many participants received because of the uncomfortable living arrangements: "Our disabilities were not able to be cared for properly because who can do that while you're doing something that is totally out of the norm?" ("Life Inside the Building," *Patient No More*). The sit-in, then, required reciprocal care across disabilities. D'Lil notes that massages were an essential daily ritual (124), and O'Toole describes the protestors' morning schedule: "a typical day in the first week consisted of everyone slowly waking up and helping each other with our different morning routines. That might mean emptying someone's leg bag [catheter] or finding a cup of water so they could take their medications" (61).

For the protestors, providing care for each other's bodies was the core of their activist praxis. The sit-in depended on the reciprocal care executed by the protestors each day, the care and support that enabled them to continue their embodied act of

resistance. For Shannon Walters, the daily acts of care and physical connection performed an important rhetorical function. She writes,

> Protestors for 504 shared 'common sensations' in a Burkean sense, initiating identification by acting together and sharing a way of life that conveyed a powerful message about equal rights. Protestors lived together, ate together, moved together, slept together… Using their bodies, they joined their identities together to form identifications with each other and to demonstrate this identification to a largely nondisabled audience. (*Rhetoric Touch* 68)

Walters emphasizes the critical role of care and interdependence to the survival, activism, and rhetoric of disabled people, as they bring people together and forge identifications in the quest for rights and justice. 504 sit-in lasted for twenty-four days because the protestors embraced collaboration and interdependent care across disabilities, creating a community that enabled them to live in an uncomfortable, inaccessible space for four weeks.

The activists brought their bodies together to create a meaningful demonstration of power, solidarity, and identification. For Walters, Burkean identification is more than connecting based on sameness: recognizing and embracing difference are key to successful identification in disability activism. Walters argues that the body is central to identification and is located not within an individual body, but rather, in the space between bodies connecting. She writes, "Unanchored to a single body, identification through tactile consubstantiality offers flexible, malleable, and diverse engagements with the body and other bodies—disabled, nondisabled, or

temporarily able-bodied" (*Rhetorical Touch* 60). Thus, though identification strives for unity, rhetorical touch allows for identification through difference: its power is rooted in the act of different bodies with different disability identities touching and sharing senses. In her chapter on rhetorical touch and the 504 sit-ins, Walters focuses on identification established across different disability statuses. She continues, "This tactile approach to consubstantiality addresses the complexities of identification among differently disabled and nondisabled people such as those exhibited in the 504 demonstrations and its aftermath" (*Rhetorical Touch* 60).

Indeed, Walters observations reveal the political potential of differently disabled and nondisabled people organizing for disability justice. However, Walters' focus on coalition across disability neglects the rich forms of identification that emerged among other forms of difference. Within the fourth floor and outside the building, disabled and nondisabled people organized together and built coalitions with racial justice, gay rights, and labor organizations. For the activists at the 504 sit-in leaned on coalitions formed with groups outside of the disability community: without the support of diverse bodies, the protestors would not have occupied the building for so long, and thus, would not have produced such persuasive and effective embodied rhetorics.

In the article, "Lomax's Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504," Susan Schweik calls attention to the whitewashed historiography of the 504 sit-ins and insists that "we come to a better understanding of the fluid and intricate dynamics of alliance that comprised the 'power of 504' when we place a disabled Black Panther and a Black Panther caregiver at the center both of Panther and of

American disability history." Schweik insists that the political force at the heart of the sit-in was black power, embodied by participant Brad Lomax, and her telling of the events—as well as white 504 participants D'Lil and O'Toole—support her claim. Lomax was one of the first participants in the sit-in. This was not his first foray into political protest: he was involved in the Center for Independent Living Movement in Berkeley in the 1960's and active in the Black Panther Party in Oakland.[17] A physically disabled black man, Lomax bridged the divide between the predominantly white disability rights movement and the local black power movement. Alongside his personal attendant, Chuck Jackson, Lomax asked the Black Panther Party to support the 504 sit-in.

O'Toole describes the level of support the participants received from the Black Panther Party. A few days into the protest, two nondisabled Black Panthers "asked permission at our daily meeting to feed our entire group dinner for the duration of the sit-in" (O'Toole 58-59). When asked why they would be willing to provide such overwhelming support, the two men responded:

> He told me that Brad and Chuck's commitment to the sit-in automatically guaranteed that the Panthers would support them.

[17] For the Black Panthers, the question of whether or not to support the protestors was an easy one. They saw their struggles as aligned with the protestors. Not only were both groups outwardly pushing against the federal government and advocating for human rights, but the Black Panthers had a history of health-related activism. Despite the image of the upright, young black man standing holding a gun that acted as a synecdoche for the entire party's strength and virility, the Black Panther party centered black vulnerability in their activism. They established health care centers for black communities, and in their September 1971 newspaper, they published a page-length description of sickle-cell anemia and their efforts to combat the condition ("Fight Sickle Cell Anemia"). Alongside the writing stands a picture of a black child surrounded by drawn sickle-cells. Similar to disability studies social model approach to disability, the Black Panthers envisioned black sickness as a byproduct of white supremacy; thus, the article traces the roots of sickle-cell anemia to the slave trade and concludes with bolded, large print "BLACK GENOCIDE." The Black Panthers historically advocated for vulnerable black bodies, specifically crafting a critique that put the blame of black pain and sickness on white supremacy.

> "Okay," I said, "I understand why you would feed Brad and Chuck, but I have no idea why you would feed the rest of us." He turned to me and said, "We support you because you're asking America to change, to treat you like human beings, like you belong. We always support people fighting for their rights." (59)

And the Black Panthers held up their promise. They delivered a hot meal every night, and when the FBI had threatened to keep the Black Panthers out of the building, they responded with a diplomacy and force learned from years of political organizing:

> "Listen, we're the Panthers. You want to starve these people out, fine, we'll go tell the media that that's what you're doing, and we'll show up with our guns to match your guns and we'll talk about who's going to talk to who about the food. Otherwise, just let us feed these people and we won't give you any trouble." (qtd. in Pelka 273).

Similar to the 504 sit-in protestors, the Black Panthers situated their bodies as their means of persuasion, announcing their wiliness to risk their bodies for the safety of the activists inside the building. Thus, a coalition of mostly-white disabled bodies inside the building and black mostly-nondisabled bodies outside the building united to push against the threat of state violence.

At the 504 sit-ins, the Black Panthers supported the protestors, feeding 150 people a warm meal everyday, because of their commitment to justice and agitating against the establishment—in this case, the federal government. O'Toole reminisces, "By far the most critical gift given us by our allies was the Black Panthers' commitment to feed each protester in the building one hot meal every day" (qtd. in

Schweik). She credits the Black Panthers support with the demonstration's success: "We would never have succeeded without them. They are a critical part of disability history and they their story is almost never told" (O'Toole 59).[18]

Led by the considerable efforts of the Black Panther Party, an unlikely coalition of black, gay, labor, and religious groups united to support the disability activists inside the building.[19] They embodied solidarity by performing acts of care across ability, gender, class, religious, and racial difference—regardless of the risks of doing so. Despite a barrier established by the FBI, local activist groups found ways to evade law enforcement and supply food, money, communication technologies, and photocopies. Still, I am cautious of representing the coalitional politics of the 504 sit-ins as neat or utopian. In many ways, the occupation got it right: people of color were invited and represented at the rallies. But in many ways, the occupation got it wrong: the leadership was white. 504 participant Mary Lou Breslin reports that "The leadership definitely was not diverse. You know, it's white women in wheelchairs for the most part. So that was, I guess, one of its weaknesses" (qtd. in "No Movement Is Perfect," *Patient No More*). Black disabled activist Leroy Moore, who was not

[18] Though O'Toole is correct in that many do not know the role the Black Panthers had in disability rights, the current day media did report on their involvement in the protest. On April 8, 1977, the San Francisco Chronicle ran an article titled "Panthers Back Handicapped Demonstrators." The article explains, "the Panthers, along with the Delancey Street Foundation and Safeway, are supplying food and medicine to the demonstrators."

[19] Indeed, the Black Panthers were not only in their support of the 504 sit-ins. In the early days of the protest, Cesar Chavez sent a mailgram reading: "we urge full support for implementation of federal anti-discrimination statue warmest regards Viva la Causa" ("Building Networks of Support," Patient No More). Glide Memorial Church, led by Cecil Williams, provided food and moral support, as well as advocated for improved medical and hygienic conditions for the occupiers. The Butterfly Brigade, a group of gay men who fought against anti-gay violence in the streets of San Francisco, circumvented the barrier the FBI had erected and snuck walkie talkies to the protestors (Shapiro 67). The local machinist union donated their headquarters to organizers, including the use of their telephone lines and copy machines (Cone "A Short History"). And the International Machinist Union paid for the travel and transportation of the protestors who flew from San Francisco to Washington, D.C. at the final days of the protest to appeal directly to Carter and Califano (D'lil 142). The Black Panther Party also contributed to these travel costs, paying for Lomax and Johnson to make the trip (Schweik).

present at the sit-ins, describes the frustration that black activists felt at the occupation and the aftermath: "Some relatives that I contacted of Black disabled activists who gave their sweat, words and heart to the sit-in were so deeply hurt by the white leadership at that time that till this day they can't talk about it." Moore continues to echo Schweik's observations: that historigraphies of the 504 sit-in ignore the involvement and sacrifices of black disabled and nondisabled activists.[20]

Disability activist and 504 participant Gary Gray confirms Moore's observations. Gray, a black man with cerebral palsy, notes that not only was the leadership homogenous, but the media coverage of the event was focused on only certain disabled people. Gray comments,

> The media was really ignorant of the different disabilities. You didn't see people with cerebral palsy. You didn't see people with muscular dystrophy. You saw quadriplegics. You saw MS because they looked normal and TV is an image thing. You don't want to see images of people like me, because I don't look normal or I don't sound normal. The media dismissed anyone who looked strange. They didn't want to deal with it. So they missed it. They missed the hardcore disabled

[20] Sadly, not much has changed here. In 2015, autistic activist of color Lydia Brown criticized the silence of disability organizations surrounding police brutality. They write, "it is no coincidence that most disability rights organizations, with relatively few exceptions, are led entirely or mostly by white people with disabilities" ("Undoing Racism"). Even in 2015, white disabled people dominate the leadership of disability rights and advocacy organizations, according to Brown. The true can be said of disability studies in academia. In the Introduction of 2012 *Blackness and Disability*, Christopher Bell famously decries disability studies as "white disability studies," a searing indictment of the absence of race analysis within DS as a field. Indeed, a perusal of the disability rhetoric bibliography featured on the Disability Rhetoric website, last updated August 2015, affirms Bell's observation: very few texts focus on race and disability are featured. This is despite research that illustrates how racism and ableism are co-constitutive (Erevelles and Minear; Boster; Swetlitz).

> people, focusing on the quadriplegics. ("Educating a Nation," *Patient No More*)

By drawing our attention to the media narrative of the sit-ins, Gray illustrates how certain bodies were deemed appropriate for media consumption and circulation. Bodies like Gray's, black and trembling, were not included in the telling of the 504 sit-ins—neither in the moment itself or our current inscriptions of the event.

Thus, the 504 sit-ins cultivated a disabled citizenship that moved toward an intersectional civic body without fully achieving an intersectional civic body. Still, the story of the sit-in cannot be told without acknowledging the embodied rhetoric of activists of color outside of the disability community, those who gave across difference and ensured the success of the sit-in. Furthermore, these coalitions struck a blow to one of the most pervasive and harmful myths about disability: that disabled people are isolated and alone, not able to participate in a collective. Rather, the coalitions among different social justice groups in support of Section 504 illustrated the capability for disabled people to build their own expansive, diverse civic society.

Where to Go from Here

Despite its imperfections, the 504 sit-ins are remembered as a moment of pride, triumph, and community even today. As Piepzna-Samarasinha writes in the epigraph, the protestors' activism continues to give affirmation and power to disabled people almost forty years after the sit-ins. Furthermore, the sit-in provides a starting point for the crip story, a poignant moment of disability history that continues to uplift disabled people.

The protest only ended once the demands of the protestors were met. On April 28, 1977, Califano signed the regulations, vowing to enforce the anti-discrimination clause of Section 504. At the victory rally, Cone remarked on their success despite the disability myths that pervade society:

> We did it! We did. We showed strength and courage and power and commitment that we the shut-ins or the shut-outs, that we the hidden, the supposedly the frail and the weak— that we can wage a struggle at the highest level of government and win! (Cone "Victory Speech")

Cone's remarks highlight what was so remarkable about this protest—it was won by activists who weren't supposed to be activists, who were expected to be weak and excluded from society. However, they used those vicious disability myths as their advantage. Just as the HEW officials were reluctant to sign 504 regulations because they did not fear or respect disability activists, the HEW officials were unprepared to deal with the agency and assertion of the protestors.

Beyond disrupting expectations, the 504 activists leveraged their most persuasive yet vulnerable rhetorical assets—their bodies—to craft arguments about their strength, presence, citizenship, community, and intersectionality. Though scholars such as Walters and Dolmage have insisted that disabled bodies are infused with rhetorical power, few have yet to grapple with the rhetorical power of material disabled bodies in protest. By acknowledging the activists' spatial transformations of the office space, I aim to underscore Sieber's caution on presenting the disabled body as merely a postmodern, abstract concept:

> The most urgent issue for DS [disability studies] is the political struggle of people with disabilities, and this struggle requires a realistic conception of the disabled body. In practice, this means resisting the temptation to describe the disabled body as either power-laden or as a weapon of resistance useful only to pierce the false armor of reality erected by modern ideologies. (68)

In this chapter, I insist on recognizing the rhetorical power of the physical body, but I also acknowledge the vulnerability of the physical body. The disabled protestors did compose persuasive arguments by situating their bodies in strategic ways in forbidden spaces. But they also had to grapple with pain, hygiene, and medication throughout the protest. In other words, their protest relied not only on the rhetorical power of their deviant bodies but also on their acknowledgement and reciprocal care of their medical needs and limitations. As Siebers argues, it is crucial for rhetorical scholars to not simply valorize the metaphorical power of the disabled body; we must also attend to the mess, the pain, and the mortality of our flesh, blood, and bones.

Lastly, by continuing the efforts of Walters, I aim to write the 504 sit-ins into the history of rhetoric. By investigating how disabled people—people historically excluded from the rhetorical tradition—deployed their bodies rhetorically, rhetorical studies can expand its notion of rhetorical history, rhetorical theory, and rhetoricity itself. Here, I follow Dolmage's suggestions to seek out the disabled body in history:

> [my] suggestion is that when we look through rhetorical history for what is most tense and contested, we most often come to stories about the body. Wherever we find the body rhetorically contested, and

> wherever we find rhetorical contestation about the body's role in meaning-making, we see intensely fraught negotiations. ("Octalog" 113)

In this chapter, I traced how the 504 sit-in protestors challenged disability myths that threatened to silence, abuse, and exclude their bodies. Instead, the protestors demanded a new understanding of their body, one that emerged from their own meaning-making. By locating my study at the site of such conflicts and negotiation, I illuminated the rhetorical richness and savviness that came from occupying a federal building with disabled bodies for four weeks.

Despite the impact of the sit-ins on federal legislation, the Bay Area disability community, and disability history, the 504 sit-ins are a rarely taught moment of activism in the United States. I grew up near San Francisco, and I did not hear about the sit-ins until I was in my thirties. Furthermore, the momentum for national-level disability activism simmered after the success of the sit-in. In *Disability Protests: Contentious Politics, 1970-1999*, Sharon Barnartt and Richard Scotch attempt to quantify the effects of the 504 sit-in. They conclude that despite the legal victories of the protest— HEW would now enforce the anti-discrimination law, ensuring that disabled people could access federal buildings and agencies—the sit-in did not trigger a landslide of other protests (167). The late eighties and early nineties, instead, would prove to be a peak of disability activism, with Deaf President Now strike at Gallaudet University in 1988 and ADAPT's civic disobedience to urge Congress to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 (Barnartt and Scotch 168).

Still, the sit-ins should not be seen as unsuccessful or inconsequential—far from that. Barnartt and Scotch acknowledge that momentum after the occupation was hard to pull off largely because, as of 1977, "information and mobilization networks had yet to materialize" (168). In other words, 1977 was the first time people of various disabilities had united and launched a national campaign. Because of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), disabled people were just beginning to enter the workforce, schools, universities, and civic spaces, and thus, beginning to form information and mobilization networks to organize and resist ableist policies. Perhaps most importantly, the sit-in revealed the strength of the disability community to itself and future generations. Piepzna-Samarasinha's prose poem envisions the protest as a constellation of stars in the disability narrative that continues to reach out to disabled people. Today, as witnessed in Piepzna-Samarasinha's poem and the *Patient No More* exhibit, we can see young people who refuse to accept a society that excludes them and who celebrate disability history as a starting place for crafting new arguments for inclusion and justice.

Chapter 2: Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera's Rhetorical Survival: An Ecological Perspective of Disability Activism

In October 1970, Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.), an activist group devoted to supporting the political rights and basic living needs of homeless trans and gay youth in New York City, organized a protest outside of Bellevue Hospital.[21] They were protesting the dehumanizing treatment of patients at the hospital, specifically the gay and trans patients who were diagnosed as "crazy" and then forcibly institutionalized —such as Chris Thompson, a gay black trans man who sought treatment for his asthma and was forcibly admitted to the psychiatric wing in a violent attempt to "cure" him of his divergent sexuality and gender (Rivera and Bell). In a photograph captured by Diana Davies, Marsha P. Johnson, S.T.A.R. co-founder and black trans woman[22], stands outside the hospital, a lit cigarette in one hand and a protest sign reading "Power to the People" in the other. In another picture from the demonstration, the other S.T.A.R. co-founder and Latina trans woman, Sylvia Rivera, holds a sign reading "community control of Bellevue" and raises her fist (Rivera and Bell). Johnson and Rivera rallied against the cruel treatment of gay

[21] I owe a debt of gratitude to Reina Gossett, trans archivist and filmmaker, for sharing her research on Rivera, Johnson, and S.T.A.R. online. In his keynote address at the Tufts Graduate Student Conference in 2014, Jose Munoz credited Gossett with "liberating" several archival materials that had been buried for decades, bringing to light the activism and sacrifices of Rivera and Johnson.

[22] Johnson never identified as transgender, though she lived and performed as a woman most of her adult life. Instead, she and Rivera both identified as transvestites, as the term transgender was not used until the 1990's (King and Ekins). In an undated interview with Johnson, she explains her plans for gender confirmation surgery, then called a "sex change" ("Rapping with Marsha P. Johnson" 117). Later in life, however, she changed her mind and decided to not pursue gender confirmation surgery. In interviews, she most often identified as a drag queen or a transvestite, and her friends used she/her/hers pronouns when referring to her. Rivera reveals a similar tension in her identity; while she identified with the transgender community in her later speeches and writings, she still disliked the term: "I'm tired of being labeled. I don't even like the label transgender. I'm tired of living with labels. I just want to be who I am" ("Queens in Exile" 48). Thus, in this paper, I use the term "trans" to be inclusive of signify both the contemporary movement they sparked—transgender rights—and their own self identity—transvestite.

and trans people by the medical industry and advocated for an alternative approach to patient care, one that privileged community wisdom and experience over the authority of medical institutions. They also resisted the pathologization of atypical gender identities and sexual orientations, again critiquing the medical industry's supposed expertise and advocating for gender and sexual identities defined by themselves rather than doctors.

S.T.A.R.'s demands echo the dominant arguments of the mainstream disability rights movement: criticisms of medical models of difference, claims of bodily autonomy, and declarations of the value and worth of othered bodies and minds. And yet, despite their disability activist rhetoric and goals, S.T.A.R., Rivera, and Johnson have been only discussed as queer activists, Stonewall instigators, and foremothers of the transgender movement, figures increasingly recognized and valorized in queer historiographies of gender and activism. In scholarship on Rivera and Johnson, disability is rarely mentioned. However, Rivera and Johnson were candid about their mental disabilities and their symptoms; they speak openly and frequently about depression, suicide attempts, drug addiction, delusions, psychosis in their interviews and writings. Rivera grappled with chronic depression throughout her life, attempting suicide twice, and was addicted to drugs (depression and drug addiction are both considered to be mental disabilities in contemporary medical and legal definitions). Johnson received Social Security Disability benefits most of her adult life. Though no specific diagnosis is noted in the archives, she and her friends openly discuss her "madness" in interviews, describing delusions, hospitalization and treatment, and psychotic episodes.

And yet, Rivera and Johnson have been largely ignored by disability studies scholarship. Indeed, narratives of disability activism on a national scale often begin with the 504 sit-ins in 1977, several years after S.T.A.R.'s birth and demise (Shapiro; Longmore; O'Toole).[23] Before the 504 sit-ins, neither disabled nor nondisabled people widely thought of disability as a political identity. The brief historiography of disability activism then poses critical questions: did disabled people only begin organizing in the late 1960's and 1970's, or have disabled people been organizing for years even decades before—but using different terminology or frameworks for understanding and presenting their experiences? Furthermore, has disability activism emerged in other movements, movements not classified as disability-oriented but still encompassing both disabled people and disability activist rhetoric? Propelled by these questions, I look to Rivera and Johnson's work in early gay liberation activism as a potential site for recovering early manifestations of disability activism.

Before I move on, I want to stress that I am not approaching transgenderism as a disability in itself. Though the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM), which lists criteria for diagnosing mental disabilities, names gender dysphoria as a disability, trans people have resisted the pathologization of their bodies and identities. That said, some trans people still pursue an official diagnosis, as it is often the only way they can attain trans-specific medical procedures, such as hormone treatments or gender affirmation surgery. But the complicated relationship between disability and transness is not the focus of this chapter. Rather, my attention is on the overlapping symptoms of oppression shaped lives and their approach to survival and activism. Ableism,

[23] Though the Independent Living Movement—which supported disabled people living outside of institutions and attending university—began in the late 1960's, it began as a local effort and did not receive national attention.

transphobia, homophobia, racism, and classism prevented Rivera and Johnson from attaining affordable and compassionate healthcare for Rivera's depression and drug addiction or Johnson's psychosis. Furthermore, the oppressions and violence they experienced on the street often increased their feelings of isolation and distress, amplifying the symptoms of mental disability they describe in interviews.

In this chapter, I approach Johnson and Rivera's disability activism through an ecological framework, arguing that their rhetoric emerged because of the dynamic and contextual factors of rhetorical frailty, rhetorical organizing, and rhetorical care. An ecological framework highlights the behind-the-scenes organizing and composing that enables public rhetorical interventions (Rivers and Weber). By employing an ecological framework to activism ignored by disability activism historiographies, I move to define disability activism as dynamic, diverse, and nested rhetorical acts undertaken by disabled rhetors in pursuit of disability justice—even when those rhetorical acts take place in other social movements. I do so by analyzing interviews, print materials, and archival research from the lives of Johnson and Rivera. I listened to hours of interviews housed in the John J. Kearns papers in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center archives and the *Testing the Limit* and Martin Duberman papers in the New York Public Library archives. These recorded interviews featured Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson's close friends. I complement this archival research with writings by Rivera featured in gay zines and newspapers, printed interviews with Johnson and Rivera, and *Pay It No Mind,* a documentary about Johnson's life. Thanks to the abundance of texts written and

spoken by Rivera and Johnson, both unpublished and published, I am able to focus my analysis on how they themselves discuss their disabilities and activism.

I begin by reviewing literature on ecologies in public rhetoric through a feminist and disability studies framework. I situate my project within growing rhetorical scholarship that acknowledges the contextual and sociocultural factors that shape rhetorical invention and delivery. Then, I provide a biographical overview of Rivera's and Johnson's early lives and their experiences of disability, gender, sexuality, race, and class, especially noting the moments that shaped their activist *ethos.* I move onto my analysis, in which I examine archival materials from Rivera's and Johnson's lives—including interviews, speeches, and ephemera—to argue that frailty, organizing, and survival were critical to Johnson's and Rivera's activism as multiply marginalized disabled women. In my conclusion, I articulate a call to disability rhetoric scholars to seek out disability activism in unexpected places, especially texts and communities crafted by disabled queer people of color.

An Ecological Framework of Rhetoric

When studying activist rhetoric, rhetorical studies scholars are often drawn to the public texts or protests, such as rallies, speeches, and pamphlets. However, scholars are increasingly looking to the ecological nature of public rhetoric, the process that occurs behind-the-scenes rather than solely the textual product. In the pivotal 1986 article "The Ecology of Writing," Marilyn Cooper proposes that "writing is an activity through which a person is continually engaged with a variety of socially constituted systems" (367). Margaret A. Syverson expands upon Cooper's

concept by merging composition studies with cognitive studies to propose a framework for understanding and interpreting texts. Discussing the dominant model of writing studies, Syverson argues that

> by privileging the individual writer composing in isolation, we have slighted or ignored compelling evidence that writing, like other cognitive processes, occurs in ecological systems involving not only social but also environmental structures that powerfully constrain and also enable what writers are able to think, feel, and write. (9)

Syverson and Cooper use the metaphor of ecology, a complex system of interacting and nested elements, to describe the act of writing. Furthermore, they push writing studies scholars to investigate the environmental, technological, social, and temporal factors that shape the writing of texts in addition to the texts themselves.

The ecological framework is particularly useful for the study of activist rhetoric, as Nathaniel Rivers and Ryan Weber observe. In their 2011 article "Ecological, Pedagogical, and Public Rhetoric," Rivers and Weber apply the ecological framework to public rhetoric, arguing that public rhetoric studies must attend to the "mundane" webs of texts that enable public displays of rhetoric, especially public activist moments. They write,

> While these mundane documents [meeting minutes, permits] are not always as exciting or visible as the rhetorical fireworks of more obvious public displays, supporting documents are no less necessary for the creation and re-creation of publics. In expanding public rhetoric's scope to include the mundane, we ultimately want to

> emphasize the ecological nature of public discourse and offer a pedagogy designed to help students recognize and engage public rhetorical ecologies. (188)

Weber and Rivers look to the Montgomery Bus Boycotts—when black bus riders boycotted public transportation in Montgomery, Alabama to protest racial segregation on the busses in the 1950's—to demonstrate how "mundane institutional tasks [are] necessary to maintain an organization—spreading word door-to-door, calling members, sending letters, and compiling the stories of women who experienced discrimination on the buses" (198). Weber and Rivers, then, push scholars to envision public rhetoric—and thus, activist rhetoric—as dynamic rhetorical action that emerges due to embedded social and textual interaction. Activist rhetoric, then, is expanded to include behind-the-scenes texts and activist labor that facilitate the public demonstrations.

Weber and Rivers' framework provides justification for scholars to frame seemingly mundane texts as rhetorically significant. Still, their ecological framework focuses primarily on the textual, and thus overlooks non-alphabetic factors—embodied, spatial, and political—that shape a public text. Integrating feminist and disability approaches enable us to gain a more holistic understand of the ecological production of rhetoric—pushing us to expand our understand of ecology to include community, oppression, lived experiences, and difference as critical components to crafting an activist response to injustice.

Using different terminology, feminist rhetorical studies has long been invested in an ecological perspective, with pioneering feminist scholars such as Andrea

Lunsford and Barbara Biesecker urging rhetoricians to look beyond individualistic approaches to rhetoric. Feminist rhetorical scholars are invested in looking at the textual and social networks that make a feminist text possible. In response to recovery work that focuses on individual great women speakers, Biesecker famously argued in 1992 that "for the feminist historiographer interested in rewriting the history of Rhetoric, the plurality of practices that together constituted the everyday must be conceptualized as a key site of social transformation, and hence, of rhetorical analysis" (157). Twenty years later, Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch echoed Biesecker's call and offered a term for such study: social circulation. In *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, Royster and Kirsch encourage feminist scholars to study the social circulation of women's texts, writing that through social circulation,

> We flesh out the contours of social spaces (communities of various kinds, including professional communities, activist communities, and the like) so that we can see, hear, and understand more ecologically the contours of both women's public lives and their private challenges. In other words, we need to make more visible the social circles within which they have functioned and continue to function as rhetorical agents. (24)

Similar to scholars in public writing and rhetoric, Royster and Kirsch insist that a comprehensive study of rhetoric should include contextual and ecological perspective, one that seeks out and examines how both private and public factors influence women's rhetoric. Indeed, feminist rhetorical studies has been invested in social circulation and ecology of women's rhetoric for decades, studying how

relational resilience, community activities, and technology influence women's writing and rhetoric (Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady; Hogg; Owens).

For instance, Lindal Buchanan's feminist re-imagining of rhetorical delivery pays close attention to the social circulation that enables and develops women's rhetorical delivery. In *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors*, Buchanan argues that delivery encompasses not just voice or gesture of the individual speaker but also "complex interplay among a speaker, an audience, and a plethora of social and ideological factors" (3). In a chapter on collaboration and delivery, Buchanan illustrates how behind-the-scenes collaboration between women orators, such as providing childcare and household chores for each other, facilitated rhetorical delivery for suffragists, and thus, "permitted pioneering women rhetors to access and speak from public platforms in hostile surroundings, and their discourse and delivery, in turn, advanced changes in gender and power relations." (158). Buchanan, then, illustrates how for historical women's rhetoric, speeches were situated within a system of collaborative, community-based organizing, with women supporting and opening platforms for each other.

While disability rhetoric has not developed as thorough of a framework for studying the social circulation or ecology of writing as feminist rhetorical studies or public writing, the field has drawn attention to interdependence as a generative and empowering system of support (Walters *Rhetorical Touch*; Price *Mad at School*). Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, for instance, challenges the individual rhetor model that dominates rhetorical study, arguing that mediated communication broadens our

concept of rhetoric to include collaborative communication created by disabled people and their caregivers. Lewiecki-Wilson puts forth that

> Mediated rhetoricity requires the advocate to attend closely to the disabled person's embodied, nonverbal performances and preferences of daily living, and then to carefully and ethically co-constructive narratives and arguments from the perspective of the disabled person for the purpose of enhancing his or her daily life. Such arguments and narratives (for certain care preferences, for example), constructed in the name of the disabled person, are social and persuasive acts that help constitute the disabled person's subjectivity and agency. (162)

Lewiecki-Wilson contends that by focusing on the mediated rhetoric of mentally disabled rhetors, rhetoric can redefine the public sphere to be "a collaborative action for specific, interested ends... which in its exercising, mutually constitutes intersubjectivity, agency *and* interdependency as well as human dignity and caring" (164). Thus, Lewiecki-Wilson's work illustrates how disability broadens the scope of rhetoric to include the collaborative processes of mentally disabled rhetors, and further, draws attention to the social factors that make communication possible. Similar to public rhetoric and feminist rhetoric scholars, Lewiecki-Wilson challenges the dominant model of rhetoric that prioritizes the text-in-isolation and the individual speaker. For Lewiecki-Wilson, communication is a process of listening, interpreting, and making meaning through collaboration—and thus, communication is ecological, created, enabled, and shaped by contextual factors.

Disability Studies scholars Michael Oliver, Jane Campbell, and Solveig Reindal, among many others, assert that interdependence is a universal human experience, as "we all rely on others and support structures for our lives" (Campbell and Oliver 202). At the same time, these scholars agree that for disabled people, interdependence is more visible and pronounced, as their wellbeing is so clearly tied to caregiving. Within disability rhetoric, interdependence is a critical component of communication, as argued by Lewiecki-Wilson. By merging disability rhetoric's focus on interdependence with public rhetoric's focus on ecologies of writing and feminist rhetoric's focus on social circulation, I analyze how Rivera and Johnson's friendship, collaboration, and survival built the foundation of their activist and rhetorical production. Their social environment not only influenced their rhetoric, but it also enabled it. As I will demonstrate in the following sections, Rivera and Johnson survived suicide attempts, state violence, and drug overdoses because of the networks of care they initiated and sustained, and without each other's support, they would have not been able to craft activist rhetoric.

Rivera's and Johnson's Activist Beginnings

The 1960's and 1970's were both a terrifying and exciting time to be young, gay, homeless, and disabled in New York City, as Rivera's and Johnson's lives illustrate. Rivera was rejected by her primary caregiver, her grandmother, for her feminine mannerisms and ran away at a young age. (Rejection was linked to the manifestation of Rivera's disabilities; often in her interviews, Rivera describes how rejection—first from her grandmother and later from the mainstream gay liberation

movement—led to suicide attempts.) At ten years old, Rivera was living on the streets of New York City. In her time on Christopher Street, the main NYC hub for gay culture in the 1960's and 70's, Rivera sold sex, used drugs, and attempted to escape harassment and incarceration[24] (Rivera "Queens in Exile"). Rivera's adolescence is not unique among queer and gender-non-conforming youth in that time; many others also left home at young ages, some voluntarily and others not, with sex work one of the more viable (and of course risky) options for securing survival. Incarcerated gay and trans youth faced even more obstacles. In her 1973 speech at the Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally, Rivera recounts her experiences of being raped by another inmate while in jail for heroin possession (Osorio 156).

Johnson similarly moved to Christopher Street at a young age, though she waited until she was eighteen and had a high school diploma. With only $15 to her name, she took a bus from New Jersey to New York City and immediately began sex work and other low-wage jobs. Johnson was routinely targeted by law enforcement while hustling or panhandling for money. Violence plagued her life, as well, with her husband shot and murdered by an undercover police officer. Furthermore, Johnson was targeted by law enforcement because of her disabilities; in *Pay It No Mind*, Johnson and Rivera's friend Bob Kohler tells of how Johnson would throw her clothes into the Hudson River, claiming the act as a sacrifice to King Neptune. Later, she would be arrested by police for walking around the city naked. She was hospitalized for two to three months at a time and, according to Kohler, would return

[24] Rivera recounts her interactions with law enforcement, writing that, "we always felt that the police were the real enemy. We expected nothing better than to be treated like we were animals-and we were. We were stuck in a bullpen like a bunch of freaks. We were disrespected. A lot of us were beaten up and raped. When I ended up going to jail, to do 90 days, they tried to rape me. I very nicely bit the shit out of a man" ("I'm Glad I Was in the Stonewall Riot").

as a "zombie" because of psychiatric medication inserted into her spine (qtd. in Kasino). Like many other homeless people with disabilities, Johnson was too poor to ever receive regular healthcare, so she only ever received emergency medication—and, from the archives, it's difficult to know how often such care was voluntary or involuntary.

The hardships Johnson and Rivera experienced on the streets shaped their activism. Quickly, Rivera learned the secret to survival on the street was community, and she found a family of other young gay and trans homeless sex workers who offered support, solidarity, and empathy. This community spurred Rivera's political development: "we'd be getting high or something and we'd start talking politics. We'd start talking politics and about when things were going to change for us as human beings" (Rivera "Queens in Exile" 74). Rivera and Johnson met when Rivera was eleven years old, with Johnson shouting out, "You're the new queen on the block! You're so young—you should be home with your mother!" and then buying Rivera dinner and offering to act as a mentor on street life (Duberman papers, cassette 2228). In the years that followed, Johnson and Rivera would become critical forces in the burgeoning gay liberation movement in New York. In the 1960's, gay and trans people increasingly expressed outrage at the routine dehumanization of gay people and drag queens by the state—especially police. This fury erupted when patrons at Stonewall Inn fought back against police officers during a raid in 1969, a moment that many historians consider to be the launching point for a national gay liberation

movement. Rivera and Johnson were at Stonewall, a part of the core group of instigators[25] that catalyzed the riots and thus the fight for gay rights.

After the Stonewall Riots, gay rights groups popped up in New York City, including the Gay Activist Alliance, a more mainstream and focused gay rights organization, and the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), a radical, leftist, anti-racist gay liberation collective. Rivera and Johnson were active in both and helped form the GLF. Once the GLF began to splinter off into smaller groups, Rivera and Johnson formed the drag queen caucus which evolved into S.T.A.R. Rivera and Johnson imagined S.T.A.R. as both a shelter for "street transvestites" and an activist group; thus, in addition to the Bellevue Hospital protest, S.T.A.R. "organized pickets, visited prisons and mental institutions, publicized inmate mistreatment, and helped form the Gay Community Prison Committee" (Cohen 92-93). Additionally, S.T.A.R. provided food, shelter, and community to gay and trans youth; Rivera published essays and delivered speeches about the inclusion of trans people in gay liberation; and Rivera and Johnson marched, often in the front, in the annual Christopher Street Day Liberation Rally (which later became the Gay Pride Parade). However, despite these powerful public acts of activism on behalf of gay liberation, Rivera and Johnson were often marginalized within gay rights activism. Their visible protests strayed from the demands of mainstream gay organizations, which increasingly mobilized around a "more limiting vision of the acceptable 'gay'" (Cohen 160). Rivera and her band of

[25] Multiple sources attribute Rivera or Johnson to starting the Stonewall Riots, with sources describing Rivera as throwing the first Molotov cocktail or Johnson as throwing the first brick (Shepherd "Sylvia and Sylvia's Children" 125); Rivera "Bitch on Wheels" 33; Kalidi). Both Rivera and Johnson deny this in separate interviews, but these stories illustrate the mythic personas of both Rivera and Johnson (Rivera "Bitch on Wheels" 33; "Marsha P. Johnson"). These urban myths demonstrate that Rivera and Johnson's roles in Stonewall and early gay liberation have since taken on legendary status.

street transvestites were pushed to the margins of the movement, as well-funded gay organizations feared the loud, flamboyant, and colorful band of drag queens and trans youth could wreck their assimilationist agenda.

But these neither these public well-documented activist acts nor the in-fighting within gay liberation are the focus of this chapter. Rather, my focus is on the activism behind-the-scenes of the public acts of resistance, the work of S.T.A.R. to ensure the survival and community formation of young street transvestites. The ecology of S.T.A.R.'s public activism was the survival work of the S.T.A.R. House and its community, which provided shelter, food, and connection for its members. Though their activism has historically been framed as exclusively serving queer youth, a closer investigation of Rivera and Johnson's approach to activism reveals an intersectional disability activist approach. As Rivera and Johnson observed their community struggling with violence, trauma, drug addiction, and poverty, they were moved to create a space for people to come together and have their most basic needs met. The S.T.A.R. House became not just a shelter but also a space for organizing, thus illustrating the relationship between disability, survival work, and activism.

Rivera and Johnson's Rhetorical Ecologies

In this section, I examine three core components of Rivera and Johnson's rhetorical ecology: rhetorical frailty, rhetorical organizing, and rhetorical care. Since Rivera and Johnson did not have access to a public podium, they created their own by instituting their own rhetorical ecology based on need, difference, and interdependence.

Rhetorical Frailty

Though Rivera and Johnson have been primarily—if not solely—discussed as queer icons and activists, they were also disabled. Though they never named disability as a core component of their identity, Rivera and Johnson both spoke openly and frequently about their experiences of mental disabilities. In an interview taped just days before her death, Johnson recalls that her first "mental breakdown was in 1970. Then it started going down hill. It's been going up and down hill ever since" (qtd. in Kasino). Johnson's mental disability was well-known within her community; her friends considered it an integral part of Johnson's vivacious personality for which she was famous (Johnson was so well-known in NYC that Andy Warhol photographed Johnson for his "Ladies and Gentleman" series). Friend and artist Thomas Langian-Schmidt shares, "Marsha was totally mad but one of the geniuses on the face of the Earth" (qtd. in Kasino)[26]. Rivera similarly had mental disabilities; she was chronically depressed and attempted suicide twice, once as an adolescent and again in 1974. Additionally, Rivera struggled with drug addiction,[27] leading to prison time, and later, an overdose. Rivera pinpoints heroin—and thus, her addiction—as one of her main vulnerabilities during her time on the street: "I was untouchable until the heroin thing" ("Queens in Exile" 46).

[26] In a series of interviews, Johnson's closest friends recount anecdotes of psychosis and delusions, behaviors that Johnson never sought to hide (see Kasino's *Pay It No Mind* and the taped interviews in the Kearns collection at the LGBT Community Center National History Archives) .

[27] As discussed in the previous chapter, legal protection for people experiencing drug addiction was central to the demands of the 504 sit-in protestors. Disability activists, then, define drug addiction as a qualified disability. The government has a more limited definition of disability, with ADA protection only covering people in recovery for drug addiction.

And yet, while disability certainly plays a critical role in their experiences of oppression, community, and activism, focusing solely on disability leaves an incomplete picture of Rivera and Johnson's rhetoric. For, while their disabilities shaped their approach to community-building and organizing, their speeches and protests were not limited to disability, but rather, covered all the various ways they experienced oppression: as transgender, as mentally disabled, as formerly incarcerated, as traumatized, as poor, as non-white, and as women living on the streets. Because of their complex identities, then, frailty provides a more intersectional, nuanced model for interpreting their manifestation of disability activism rather than focusing solely on disability. In his work on human rights and sociology, Bryan Turner writes that "human beings are frail, because their lives are finite, because they typically exist under conditions of scarcity, disease and danger, and because they are constrained by processes of ageing and decay" (181). Turner claims that frailty is a universal aspect of the human condition, but some people experience frailty—especially under conditions of scarcity, disease, and danger—more so than others. Frailty, then, provides an intersectional framework to identify and interpret the multiple exigences for Rivera and Johnson's activism, for they faced scarcity, disease, and danger not only because of their disabilities but their other marginalized identities as well.

Indeed, Rivera and Johnson's entire community experienced frailty, which inspired their work within gay liberation. Rivera and Johnson's interviews paint a picture of the hardships displaced gay youth faced on the streets: hunger, homelessness, incarceration, police violence, drug addiction, and lack of access to

healthcare. They witnessed friends get arrested, raped, and assaulted, and they mourned friends who died due to drug overdoses, suicide, and murder. In other words, many of their friends were disabled by life on the streets, with physical and mental trauma impacting their bodies in drastic ways, such as depression, injuries from assault and rape, and death from violence, suicide, or drug overdose. Rivera and Johnson were open about their and their community's frailty; indeed, they incorporated their experiences of disability[28], violence, and oppression into their essays, speeches, and rallies. For example, Rivera boldly and unapologetically tells her audience about her rape in prison in her 1973 speech at the Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally, in which she documents the wide-spread of rape and assault, and thus trauma, trans women experience in prisons and homeless shelters (Osorio 156). As for disability-specific content, in addition to the Bellevue Protests, disability factored heavily into Johnson's activism later in her life; she advocated for HIV/AIDS patients as an HIV-positive person herself. Rivera's and Johnson's openness about their frailty aligns them with later disability activists, who similarly described their vulnerabilities openly and without shame. Furthermore, their experiences of frailty are indeed rhetorical; Rivera and Johnson's desperation to achieve safety and community for themselves and other vulnerable people motivated their creation and sustainment of S.T.A.R.

[28] Much of their activist rhetoric targeted the abusive treatment of gay people and drag queens within the medical industry. While Rivera and Johnson were mentally disabled, they were not disabled by their gender or sexuality. Rather, similarly to the autism activism, they argued that medical and mental institutions disabled them. In addition to their protests at Bellevue Hospital in New York City, Johnson again protested the medical industry's poor treatment of gay and trans people, this time during the HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980's and 90's. As a longtime gay liberation activist, caregiver and friend to people with HIV/AIDS, and a HIV+ trans woman herself, Johnson was deeply invested in publicly remembering people who had died and saw remembrance as a form of activism (Kasino).

Frailty, then, is central to disability activism and its ecology. For disability studies scholar Tobin Siebers, frailty should the central ethic of human rights. He asks,

> What difference to human rights would it make if we were to treat fragility, vulnerability, and disability as central to the human condition, if we were to see disability as a positive, critical concept useful to define the shared need among all people for the protection of human rights? (180)

Siebers argues that attending first to the needs of the most vulnerable—including not just disabled people but all oppressed people—would activate a powerful iteration of human rights. Furthermore, Siebers proposes that such an approach to human rights would highlight the inherent interdependence of human life:

> As finite beings who live under conditions of scarcity, we depend on other human beings not only at those times when our capacities are diminished but each and everyday, and even at those moments when we may be at the height of our physical and mental powers. (182-183)

Thus, for Siebers, frailty should be the cornerstone of the pursuit of human rights. Undoubtedly, this has long been the case within disability activism, as disabled activists acknowledge their frailty, demand resources for frail bodies and minds to survive and thrive, and rebel against systems of injustice that threaten violence upon already frail people.

Indeed, Rivera and Johnson's frailty necessitated community, interdependence, and activism. Martin Duberman reports on his interview with Rivera, writing that, at the time of S.T.A.R.'s formation,

> Sylvia was still only nineteen herself, yet she had begun to worry about 'the youngsters,' the kids who started to hustle on the streets, as she had, at age ten or eleven, and within a few years, were dead from a stabbing or overdose or were locked into dead-end lives. (*Stonewall* 251)

Ehn Nothing locates survival as an essential *topoi* in all of S.T.A.R.'s work, writing, "the immediate concerns of life – food, housing, money, safety – were central to all of STAR's projects" (9). Indeed, by attending to the most basic needs of its members, S.T.A.R. created an environment that helped street youth survive, affirmed their identities, and facilitated activist interventions. Rivera highlights her community's frailty as the force behind their radical activism, declaring that, "drag queens... were willing to be revolutionaries because we had nothing to lose at that time" (qtd. in Duberman Papers, cassette 2886). Faced with poverty and violence, and the health issues that stem from poverty and violence, trans women were willing to invent and deliver radical activist rhetoric that embraced frailty. They were prepared to start a revolution—but first, they had to ensure each other's survival. Frailty provided the exigence for their coming together, erecting the S.T.A.R. House, and then publicly resisting institutions that threatened their safety.

Rhetorical Organizing

Disability activism does not appear out of the ether; of course, no form of activism does, as ecological frameworks of writing emphasize. But disability activism often faces additional challenges to building movements, as disabled people must create a foundation for activism that is accessible to disabled bodies and minds. Though Rivera and Johnson's activism was outwardly focused on gay and trans youth, the ecologies surrounding that work embodied central tenets of disability activism: their leadership structure affirmed different ways of thinking and communicating and their construction of the S.T.A.R. House provided an inclusive space for people experiencing drug addiction and other forms of frailty.

S.T.A.R. began after Rivera, Johnson, and other radical gay and trans people occupied Weinstein Hall on New York University's campus; the activists protested the university's reluctance to allow gay community groups to use campus space (Cohen 114). Arthur Bell, friend of S.T.A.R. and prolific journalist covering gay culture and activism, writes that the occupation inspired Rivera to think about a shelter for street youth (119). During the occupation and afterward, Rivera and Johnson spent many nights talking through their ideas for support trans youth. They both agreed on the critical need for an organization and a shelter for the frailest members of their community, and in these talks, they mapped out a leadership structure for their emerging group. Rivera had first asked Johnson to serve as President of S.T.A.R.; Johnson was an icon at the time, well-known for her generous and jubilant personality. But Johnson demurred and instead claimed the position of Vice President. According to Rivera, Johnson was resistant to taking on the president's role because of her tendency to "go off in other directions" while speaking

(qtd. in *Dolberman Papers*, cassette 2888). And while many of Johnson's friends confirm that she often strayed from topic to topic (*Kearns Papers* cassettes 1 and 7; Kasino), Rivera reports that in discussions about S.T.A.R., Johnson was incredibly focused. Thus, in these conversations, Rivera and Johnson developed the foundation of S.T.A.R., with both Rivera and Johnson assuming critical leadership roles for the organization.

Rivera's accounts of this planning provide insight in the rhetorical significance of casual conversations in activist settings. Late-night conversations facilitated consciousness raising, as explained earlier, and Johnson and Rivera outlined the vision for S.T.A.R. through these intimate talks. Though she is discussing women's conversational traditions in the 1600-1900's, Jane Donawerth's musings about the rhetorical nature of women's conversations is relevant to S.T.A.R.'s formations. Donawerth writes that women who theorized and taught conversation,

> put forward conversation as a model for all discourse, urging speaking and writing that is collaborative, not antagonistic in relation to the audience, seeking consensus, not domination as the goal of communication, advising best practices for domestic rhetoric, developing an art of listening. (*Conversational Rhetoric* 16)

Donawerth then situates conversation as a rhetorical act, one that allowed for listening and collaboration, unlike persuasive speeches. Though Rivera and Johnson did not advise "best practices for domestic rhetoric," they did practice listening and collaboration. Indeed, Rivera's accounts of her organizing with Johnson underscore

the importance of these behind-the-scenes conversations between the two friends: these talks facilitated political consciousness raising, delegation of roles and responsibilities, and collaboration.

Furthermore, Rivera's and Johnson's practice of conversation affirmed Johnson's divergent forms of thinking and communicating. Their delegation of leadership roles illustrates the importance of collaboration across difference within disability activism. While Johnson saw her short attention span as a deficit, Rivera instead saw Johnson's energy and vivacity as an asset and insisted that Johnson maintain a leadership role. Rivera and Johnson, then, both claimed leadership roles, collaborating throughout the organization's life to raise funds for and awareness of S.T.A.R. While Johnson was well-known for straying from the topic at hand and rarely speaking in a what dominant society would deem as linear logic,[29] within S.T.A.R., her method of communication was not shamed; instead, she was a central figure and leader. Disability did not preclude anyone from assuming a leadership role, but rather, disability was embraced as simply a different way of moving through the world. Additionally, Rivera's and Johnson's shared leadership roles reflects an interdependent *ethos*, one that pushes against the Western model of autonomous leadership and instead embraces a disability-positive approach to leadership and communication. While Rivera served President and Johnson as Vice President, interviews and documents from S.T.A.R.'s peak refer to them as equal leaders, friends who collaborated to build and sustain S.T.A.R.

[29] In an interview, Amy Coleman remembers describes Johnson's manic communication style , remembering that "sometimes she [Johnson] could be very quiet and then all of the sudden—she was pretty crazy. I never knew that she knew she was being funny or was just insane" (qtd. in *Kearns Papers* audio tape 1).

The next step for their organizing required a physical shelter. Rivera, Johnson, and their friends were homeless; if they wanted to organize future protests, they had to first attend tor their basic needs of shelter, safety, and food, needs that were out of reach for their frail community. The first S.T.A.R. shelter was a trailer in an abandoned parking lot in Greenwich Village. Quickly, "two dozen young street transvestites" occupied the trailer, demonstrating the urgent need for such a shelter (qtd. in Duberman *Stonewall* 251). However, the trailer was short-lived, as someone would later reclaim it and unknowingly drive off with some of the street youth still inside.[30] Johnson and Rivera realized that a more permanent shelter was needed. However, as homeless disabled activists, neither Johnson nor Rivera had the capital or credit to purchase or rent a home in traditional means—those options were simply unavailable to them. As a solution, Bubbles Rose Marie, a S.T.A.R. member, reached out to her mafia contacts and secured a dilapidated building for S.T.A.R. to rent. The building lacked running water and electricity, prompting Rivera, Johnson, and other street queens—Bambi Lamour and Andorra—to teach themselves plumbing and home repair. Rivera recounts, "four queens that don't know shit about nothing, we're looking at the tools, we're looking at each other. We just started taking things apart, putting them back together, and the next thing we knew, the motherfucker was working!" (qtd. in *Duberman Tapes,* cassette 2888). The house was soon populated by homeless gay and trans youth in need of community, support, and basic needs. Rivera and Johnson's efforts to maintain the house continued, with them recruiting other gay activists—though, only Bob Kohler consistently showed up—to help them

[30] Rivera reminisces that "we're standing there like two yentas. I mean, we're talking about two crazy women: 'Oh my God, the kids, the kids! Oh Lord Jesus, please don't take the children!' Two crazy women, hysterical. And in full drag" (qtd. in Duberman *Stonewall* 252).

"paint, clean up the yard, and get some primitive plumbing involved" (qtd. in Duberman *Stonewall* 253).

The house was soon ready to house the street youth, many of whom were disabled due to drug addiction, trauma, or other mental disabilities. For the occupants, the S.T.A.R. house offered a safe, non-judgmental place for the most frail members of gay liberation to sleep, eat, and find community. While many of the S.T.A.R. occupants were rejected by mainstream gay organizations or by gender-specific homeless shelters, at S.T.A.R., they could find a shelter that affirmed their identities and differences. Scholars like Shepard and Gan clearly articulate how the S.T.A.R. House fits within the legacy of LGBT organizing, yet I propose that we can also look at the house itself as a manifestation of disability activism. Just as the Independent Living Movement of the 1960's did, S.T.A.R. acknowledged that physical shelter and communal living were the key to their survival, and thus, to their activism. Many of the residents of the S.T.A.R. House were addicted to drugs—a disability itself—and many others became disabled through their violent interactions with institutions and society. Rivera was introduced to heroin while in prison, leading to a years-long addiction that brought her close to death. Johnson's husband was shot and killed by a police officer, which prompted a "serious attack of 'nerves'" for Johnson (Duberman 254). But Johnson and Rivera never had to cope with their disabilities alone, for during the existence of the S.T.A.R. House, they could always count on food, shelter, and friendship. Furthermore, the S.T.A.R. House saved lives: drug use was rampant in the house, but people were present to intervene during an overdose.

This interdependent support required a physical shelter for community, connection, and risk reduction to occur. Thus, the renovation and maintenance of the building by Rivera and Johnson should be approached as rhetorical work, behind-the-scenes labor that shaped the ecology of their activist rhetoric. First, by fixing up the house, Rivera and Johnson were able to meet their basic needs and re-direct energy from simply surviving to community organizing. The construction of the house, and the retrofits carried out by Rivera, Johnson, and their friends, provided the foundation for activist interventions. Years later, Rivera recounts about the S.T.A.R. House,

> we got a building at 213 East 2nd Street. Marsha and I just decided it was time to help each other and help our other kids. We fed people and clothed people. We kept the building going. We went out and hustled the streets. We paid the rent. We didn't want the kids out in the streets hustling. They would go out and rip off food. There was always food in the house and everyone had fun. ("I'm Glad I Was at the Stonewall Riot" 13)

Here, Rivera reveals that "keeping the building going" was indeed a core element in S.T.A.R.'s work. Their maintenance labor was one of their main strategies in supporting street youth, a rhetorical and activist act that empowered S.T.A.R.'s residents to protect themselves from the harsh realities of street life and embrace their disability, gender, and sexual identities.

The maintenance of the S.T.A.R. House was part of the ecological framework of their activism, "mundane" behind-the-scenes labor the facilitated rhetorical interventions. Weber and Rivers discuss the mundane institutional texts that go into

producing activist moments, arguing, "while these mundane documents are not always as exciting or visible as the rhetorical fireworks of more obvious public displays, supporting documents are no less necessary for the creation and re-creation of publics" (188). For Weber and Rivers, the ecological framework is grounded in discursive, alphabetic texts—permits, meeting minutes, press releases. But I want to extend the ecological framework to also include embodied rhetorics, the behind-the-scenes physical labor that makes disability activism possible. Disabled people need accessible, supportive, and affirming spaces in which to organize, and the S.T.A.R. House welcomed frail people—both disabled and nondisabled, but all experiencing various levels of frailty—into its halls. These street queens jumped far out of their comfort zones, using tools to fix apparatuses they did not understand. Encountering dangerous construction projects, the leaders of S.T.A.R. risked physical well-being to build a structure that would shelter frail bodies and minds.

Of course, home construction and renovation are not always rhetorical. In addition to the S.T.A.R. House's sheltering of at-risk youth, the physical S.T.A.R. House was an activist endeavor largely because what the building stood for—its mere existence was an argument for inherent value of some of the frailest people in gay liberation: gay street youth, trans people, drag queens, and people experiencing drug addiction. In speeches and writing, such as Rivera's impromptu speech at the 1973 Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally, Rivera gave out the address of the S.T.A.R. House, framing S.T.A.R. House as the only space where traumatized trans youth could get support. She invited both street youth and more privileged gay allies to see and participate in the work they were doing ("Y'All Better Quiet Down" 31). As cited

above, even in interviews years later, Rivera would recite the address of the S.T.A.R. House, illustrating the significance of the building on her life and activism. Rivera's remembrance and recitation of the address indicates the symbolic significance of the house itself, a physical space dedicated to sheltering, feeding, and supporting young people ostracized for their divergent bodies and minds. In an essay penned by Rivera in 2002, Rivera writes that the House and its role in the local community "was a revolutionary thing" ("Queen in Exile" 53).

Some may pause to think of a home—a physical space as rhetorical, but, with scholars such as Danielle Enders, Samantha Senda Cook, and Jessica Enoch, I see spaces as sites rhetorically crafted and inhabited, whose meanings are written and re-written by activists. Indeed, S.T.A.R. House was a revolutionary thing, perhaps the first trans-specific shelter in the United States. Several scholars have noted S.T.A.R. House's legacy in queer history.[31] By renovating and maintaining the S.T.A.R. House, Rivera and Johnson advocated for its central principles—trans acceptance and communal care without judgment—and thus, established the foundation of the modern day trans liberation movement. But as I have demonstrated, the house itself, as well as the labor that went into maintaining the house, also supported frail and disabled youth. The S.T.A.R. House served youth stigmatized for drug addiction, as well as sheltered Rivera and Johnson who grappled with mental disabilities that made them increasingly vulnerable living on the streets. In a time when both homeless gay

[31] Benjamin Shepard traces the impact of the S.T.A.R. House on the growth of direct services and homeless shelters specifically for LGBT youth, including the currently-running Sylvia's Place in New York City, indeed named after Sylvia Rivera. Shepherd writes that the S.T.A.R. House "spark[ed] for this population to get organized to demand something for themselves," initiating the modern day trans movement ("From Community Organizing to Direct Services" 101). Jessi Gan, author of the article "'Still at the Back of the Bus': Sylvia Rivera's Struggle," similarly observes the relationship between the house's physical structure and the principles S.T.A.R. stood for, writing "STAR House enacted a limber physical mobility, but a steadfast commitment to justice, as circumstance buffeted it" (136).

and trans youth and disabled people were largely institutionalized by the state, S.T.A.R. allowed its members to carve at a space for themselves to sleep, eat, and attend to basic health needs—away from the abuse they had encountered on the street or in institutions. Furthermore, the S.T.A.R. House became ground zero for organizing, a place where S.T.A.R. members could congregate and strategize against the violence and injustice of the prison system, the medical industry, and discriminatory laws. The house, alongside the leadership structure and the maintenance of the house, embodied some of the most defining traits of disability activism: collaboration across difference, affirmation of divergent identities, and interdependent communities of care.

Rhetorical Care

Rivera and Johnson both asserted that caregiving was a form of activism, a claim echoed in contemporary disability literature. In her manifesto "Sick Woman Theory," Johanna Hedva writes,

> The most anti-capitalist protest is to care for another and to care for yourself. To take on the historically feminized and therefore invisible practice of nursing, nurturing, caring. To take seriously each other's vulnerability and fragility and precarity, and to support it, honor it, empower it. To protect each other, to enact and practice community. A radical kinship, an interdependent sociality, a politics of care.

Hedva embraces care as an act of protest because it affirms the value of people who have been excluded and marginalized, and it pushes against the capitalist formula of

determining someone's worth by their productivity. Indeed, Rivera and Johnson's activism illustrated Hedva's vision of care as activist praxis, as they took "seriously each other's vulnerability and fragility." At the S.T.A.R. House, young people who had been tossed aside by their families, society, and even gay liberation could care and be cared for in ways that nourished their frail selves and moved them toward activism.

Once the leadership roles were delegated and the house was livable, Johnson and Rivera doubled their caregiving efforts to their community—and to each other. As mentioned earlier, Johnson and Rivera's first encounter involved Johnson buying then eleven-year-old Rivera a meal (*Duberman Papers*, cassette 2888). Johnson was famous on Christopher Street for her generosity. In an interview, friend Bobby Miller recounts one of his favorite memories of Johnson: after a long day of panhandling, Johnson's cup was full of money. However, when Johnson noticed that another queen was struggling, Johnson walked over "to dump money into her [the other queen's] cup. Because of how much money was in it, it just sort of all went [all over the place]. So all of her money came out and flooded on the street." Johnson told the queen "'all well hun, get something to eat' .... and then went right back to the same spot and started all over at like midnight" (qtd. in *Kearns Papers* audio file 6). Johnson was so beloved for her kindness and generosity, that she was christened the Saint of Christopher Street.

Johnson's care extended into and fueled her work within S.T.A.R. Rivera recalls Marsha's returning to the S.T.A.R. House with breakfast for residents: "Marsha was hustling at night and come in with all the coffee and danishes. 'All right

girls, I made all the money cause see this is for the movement'" (qtd. in "The Question of Equality"). In a society that sought to marginalize and ignore frail people, Rivera and Johnson's commitment to serve S.T.A.R. members was a radical act of care and service. They sought to ensure the survival of the most at-risk members of their community, those who had left behind by gay liberation. Rivera and Johnson saw themselves as mothers, and cultivated maternal caregiving as a central aspect of their activism. Years after S.T.A.R.'s demise, in a 1994 interview, Rivera still framed herself as a mother to street youth, explaining,

> I still play a little mother hen up in Westchester in my apartment. You've been up to my apartment. When you came, what'd you see? A bunch of drag queens on my floor. They come to me, 'mother Sylvia, do you have something to eat? Can I crash in your house?' (qtd. in "The Question of Equality"*)*

Indeed, Rivera and Johnson were mothers in their community, providing guidance and care for their chosen family of vulnerable street "kids." And this identity assumed a political position, as seen by Johnson's acknowledgement that feeding people was a form of supporting "the movement." Furthermore, Johnson and Rivera subverted notions of motherhood—as two trans women, they adopted their peers and created a home based on interdependence and acceptance. Indeed, S.T.A.R. was a family. Rivera shares in an interview, "I should make that part clear: drag queens have a strong bond for each other, and we make our own little families because we have to because nobody else is there. After what the movement did [excluding trans people], there is no other family" (qtd. in *Duberman* Papers, cassette 2888). Thus, Rivera and

Johnson built a family of misfits, one with bonds based on shared oppression, frailty, and celebration rather than biology.

Rivera and Johnson's caregiving labor resembles what Buchanan calls "supportive collaboration," when a person's efforts "contribute *indirectly* to another's rhetorical production" (134). Buchanan provides examples of supportive collaboration for antebellum women rhetors—childcare, household chores, business responsibilities—and asserts that "these indirect and frequently overlooked types of collaboration allow women rhetors to attend to both practical concerns and ideological constraints, two of the greatest obstacles to their public discourse" (134). For Buchanan, collaboration is key to how not just antebellum women but all "marginalized groups come to public voice" (158). Buchanan's attention to the ways women collaborate to produce rhetorical delivery shines light onto the rhetorical dimensions of this often invisible yet indispensible labor. Rivera and Johnson's form of caregiving—especially their obtaining and sharing resources—was the backbone of their disability activism. By providing for the basic needs, S.T.A.R. gave its members the opportunity to practice consciousness-raising and forge deep connections with their community, which would lead to more radical and overt activist interventions in the early days of gay liberation.

The S.TA.R. House ensured survival not only by providing care and community; the members of the house also literally saved each other's lives. Johnson and the other S.T.A.R. members saved Rivera's life twice. The first time occurred when Rivera had overdosed on heroin while living in the S.T.A.R. House. Her friends

found her unconsciousness and revived her.[32] Later, Rivera struggled with depression because the well-educated and connected lesbian and gay activists who had pledged to help S.T.A.R. House never followed through. Then, later in 1973, S.T.A.R. had fallen behind on its rent, and the mafia owners of the house had its occupants evicted. Feeling left behind by her community and without the S.T.A.R. House to find care and support, Rivera fell into a deep depression and attempted to take her own life. In an interview about Johnson's life, Wicker recalls that when Rivera attempted suicide, "Marsha came in and found her and saved her life" (qtd. in *Kearns Papers* audio file 7). Thus, Johnson, a mentally disabled trans woman, saved Rivera, another mentally disabled trans women, during Rivera's suicide attempt. Rather than rely on institutions that demonized their frail bodies and minds, Johnson and Rivera established a network of care and support that was integral to their survival. Without their friendship, Rivera would have likely died during the 1970's due to suicide attempts or drug overdoses.

None of Johnson's and Rivera's activism would have been possible without the culture of interdependence in S.T.A.R. Interdependence is a hallmark of disability studies and disability activism (Oliver and Campbell; Reindal). While disabled people have historically been portrayed as *dependent* on nondisabled people, within disability activism, disabled people are seen as *interdependent* with others: care becomes a two-way street, a relational and non-hierarchal way of moving through the world. Rosemarie Garland-Thompson describes the political dimensions of interdependence, arguing that disability can radically shift the way society thinks

[32] While Rivera's friends rushed to help her, they had ruined the coat she was wearing. Clothing was expensive, so when Rivera woke up, she recalls shouting at her friends, "you motherfuckers fucked up my coat!" (qtd. in *Duberman Papers*, cassette 2888).

about subjectivity and rights: "disability itself demands that human interdependence and the universal need for assistance be figured into our dialogues about rights and subjectivity" ("Integrating Disability" 17).

Interdependent care ensured the survival of S.T.A.R. members, and thus, is part of the ecological framework of S.T.A.R.'s rhetoric. As disabled people—disabled by drug addiction and mental disability—the members of S.T.A.R. required communal care, a network of risk reduction, support, and intervention. The care was horizontal, meaning that no caregiver was ever designated as more powerful. Rivera and Johnson worked hard to secure food and shelter for the members of S.T.A.R., and the members of S.T.A.R. intervened when Rivera attempted suicide and overdosed on drugs. These consistent interactions between the bodies of S.T.A.R. members could be categorized as manifestations of rhetorical touch. Shannon Walters explains that "touch is a sense that people with a wide range of physical, psychological, and cognitive disabilities can use to their advantage, forming potential spaces of rhetorical contact and identification with others of varying abilities" (*Rhetorical Touch* 6). Walters is not alone in exploring how the disabled rhetor often collaborates with other bodies (or technology) to produce rhetoric. Price, Leweicki-Wilson, and Kimberly Elmore, among others, highlight the critical role interdependence plays in writing and communication, therefore expanding the boundaries of rhetoric, writing, and research to include disabled ways of moving and thinking (Price *Mad at School*; Leweicki-Wilson; and Elmore).

Yet Rivera and Johnson's activism goes further than former disability-focused models of interdependence, as their caregiving occurred across various differences:

they cared for trans, gay, black and brown, and poor bodies who were often but not always disabled. The members of S.T.A.R. needed multi-dimensional care, care that sustained their multi-dimensional identities. Their care-as-activism demonstrates the need for expansive and intersectional models of care. Disability scholars, as noted above, clearly emphasize the importance of care in the formation of disability communities, and queer studies scholars such as Deepali Gokhale, Erin Rand, Sasha Roseneil, and Lynn Jamieson have argued that radical approaches caregiving and kinmaking are central to queer community-building, survival, and activism. Rivera and Johnson's survival work illustrates the need for intersectional models that go beyond single identities in isolation. Their queerness necessitated kinmaking outside of traditional familial bonds, especially since Rivera's biological family was hostile to her gender and sexuality identities, and their disabilities necessitated collective physical care, emotional support, and high-risk interventions.

Despite S.T.A.R.'s interdependence and survival work, not every member survived. Rivera tells the story of an off-site fundraiser for the S.T.A.R. House, when both Johnson and Rivera sensed something was "wrong" back at the house. Johnson returned to the house to find a drag queen dead from a methadone overdose. Though the S.T.A.R. community offered each support and wisdom, they could not erase the societal pressures, oppressions, and health issues members faced. Still, even after death, the community cared for each other, as Johnson and Rivera walked throughout the city until they found the deceased queen's mother (*Duberman Papers* cassette 2888). And though Rivera and Johnson themselves would survive the tumultuous 1960's and 1970's, they too would die early due to violence and disability. Johnson's

body was found in the Hudson Rivera in 1992. The police ruled the death a suicide, but her friends rallied for years later demanding an investigation; they asserted that Johnson was murdered. Johnson was forty-six years old at the time of her death. Ten years later, Rivera died of liver cancer. While on her deathbed, Rivera negotiated for the inclusion of transgender people in the Empire State Pride Agenda, a statewide policy advocacy group (Klebine).

Rivera, Johnson, and their friends lived precarious and frail lives, and thus, their activism was deeply tied to their own survival. Everyday, they faced infinite threats—police violence, incarceration, street violence, sexually transmitted infections, hunger, and homelessness. A lack of funds and lack of respect from the medical industry prevented them from seeking out treatment for health concerns or mental health support—unless it was forcibly mandated by the state. Despite these hardships, Rivera and Johnson created a community that facilitated survival, consciousness raising, and then, rhetorical production. As I quoted earlier, but it bares repeating, Rivera links their frailty to their activism, explaining that "drag queens, we were willing to be revolutionaries because we had nothing to lose at that time" (*Duberman Papers,* cassette 2886). It was their frailty that brought the group together, that prompted their organizing for survival and ensured their activist organizing and legacy.

Next Steps for Rhetorical and Disability Studies

Because of S.T.A.R.'s vibrant and active community, and because of the work and sacrifices of Rivera and Johnson, its rhetorical and activist legacy lives on within

queer scholarship and history. Stephan L. Cohen writes, "STAR did more than shelter homeless transvestite youth and adults. It provided a political platform, lent legitimacy to non-traditional gender expression, and formalized a transgender identity" (161). Underscoring S.T.A.R.'s historical significance to transgender history, Michael Bronski observes, "out of almost nothing Sylvia and Marsha essentially started what was to become, more than 20 years later, the transgender movement we know today" (qtd. in Cohen 93). Today, the non-profit advocacy group Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) honors Sylvia Rivera's work in its name. SRLP operates in New York City, advocating for the legal rights and safety of trans youth, especially focusing on trans people of color. Additionally, CUNY's Center for LGBT Studies and the SRLP both give out awards named after Rivera. Recent efforts by black trans activists, such as filmmaker and archivist Reina Gossett, have brought increased attention to Johnson. Johnson was the subject of a 2012 documentary, *Pay It No Mind* (Kasino), and Gossett and Sasha Wortzel are directing an independent film titled *Happy Birthday, Marsha!*, starring Independent Spirit Award-winning actress Mya Taylor, about Johnson on the night of the Stonewall Riots. S.T.A.R., Johnson, and Rivera continue to impact the direction of LGBT culture and activism, today inspiring trans activists to confront transphobia and celebrate their identities, culture, and history (Gossett). Their legacy thrives because of the fierce and strong network of support they created, and because together, they were able to navigate the violence and hardship thrust upon them.

While Rivera and Johnson have become increasingly celebrated figures in queer studies and LGBT and trans activism, they are still largely unstudied in

rhetorical studies and disability studies. Thus, in this chapter, I make two main interventions. For the first, I insist upon the rhetorical dimension of organizing and survival work, especially for disabled and frail people, demonstrating how tasks like renovating a building, collecting and distributing food, and intervening on suicide attempts and overdoses enabled S.T.A.R.'s rhetorical invention and delivery as activists. Here, I expand upon the work on public writing, feminist rhetoric, and disability rhetoric, illustrating how interdependence and caregiving behind-the-scenes shaped S.T.A.R.'s activism. The field of rhetorical studies, by historically prioritizing the study texts over the process behind composing and delivering the texts, has obscured the essential work of survival in disabled, marginalized, and frail communities. The radical activism of Rivera and Johnson would not have been possible without S.T.A.R.'s network of support.

If rhetorical studies takes seriously the vital survival work of marginalized communities, we can understand the complexity of how the most frail rhetors invent, organize, and agitate. The social turn of composition studies brings the ecological framework of writing into light, but more needs to be said about how oppression, frailty, and identity shape the ecology surrounding the rhetor. By expanding upon the research of Buchanan, who applies a feminist ecological lens to rhetoric, rhetorical studies can explore how marginalized people create networks of support and care to produce rhetoric, and furthermore, how those networks form not just the product but also the process of creating activist texts. What can we learn about rhetoric by studying, for example, collectives of modern-day sex workers who band together to share resources, distribute a "bad client" list for protection, and then organize rallies

for decriminalization? What can we learn about the inventional strategies of #BlackLivesMatter protestors who both organize racial justice direct action and fundraise for the grieving families of police brutality victims? Both of these movements are directly tied to survival work, with collectives of marginalized peoples banding together to resist fatal oppression.

For my second intervention, I urge disability studies to broaden its conception of disability activism by seeking disability activism within other movements. Here, I echo Allison Kafer, who writes that "looking within disability for traces of other movements while simultaneously looking for disability in places it has gone unmarked is one way of moving us toward accessible futures" (150). For Kafer, an intersectional approach is politically necessary for envisioning an accessible and inclusive world for people with disabilities. The reality is that disability activism has manifested in different ways and in different movements, often without the activists themselves realizing they were engaging in disability activism. For disability as a political identity is still a fairly new concept, one that was initiated within the Independent Living Movement of the late 1960's and become more nationally known in the late 1980's with the Deaf President Now strike Gallaudet University and then the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. Those movements were primarily led by white disabled people and did not overtly grapple with issues of race, gender, or sexual orientation. So by acknowledging the mainstream disability rights movement as the only manifestation of disability activism, our work threatens to contribute to what Christopher Bell calls "white disability studies."

Indeed, as I have shown here, Rivera and Johnson absolutely deserve a chapter in the disability activism narrative. Just like the disabled activists at the 504 sit-ins, Rivera and Johnson embraced their non-typical identities, rejecting the shame associated with being trans, mentally disabled, poor, and addicted to drugs. Rivera and Johnson centered their divergent bodies and minds in their activist praxis, unapologetically arguing for their right to basic needs, acceptance, and inclusion. Just like autistic activists on Twitter define expertise by first-hand experience and identity, Rivera and Johnson asserted their authority over the doctors at Bellevue Hospital. But just as importantly as the content of their activism, Rivera and Johnson cultivated an *ethos* and praxis of interdependence and care in their activist process, building a movement that affirmed the value of the lives of S.T.A.R. members by helping them survive, connect, and organize. By studying cases of disability activism outside of the traditional disability rights narrative, disability studies can expand its understanding of disability activism to include disabled activists within other movements who practice of strategies caregiving, interdependence, and survival work.

A broader and more nuanced approach to disability activism invites further study in movements such as HIV/AIDS activism, that has been primarily studied through a queer rhetorical lens. It can also encourage disability studies scholars to pursue disability activism in other national and historical contexts, contexts which may apply define or understand disability differently than our contemporary understanding in the United States. For example, this framework can expand upon the work initiated by Cassandra Jackson on the visual rhetorics of disability, slavery, and the wounded black male body by investigating how enslaved people resisted slavery

on plantations while caring for the bodies brutalized and disabled by slaveholders. Additionally, disability studies can approach anti-colonization activism in the Global South as disability activism, as colonial violence often leads to impairment and disability. This angle could expand the work of Helen Meekosha, who claims that while disability activism in the Global North rejects the rhetoric of cures and prevention, disability activism in the Global South often focuses on prevention in the form of anti-colonial, anti-racist activism. By expanding how we envision disability activism, we not only diversify the narrative but we also offer new ways of understanding disability—especially how state violence, colonization, racism, transphobia, and other systems of oppression can *create* disability.

While Rivera and Johnson's activism does not necessarily revise dominant definitions of disability, they do challenge dominant perceptions of what disability activists look like. They are not visibly disabled. Though Rivera and Johnson were both open about their mental disabilities, neither claimed disability as a central part of their political identity—their peak activism was years before disability activism would hit national news. But this is why they are such important case studies for disability activism. Rivera and Johnson remind us that people of color can be disabled, that sex workers can be disabled, that trans and gay people can be disabled. Their multiple marginalized intersecting identities do not erase their disabilities, but rather, craft how their disabilities are experienced and perceived in the world. By including Johnson and Rivera in the disability activism narrative, we invite trans and non-white disabled youth to see themselves in the fierce, determined, and caring

women who launched a movement with just an idea, some friends, and a crumbling house.

Chapter 3: I Am #ActuallyAutistic, Hear Me Tweet: The *Topoi* of Autistic Activists on Twitter

In 2009, Autism Speaks, the largest autism-focused organization in the United States, released a Public Service Announcement entitled "I Am Autism." In the three-minute video, a deep, menacing male narrator introduces himself as *Autism*, the disorder itself, and speaks to non-autistic parents of autistic children. As ominous music plays in the background, *Autism* threatens parents, pledging to destroy their lives: "If you are happily married, I [*Autism*] will make sure that your marriage fails.... I will plot to rob you of your children and your dreams.... I will make sure you wake up everyday you wake up, you will cry wondering 'who will take care of my child when I die?'" In the final minute of the video, non-autistic parents take over as narrator, declaring their commitment to defeating *Autism* through a coalition of parents, scientists, doctors, and educators. Quickly, the video drew controversy, with autistic adults denouncing the depiction of autism. Ari Ne'eman, president of the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN)—an autistic-led autistic advocacy group—criticized the video, arguing, "we don't want to be portrayed as burdens or objects of fear and pity." Ne'eman continues, "Apparently, should my parents divorce, it's all my fault" (qtd. in Wallis). In response to overwhelming criticism by autistic people, Autism Speaks quickly took down the video, acknowledging that people were hurt by the video (while also explaining that they received positive feedback as well).

Even though years have passed since "I Am Autism" was released, autistic people continue to critique and mock the video. In 2015, Twitter user @Rose198172 wrote, "I shouldn't have to fight the stigma you created by 'I am Autism.'" The tweet

was tagged with the hashtag #ActuallyAutistic, a signifier that the writer is autistic. Several people tweeting on the #ActuallyAutistic hashtag in 2015—the ten year anniversary of Autism Speaks— asked the organization for an apology for creating and promoting the video. The response to the video, even years after its production, demonstrates the fraught tension between autistic activists and the juggernaut Autism Speaks. The organization, which historically has had little to no autistic representation in its leadership, presents itself as the expert of autism; however, autistic activists have inserted themselves into the public discourse to claim their authority as the autism experts, organizing virtual boycotts and rallies to push against Autism Speaks' problematic autism rhetoric.

Much of this organizing occurs on Twitter under the #ActuallyAutistic hashtag, a tag created specifically to aggregate and amplify autistic people's voices in social media. Rather than using the more general tag #autism, which is dominated by non-autistic parents and siblings of autistic people, autistic activists created the #ActuallyAutistic hashtag to aggregate all posts written by autistic people, thus demarcating a virtual space intended to feature exclusively autistic voices (Hillary). The first public usage of the hashtag on Twitter occurred on February 9, 2012, with user @Marikunin tweeting:

Off to another sensory overloaded day at work. #actuallyautistic #work

In the inaugural tweet, @Marikunin uses the hashtag to simply describe their[33] daily life as an autistic person dealing with sensory overload—a typical experience for many autistic people. Since that first usage, the #ActuallyAutistic community has

[33] I do not know the gender identities or pronouns of the Twitter users, so I will be referring to them in the singular third-person.

grown on Twitter. When Autism Speaks releases a video, fundraising campaign, or press release, the #ActuallyAutistic community is among the first to respond, and Twitter is often the medium of choice to share their sharply written criticisms. Beyond responding to Autism Speaks, the #ActuallyAutistic tweeters also share stories of anti-autistic bias, celebrate rare positive portrayals of autistic people in popular culture, and circulate writing and art created by autistic people. Thus, the #ActuallyAutistic community produces both oppositional rhetoric to outsiders and affirming rhetoric for other autistic people. By clicking on the hashtag, anyone on Twitter can see recent tweets tagged with #ActuallyAutistic. Within the tag, users talk about autistic life and culture, and then reply to each other, like each other's tweets, and re-tweet (share) tweets with their own Twitter followers. The intended audience of #ActuallyAutistic activists is therefore twofold. While some of their writing is directed toward educating non-autistic people about autistic culture and community, most of the tweets are primarily written for other #ActuallyAutistic people.

The community disproves many of the dominant tropes about autism: rather than isolated, non-verbal, or cold, #ActuallyAutistic tweeters are interconnected, eloquent, and emotional. In this chapter, I look at the #ActuallyAutistic community on Twitter to investigate the rhetorical strategies of digital disability activism. As I argue in this chapter, #ActuallyAutistic tweets demonstrate rhetorical sophistication, with activists developing autistic activists *topoi*, or lines of argument, that challenge dominant notions of autism and mental disability within the tight constraints of Twitter: a 140-character limit. The development of specific *topoi* for their community is significant; as a group that has been denied rhetoricity, #ActuallyAutistic writers

respond by constructing their own lines of argument that resist mainstream frameworks of autism. Furthermore, the writers on #ActuallyAutistic rewrite dominant narratives of autism, re-framing autism as a rhetorical asset rather than a rhetorical deficit.

To make these claims, I begin by reviewing definitions of autism within popular/medical contexts and the rhetorical tradition. Then, I outline my methodology for digital activism research by explaining the theoretical underpinnings of my data and analysis methods. After, I turn to the data itself and present three *topoi* most common to #ActuallyAutistic tweets: prioritizing experiential expertise, embracing neurodiversity, and documenting ableism. These three *topoi*, I argue, expand the purview of rhetoric to include autistic activists, whose rhetorical strategies are often excluded from the rhetorical canon. Furthermore, I investigate the tweets themselves as rhetorically rich micro-texts, demonstrating the activist potential of writing on Twitter. Therefore, I reveal how autistic activists have expanded the definition of rhetoric but also the definition of activism, modeling how people traditionally denied a platform have created their own discursive space for community-building and advocacy.

What Is Autism?

In *Autism and Gender*, Jordynn Jack admits, "it is difficult to provide a single definition of autism that would be accepted by all the stakeholders involved in debates about autism" (6). Indeed, as I show, there are conflicting definitions of

autism, each shaping the perception and material reality of autistic people. In this section I review two models of autism: the deficit model and the rhetorical model.

The Deficit Model

The most influential definition comes from the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)*, which describes autism as a series of deficits, such as difficulties with language, difficulties with emotional and social interactions, repetitive behaviors and movements, insistence on routines, and intense interest in "unusual objects." Within the *DSM-5*'s lists of symptoms, the words deficit and abnormal are used, framing autism as a disorder, a mental disability that impairs the autistic person and prohibits them from operating in "normal" life. The *DSM-5* provides the diagnostic criteria used by psychiatrists: thus, this definition holds substantial power, as an official diagnosis of autism is required for employment and educational accommodations and social security benefits.

In conjunction with the *DSM-5*, science writing on autism has furthered the perception that autism is a deficit, a bad wiring of the brain. Simon Baron-Cohen, Alan M. Leslie, and Uta Fresh's influential paper, "Does the Autistic Child Have a Theory of the Mind," argues that autistic children lack a theory of the mind (ToM), the knowledge that other people have their own thoughts, needs, feelings, and beliefs. Baron-Cohen, Leslie, and Fresh assert that, thus, because of the "inability to represent mental states . . . [autistic people] are unable to impute beliefs to others and are thus at a grave disadvantage when having to predict the behaviour of other people" (43). The lack of a theory of mind, as proposed by Baron-Cohen, suggests that autistic

people are not only unable to interpret other people's emotions but also unable to understand their own experiences of autism, and thus, unable to express or communicate those experiences. Baron-Cohen extends his theorizations of ToM in his later book, *Mindblindness,* where he writes, "A theory of mind remains one of the quintessential abilities that makes us human" (3). If ToM is key to our individual humanity and autistic people lack a ToM, as Baron-Cohen asserts, are autistic people human?

The framing of autism as a deficit trickles into how autism is portrayed in popular discourse, especially in philanthropic efforts surrounding autism. One startling yet fairly accepted example is the "Locked in for Autism" fundraiser held by Caudwell Children, a non-profit organization that supports disabled children in the United Kingdom. For the event, non-autistic people collect donations and then lock themselves into a glass box for fifty hours. The box is meant to symbolize the autistic experience: the website explains,

> Many [non-autistic] parents of autistic children have confirmed that the box is a metaphor for autism – the isolation, difficulties with communication and being stared at from all directions, with a sense of sometimes 'feeling trapped' – are often associated with the condition.

Thus, even in fundraising and advocacy events, autistic people are depicted as lacking empathy and communication skills, perpetuating the autism-as-deficit definition.

In the United States, perhaps the most dominant voice in defining autism is Autism Speaks. Autistic activists charge Autism Speaks with presenting autism as a burden not just in the video "I Am Autism," but also in other promotional pieces,

such as a short documentary titled *Autism Everyday*, featuring non-autistic parents describing the challenges of raising children with autism. Even the Autism Speaks logo, autistic activists argue, defines autism as a deficit, with the blue puzzle piece suggesting that autistic people are puzzles missing a piece. Autistic activists critique Autism Speaks' throughout the year, but the critiques ramp up each year in April, which has been designated as Autism Awareness Month. In 2010, Autism Speaks launched the annual "Light It Up Blue" campaign, occurring each April, in which individuals and buildings wear or light up buildings in blue lights to raise awareness for autism—and funds for Autism Speaks. The sponsorship page lists thirty-seven corporate sponsors of the campaign, including Toyota, Home Depot, and American Express. The wide-reaching and prolific support of the Light It Up Blue campaign illustrates the influence and perceived authority of Autism Speaks and its approach to autism.

The Rhetorical Model

Autism is not mentioned directly in classical rhetorical theory; however, for the most part, rhetorical history demonstrates great anxiety about mental disability, irrationality, and lack of control (Brewer). Aristotle defines *ethos* as a foundational component of persuasion, for a speaker must appear to have "good sense, good moral character and goodwill" to move their audience (*On Rhetoric* 60). However, the mentally disabled rhetor, and thus the autistic rhetor, is not often deemed to have "good sense" by a nondisabled audience. In the article "Autistic Ethos at Work: Writing on the Spectrum in Contexts of Professional and Technical Communication,"

Shannon Walters describes how traditional conceptions of *ethos* exclude autistic people, particularly due to the emphasis on good sense. Walters writes,

> People with cognitive differences such as autism and Asperger's Syndrome disrupt the traditional mold of neurotypical ethos. In part because of their own cognitive differences and in part because of pervasive stereotypes about autism, people with autism often construct *ethos* differently.

Walters points to both the autistic character and stereotypes about autism as barriers to the neurotypical, or classical, *ethos*. Thus, Walters argues that autistic rhetors must construct their own *ethos* by inventing "a sense of ethos based on traditional traits such as goodwill, credibility, and good character, while demonstrating alternatives to the neurotypical foundations of these elements of ethos."

Contemporary scholars of rhetoric have similarly pointed to the ways classical rhetorical theory threatens to exclude disabled rhetors, with disability rhetoric scholars such as Brenda Breuggemann, Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, Jay Dolmage, Margaret Price, and Melanie Yergeau expanding the definition rhetoric to include communication by the seemingly irrational rhetor. Yergeau and Paul Heilker in their article "Autism and Rhetoric" argue that, despite scientific and rhetorical writings that suggest otherwise, autism is inherently rhetorical:

> We contend that human neurology itself, autistic or other, is likewise profoundly rhetorical phenomenon. We contend that autism itself is a rhetoric, a way of being in the world through language, a rhetoric we may not have encountered or recognized frequently in the past nor

> value highly in academic contexts, but rhetoric nonetheless. If autism is a rhetoric, then we are beholden to respond to it with cultural sensitivity, ethical care, and pedagogical complexity. (487)

Thus, Yergeau and Heilker propose an approach to rhetoric that embraces autism as a way of communicating. In their article, they reframe autistic traits that are typically defined as deficits and identify them instead as rhetorical assets. For example, the *DSM-5* lists repetitive behavior as a characteristic of autism. One way this manifests is *echolalia*, the memorization and repetition of stock phrases from films, television shows, or other forms of media. Rather than approaching *echolalia* as a symptom of developmental delay, Yergeau and Heilker situate the practice within the rhetorical tradition of "commonplace books," notebooks in which students of rhetoric would copy verbatim quotes overheard (490-491). What happens, they ask, when we envision autism not as an impediment to rhetoric but an avenue to it?

Yergeau, an autistic rhetorical scholar and activist, applies rhetorical theory to push against Baron-Cohen's writings on ToM. In the article "Clinically Significant Disturbance," Yergeau argues that ToM threatens the rhetoricity—being seen as capable of producing rhetoric (Prendergast)— of autistic people. The inability to analyze one's audience, or to even understand that an audience may have a distinct set of emotions and beliefs, would indeed impede a rhetor.[34] Yergeau observes the tension between the rhetorical tradition and science writing on autism, writing,

> In this reading [of cognitive studies], I am bombarded by representations of autistic people as non-rhetors—as non-rhetors who

[34] Indeed, in *The New Rhetoric*, Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca establish the audience as the most important consideration for the rhetor, writing that "there is only one rule in this [argumentation] matter: adaptation of the speech to the audience, whatever its nature" (25).

> cannot emote (goodbye pathos), as non-rhetors who cannot recognize the mental states nor visualize the needs of the people around them (goodbye ethos), as non-rhetors whose logics are so mechanistic and rigid that their only comparable non-rhetor analogues are robots and chimpanzees (goodbye, logos). ("Clinically Significant Disturbance")

Thus, ToM positions the autistic person as unable to create and deliver rhetoric. In response, Yergeau notes the limitations of ToM—it relies on circular logic in order to silence the autistic person, and thus, reveals the insufficiency of empiricism to describe the autistic experience. In response, Yergeau employs rhetorical tools to dismantle ToM, writing,

> We know that autistic people lack a ToM because non-autistic people have a ToM; we know that non-autistic people have a ToM because autistic people lack a ToM. This is the state of our knowing—this is where empiricism has led us. Where might a feministic, rhetorical, embodied, disability-positive understanding of autism lead us? What of this skin and bones? ("Clinically Significant Disturbance")

Yergeau criticizes the dehumanizing discourse of theory of mind theories and imagines an alternative rhetorical response to understanding autism and the autistic rhetor. Yergeau's rhetorical model pushes against ToM approaches to autism and offers a framework for identifying and analyzing the rhetorical impacts of autistic forms of expression.

Why Twitter?: A Digital Disability Activist Methodology

Critics of digital activism are numerous, with people citing the lack of risk and effort as signs of digital activism's low impact. [35] Starting in 1995, the term "slacktivism" emerged, a portmanteau of slacker and activism. Quoted in a 2002 *New York Times* article, Barbara Mikkelson, co-founder of *Snopes*, characterizes slactivism as "the desire people have to do something good without getting out of their chair" (qtd. in Feder). Eight years later, in a 2010 article on social media activism in *The New Yorker*, Malcolm Gladwell concluded that "Facebook activism succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice." Gladwell's skepticism of social media activism—focused on Facebook though surely applicable to Twitter as well—is widespread.

What these criticisms of digital activism ignore is that, for many disabled protestors, digital activism is the often most accessible form of protest. Autistic activists flock to Twitter to resist the damaging and false portrayals of autistic people within popular discourse and cognitive scientists. At a 2013 keynote at the conference Computers and Writing, Yergeau describes how autism activism thrives on social media:

> Disability culture is distributed; our network is largely virtual; we are often netroots activists[36] because we lack f2f [face to face] options. While only twenty of us may have the means to physically protest

[35] Despite the criticisms of digital activism as lacking substance and sacrifice, scholars have increasingly noted that digital activism is a growing trend and thus worthy of study. Though digital activism is a fairly new area of study, many scholars have already written journal articles and edited collections on the topic, especially exploring the ramifications of social media's role in the contemporary social movements (Penney and Dadas; Joyce; McCaughey; and Adsanatham).

[36] "Netroots activists" refers to political activists who use social media and blogs to network, organize, and publicize.

> exclusionary practices at an Autism Speaks walk, several hundred of us are able to participate in Twitter campaigns that target Autism Speaks's corporate sponsors and, as a result, convince ThinkGeek to redirect its fundraising efforts to a disabled-led non-profit. ("Disable All the Things")

Traditional street activism—marches, rallies, sit-ins—are often inaccessible to disabled people, but as Yergeau explains, the Internet offers both a medium and a platform for community building and organizing amongst autistic activists. Autistic people in particular may struggle with the high sensory output and the large group setting of a rally or march. Writing that dismisses digital activism as slactivism or not worthy of in-depth study ignores that for many disabled activists, social media may be the only accessible way to protest. Yergeau's observation is echoed by digital activists such as the These Tweets Called My Back collective (Devereaux) and Twitter user Autistic Native, the latter who claims that "as a Neurodiverse disabledWOC [Woman of Color], [digital] activism is the only time I get a platform to speak as a disabledWOC."

Thus, my methods are infused by my own activist stance: that scholars of digital activism must take seriously not only the mode of activism but also the digital texts themselves as primary sites of study. Since autistic activists have historically been denied rhetoricity, I focus my study on the tweets themselves, approaching them as rhetorically rich micro-texts. My text selection, then, argues for the rhetorical sophistication of autistic rhetors *and* the significance of digital activism. By locating and studying the tweets as my primary activist artifact, I affirm the hashtag

#ActuallyAutistic on Twitter as a central site of protest—not an auxiliary tool but an actual discursive space where social change occurs.

By focusing on the tweets themselves as my primary texts, I diverge from much scholarship on digital activism. For example, Carolyn Dadas and Joel Penney's article, "(Re)Tweeting in the Service of Protest: Digital Composition and Circulation in the Occupy Wall Street Movement," and the essays in Cyberactivism and the Participatory Web use interviews or digital mapping to analyze the themes and significance of digital activism. Additionally, scholars have paid special attention to how Twitter has been used by activists to mobilize offline rallies and occupations (Khamis and Vaughn; Garrido and Halavias; Adsanatham). This approach has motivated some scholars to see Twitter as tool for a larger revolution or protest, rather than a site of protest itself; for example, in discussing the role of Twitter in Arab Spring, Sahar Khamis and Katherine Vaughn argue, "it would be a mistake to characterize these uprisings as Facebook or Twitter revolutions, since these new media were nothing more than powerful mobilization and organization tools and effective catalysts" (77). Thus, even in studies of Twitter as a tool for activism, scholars tend to disregard the activist nature of the tweets themselves.

Methods

For this chapter, I study the rhetorical strategies and *topoi* present in a sample of tweets from #ActuallyAutistic. Initially, I collected 56,346 tweets with the hashtag #ActuallyAutistic over sixteen months using the program TAGSExplorer, a free software that captures tweets in a Google Doc spreadsheet as they are published. For

my analysis, I focused on tweets published and circulated in April 2016, for tweets in April featured the most overtly subversive and activist tweets. As noted, April is Autism Awareness Month, an effort coordinated by Autism Speaks that the #ActuallyAutistic community largely condemns because of Autism Speaks' problematic autism rhetoric. Thus, activity on the hashtag peaks in April, offering a view into how autistic activism develops on Twitter.[37] Once I narrowed my sample to tweets to April 2016, I deleted duplicate tweets that TAGS mistakenly captured twice. I was thus left with 1,961 unique tweets to study. From here, I clicked on the URL for each tweet to record the number of retweets and likes[38] on each tweet in order to gain a better idea of the circulation of each tweet.

Once I had gathered and prepared my data, I analyzed the collected tweets using a grounded theory approach. In grounded theory methodology, according to sociologists Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, "data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (23). In her book *Qualitative Research*, Sharan Merriam explains, "the end results of this type of qualitative study is a theory that emerges from, or is 'grounded' in, the data—hence, grounded theory" (29). For this study, I immersed myself in the hashtag #ActuallyAutistic for several months, reading, coding, and analyzing the tweets as my primary dataset.

---

[37] March 2016 features 1,047 unique tweets; at 1,961 unique tweets, April 2016 nearly doubled that number.

[38] Users can respond to tweets in a variety of ways: directly replying to other users (using the @ symbol followed by the username: @username), demonstrating their appreciation for a specific tweet by clicking the "Like" heart icon, or retweeting a tweet onto their Twitter timeline. I captured the number of likes and tweets for each tweet as of September 2016, so the retweet and like counts for each tweet may have changed since then.

The initial step is open coding. For this step, I read through the tweets and noted themes and strategies I saw emerging; for example, many of the tweets criticized Autism Speaks, a trend that would become a code in my codebook (see on page 15). After my initial reading of the data, I spent time revising the categories as the trends become clearer to me. For example, at one point, I had two similar codes. As I went through the data, I realized the two subcategories converged enough that I should merge the two codes. Thus, I spent much time reflecting and revising my codebook as I sorted the tweets (Sullivan and Porter; Strauss and Corbin; Blythe).

By the time I concluded my open coding process, I had observed and coded for twenty-four categories. Despite the short-length of the tweets, many engaged in multiple categories. For example, on April 5, user @AnEndInItself tweeted

> There's no need to solve me, cure me, fix me or change me. It's much easier (and cheaper) to listen to me. #ActuallyAutistic #WAAW2016

I recorded this tweet as having three codes: criticizing dominant discourse on autism, instructing allies how to support autistic people, and criticizing the medical model of autism, the pathological model of autism presented by the *DSM*. I will more thoroughly define and explore these codes in the analysis section of the chapter.

I observed that most of the codes could be grouped into three distinct groups, which I refer to as *topoi*: (1) prioritizing experiential expertise, (2) embracing neurodiversity, and (3) documenting anti-autistic ableism. These *topoi* represent the three most commonly used lines of argument in the dataset. Table 1 illustrates the

breakdown of these three *topoi* into the smaller categories as well as the number of tweets that demonstrated those themes.[39]

Topos: Prioritizing Experiential Expertise	**Number of Tweets**
Criticizing Autism Speaks	650
Instructing non-autistic allies	499
Appealing directly to strangers	241
Identifying experts	233
Addressing non-experts	135
Interrogating labels	80
Planning and promoting offline advocacy	68
Topos: Embracing Neurodiversity	
Describing autistic life	489
Sharing autistic creations	425
Offering/asking for support	217
Expressing autistic pride	169
Expressing gratitude	59
Acknowledging the diversity of the autistic community	52
Reclaiming communication	39
Recognizing cross-disability solidarity	16
Topos: Documenting Ableism	
Naming and describing ableism	462
Criticizing the medical model of autism	160
Seeking accommodations	53

Table 3.1 Subcategories Grouped by *Topos* and Listed by Frequency

The #ActuallyAutistic Activist Topoi

Yergeau and Heilker argue that "students on the autism spectrum, like all students, have their own culturally and individually distinctive topoi, tropes, dialects, and so on, and their rhetorics thus constitute both cultural and individual representations of their selfhood" (496). My research confirms this, adding that not only autistic students but autistic people more generally collectively construct autistic

[39] Four subcategories did not fit into the three dominant topoi: using humor (forty-four instances), discussing politics/presidential election (twenty-two instances), active trolling/warning users of trolls (fourteen instances), and discussing the purpose of the hashtag (twenty-seven instances).

activist *topoi* to argue for justice and inclusion. Furthermore, these *topoi* provide the foundation for an autistic approach to rhetoric, one that involves the *ethos* of the autistic activist. As noted, autistic people have been excluded from classical approaches to rhetoric and discourse; thus, autistic activists have responded by creating their own rhetorical framework, one that positions them as the expert on autism and innovative rhetors at the same time.

Topos 1: Prioritizing Experiential Expertise

One of the chief critiques of Autism Speaks is the lack of autistic people in leadership roles.[40] In fact, this is a disturbing trend not just within Autism Speaks but also in scientific and popular discourse about autism: non-autistic people defining and explaining autism. While all of April is considered to be Autism Awareness Month, April 2 receives extra attention as the World Autism Awareness Day—a global day of recognition of autistic people initiated by the United Nations in 2007 ("About World Autism Awareness Day").[41] April is thus a *kairotic* moment for autistic activism, as autism is heavily discussed by non-autistic celebrities, corporations, politicians, family members, and behavioral therapists "light it up blue." Autistic activists use this

[40] As of 2015, two of the twenty-eight members on the Autism Speaks Board are autistic ("Board Members").

[41] 2017 will be the first year the White House also lights it up blue, a move that ASAN condemned in a press release. On April 1, 2017, ASAN wrote, "The Autistic Self Advocacy Network strongly condemns the President's regressive World Autism Awareness Day proclamation, and the announcement that the White House will be participating in Autism Speaks' "Light It Up Blue" campaign. After a decade of progress in which public conversations about autism have increasingly shifted away from tragedy and fear and towards acceptance and inclusion, the White House's actions signal a disturbing attempt to drag autistic people back to the margins. ASAN will not let our community be forced back to the too-recent time when the public consensus was that autistic people should not exist" ("ASAN Condemns").

moment to intervene and position themselves as the ultimate experts on autism, thus reshaping the discourse surrounding autism.

For autistic people to assert themselves as experts, they have to de-legitimatize two main *topoi* in prominent autism discourse: (1) that autistic people are locked in and removed from reality, and thus incapable of understanding and articulating their knowledge of autism, and (2) that, because of autistic people's deficits, organizations such as Autism Speaks, parents, doctors, and cognitive scientists must speak on behalf of autistic people. The #ActuallyAutistic tweeters combat these two tropes by redefining expertise to be based on lived experience. Here, their arguments resemble aspects of feminist epistemology and standpoint theory, which argue that knowledge is rooted in the lived experiences of women.[42] Though #ActuallyAutistic is not focused on women's experiences, as is the focus of feminist epistemology, the tweets similarly value knowledge formed by lived experience and collaboration with others. Indeed, these tweets project a disabled epistemology, one that prioritizes the disabled body and mind as a maker of knowledge. Because Autism Speaks is so often heralded as the authoritative source on all things autism, #ActuallyAutistic users attack Autism Speak's authority while illustrating their own.

Out of 1,961 tweets, six-hundred and fifty feature a critique of Autism Speaks and other dominant discourses on autism. Of those six-hundred and fifty tweets,

---

[42] In her article on the collectively written *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, Sara Hayden describes how feminist epistemology declared women as the authorities of their own experiences:

> As Marilyn Frye (1993) has noted, when women began to create theory they were granting women authority as perceivers, rather than as people to be perceived; they were insisting that women were people capable of describing their own lives, not simply people about whom others could make claims of truth. (132)

Thus, rather than a distanced objectivity, in which women are looking in from the outside, feminist epistemology centers women as the makers of knowledge and wisdom about their experiences.

seventy-three tweets are coded as *both* criticizing Autism Speaks *and* identifying autistic people as experts, including this tweet by @MargaretBates1 on April 2, 2016:

> Don't donate to autism Speaks, don't light up blue and speak with #ActuallyAutistic ppl to get the real facts

On April 2, 2016, user @xxmusicsavedmex makes the same argument:

> If you want the truth about us, listen to someone #ActuallyAutistic. #BoycottAutismSpeaks and do the right thing. #WorldAutismAwarenessDay

Within the limited character constraints of Twitter, @MargaretBates1 and @xxmusicsavedmex dismantle Autism Speaks' claim to speak on behalf of autistic people and identify autistic people as experts. The activists direct non-autistic people not to Autism Speaks or cognitive science scholarship but to autistic people as the source of "real facts." In order to establish themselves as the experts on autism, the #ActuallyAutistic community argues that the assumed experts, Autism Speaks and top autism researchers, are not in fact experts. In addition, the hashtag #BoycottAutismSpeaks occurs 102 times and is the tenth most used word in the corpus, revealing the oppositional relationship between the #ActuallyAutistic community and Autism Speaks.

Furthermore, @MargaretBates1, @xxmusicsavedmex, and hundreds of other #ActuallyAutistic tweeters are redefining expertise based on experience and embodied knowledge. In other words, while doctors, teachers, and researchers may claim expertise on autism based on outside research and credentials,

#ActuallyAutistic tweeters claim expertise on autism based on their lived experiences. For example, user @cheetahpeople tweets on April 6, 2016,

> hi im #actuallyautistic and i can tell you most of the facts on ur school's autism poster are either bullshit or unhelpful.

In this tweet, @cheetahpeople crafts an enthymemic argument with a critical yet unstated premise: that @cheetahpeople's lived experience as an autistic person outweighs the knowledge presented in posters presumably created by non-autistic autism "experts." By merely implying the premise—that lived experience trumps book learning— @cheetahpeople operates as if this premise is universally accepted. After all, the unstated premise is often what makes enthymemes so effective. By inviting the audience to construct the argument, @cheetahpeople aims to have the non-autistic members realize the obviousness of the premise—*of course life experience leads to expertise!*

In many of these tweets, the hashtag itself also serves as an argument for expertise. As @xxmusicsavedmex's and @MargaretBates1's tweets illustrate, many of the #ActuallyAutistic community members use the hashtag as an identifier within their tweet. On April 20, 2016 @chromesthesia tweeted:

> It's just not accurate to rely solely on autism narratives by parents and "experts". #actuallyautistic people live it and understand better

@chromesthesia echoes the two-hundred and thirty tweets directly identifying autistic people as experts, specifically naming lived experience as the source of their superior knowledge. The hashtag itself is crucial to their argument, as #ActuallyAutistic people are named as being distinct from and more authoritative than non-autistic

people. This grammatical phenomenon occurs 1,403 times in the corpus—far and away the most commonly reoccurring code.

Through the tag, #ActuallyAutistic tweeters also work through *ethos* appeals, actively inviting the readers to question their own assumptions about expertise, authority, and autism.[43] In the month of April, two-hundred and forty-one #ActuallyAutistic tweets directly appealed to public figures and corporations that celebrated "autism awareness." These appeals attempted to re-direct attention to autistic activists, educating the public about not only the harm Autism Speaks causes but the values and concerns of autistic people. When Samsung Canada, a major technology company, announced a partnership with Autism Speaks, @femmemystique_ tweeted on April 1, 2016,

> @SamsungCanada Let's not [light it up blue]! #ActuallyAutistic people DO NOT support AS. We'd love to offer alternate orgs to support if anyone would listen!

Similarly, after journalist Katie Couric tweeted in support of the Light It Up Blue campaign, @IndubitablyISFP replied directly to both Couric and Autism Speaks on April 2, 2016:

[43] For example, non-autistic mothers of autistic children often call themselves "autism moms," and historically, this group has dominated conversations about autism and assumed the position of expert—even over autistic adults (Jack 65). The #ActuallyAutistic community has actively attempted to subvert the authority of the autism mom community. In an article published in *The Establishment,* autistic writer Shannon Des Roches Rosa describes a certain breed of autism parents called "Autism Warrior Parents," the kind of parents that "insist on supporting their autistic kids either by trying to cure them, or by imposing non-autistic-oriented goals on them—rather than by trying to understand how their kids are wired, and how that wiring affects their life experience." Rosa urges Autism Warrior Parents to acknowledge their lack of expertise and reach out to autistic people for support and guidance, writing that "Your autistic kids depend on you, but if you're not autistic, then you have to learn how to be the parent they need, and autistic people's perspectives can help you tremendously. So do your best to absorb how autistic people of all abilities think and perceive the world."

> @katiecouric @autismspeaks If you want to support #ActuallyAutistic people, please listen to us & do #RedInstead! Not #LIUB - that hurts us.

In these cases, #ActuallyAutistic people present their argument of expertise to the non-autistic world, and in a decidedly activist move, attempt to move hearts and minds and persuade their audience to change direction by supporting autistic people instead of Autism Speaks. Additionally, the tweets appeal directly to strangers—the first to a major corporation and the second to a high profile public figure.

By targeting their rhetoric directly to powerful organizations, corporations, and public figures, the #ActuallyAutistic community leverages their experiential expertise for cultural and material change. They urge corporations and celebrities to recognize the authority of autistic people, revealing how their audience had previously overlooked autistic people in their efforts to support autistic people. This move has been successful in the past—in 2011, the #ActuallyAutistic community persuaded ThinkGeek, an online retailer that makes t-shirts and other products celebrating geek culture, to drop Autism Speaks from its giving campaign. In an apology posted on the ThinkGeek blog in April 2011, employee Carrie Gouldin she vows that the company will reach out to autistic people before choosing a charity:

> Since last Friday we've gotten lots of ideas for different charities working on autism issues, most notably ASAN [Autistic Self Advocacy Network], and we're looking into what we can do for them in the near future. And we'll definitely try to toss this out to as many as our readers, followers, and customers as we can before we donate

> again--*you guys are the experts on this*, not us, and we should have asked for feedback earlier in the process. (emphasis added)

Gouldin's reply emphasizes the effectiveness of autistic activists' arguments about expertise: not only did ThinkGeek change its philanthropy focus because of autistic activism on Twitter and other forms of social model, but ThinkGeek also affirmed the expertise of the community. Starting in 2012, ThinkGeek partnered with ASAN each year by designing and selling a t-shirt that celebrates autism and neurodiversity. Far too many non-autistic people initially assume that autistic people cannot speak for themselves and do not actively seek out autistic voices. Thus, when autistic activists demonstrate their own expertise through social media campaigns and rhetorical savvy, the activists shift the conversation to focus on the needs and concerns of autistic people.

In addition to tweeting directly to businesses and public figures, #ActuallyAutistic writers also address non-autistic people generally by instructing them on how to be better allies. In these tweets, #ActuallyAutistic writers again supplant non-autistic so-called "experts" and direct non-autistic advocates and supporters to autistic-led organizations and autistic people as the authoritative sources on autism. In the 499 tweets coded as "instructing allies," the #ActuallyAutistic tweeters act as teachers, instructing non-autistic people on how to support autistic people. On April 2, 2016, @theochz tweeted:

> If you truly care and support autistic people take your time to listen to #ActuallyAutistic people instead of a hate group that silences us

Similarly, on April 2, 2016, @C_Squared2911 tweeted:

> For #WorldAutismAwarenessDay, PLEASE listen to those of us who are #actuallyautistic. Our voices- whether in speech or otherwise- matter.

In both tweets, the writers direct non-autistic people on how to support and care for autistic people: to listen. In fact, out of the 499 tweets coded as instructing allies, the word listen appears sixty-nine times. As Krista Ratcliffe writes, listening[44] is a decidedly rhetorical and activist act. Thus, the autistic activists leverage their authority and expertise to instruct non-autistic people on how to communicate with autistic people. Given the wealth of resources and training devoted to teaching autistic people how to communicate like and with non-autistic people, this subversion challenges the preconceived notion that autistic people should cater to the rhetorical styles of non-autistic people. Rather, in the #ActuallyAutistic community, autistic people dictate the conversational norms and educate non-autistic people about communication expectations—especially the importance of listening.

Topos 2: Redefining Autism

While tweets that prioritize experiential experience are generally directed toward non-autistic people outside of the autistic activist community, much of the

[44] Rhetorical studies has noted the power and potential of listening as a rhetorical, activist act. In Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness, Krista Ratcliffe defines rhetorical listening as "a trope for interpretative invention, that is, as a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text or culture; its purpose is to cultivate conscious identifications in ways that promote productive communication, especially but not solely cross-culturally" (25). Ratcliffe, then, describes rhetorical listening as a dynamic act of invention and possibility. The #ActuallyAutistic community views listening similarly, often pleading with non-autistic people to listen to the voices and experiences of autistic people. Listening, then, is framed as an active mode of support and advocacy, and even, an activist act: by listening to people who have been historically silenced, non-autistic people can reject the ideology that denies autistic people their rhetoricity.

activist work in the #ActuallyAutistic tag is directed toward fellow autistic people. And yet, while these conversations are geared toward each other, they are ultimately public—meaning that non-autistic users of Twitter also observe the conversations in their Twitter feeds. One such internally/externally-directed *topoi* is redefining autism. #ActuallyAutistic people offer new definitions of autism, definitions that situate autism not as a deficit but as a way of being, moving, and thinking. This redefinition centers on the concept of neurodiversity: the idea that humans have different neurologies, and these differences should be celebrated rather than quelled. Amy Harmon introduced nondisabled society to the concept of neurodiversity[45] in Harmon's 2004 *New York Times* editorial entitled "Neurodiversity Forever: The Disability Movement Turns to Brains." Here, Harmon describes the neurodiverse movement, writing that,

> But in a new kind of disabilities movement, many of those who deviate from the shrinking subset of neurologically "normal" want tolerance, not just of their diagnoses, but of their behavioral quirks. They say brain differences, like body differences, should be embraced, and argue for an acceptance of "neurodiversity."

Neurodiversity, thus, offers a framework for understanding autism (and other mental disabilities, such as ADHD, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder) not as medical tragedies to be cured, but rather, valued variations of the human mind.

Definitional *topoi* are crucial to argumentation, so the #ActuallyAutistic community goes to great lengths to refute dominant definitions of autism and assert

[45] Emily Thornton Savarese and Ralph James Savarese write a thorough summary of the history of the concept of neurodiversity in their introduction to the 2010 *Disability Studies Quarterly* special issue, "Autism and the Concept of Neurodiversity."

one that embraces neurodiversity.[46] Indeed, #ActuallyAutistic people are well aware of the various definitions of autism—their lives have been shaped by definitions that frame autism characteristics as problems to be solved. Thus, the #ActuallyAutistic community developed a redefinition *topoi*, one that evaluates and rejects problematic definitions and then rewrites autism on its own terms. Two related strategies that #ActuallyAutistic people use to embrace neurodiversity are describing autistic life and expressing autism pride. In the former, #ActuallyAutistic people candidly paint a picture of the daily life of an autistic person. Since autism is so often discussed as a deficit, #ActuallyAutistic activists utilize this *topos* to present alternative depictions of the autistic person: depictions that demonstrate the diversity, humanity, and vibrancy of autistic people.

The #ActuallyAutistic community redefines behaviors associated with autism as central to autistic life and culture, rather than symptoms of pathology. For example, the *DSM-5* lists "stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech" as one of the diagnostic criteria for autism, further explaining that severity can be determined by "social communication impairments and restricted repetitive patterns of behavior." Thus, repetitive movement is framed as pathological, as hurdles to communication and life. These repetitive movements, called stimming or flapping, are instead framed by the #ActuallyAutistic community as integral aspects of autistic life. On April 25, 2016, @KeelanArt tweeted,

[46] The significance of definitions has been long recognized in rhetorical history. In Aristotle's *Topics*, Aristotle explains at great lengths the importance of definitions in composing an argument. He advises rhetors to, when writing a counterargument, "look among the definitions, real or apparent, of the thing before you, and if one is not enough, draw upon several. For it will be easier to attack people when committed to a definition" (185-186).

Proud to be autistic, I stim without shame. #AutismAcceptance #AutisticArt #actuallyautistic @autselfadvocacy

The tweet is accompanied by an illustration of a person with long hair and closed eyes and wearing headphones. Lines drawn around the person suggest stimming. Underneath the person, there is a rainbow infinity symbol with the handwritten text "Free to Be Me Autistic Pride" (Fig. 2).

Fig. 3.2 A screenshot of @KeelanArt's tweet and artwork celebrating stimming.

The tweet provides a multimodal embrace of stimming: @KeelanArt feels no shame about moving in a neurodiverse way, and indeed, feels pride about this aspect of their

personality.[47] To celebrate stimming, then, is to challenge medical discourse that portrays stimming as a deficit, as a sign of dysfunction. By demonstrating autism pride, and specifically pride in the act of stimming, @KeelanArt's tweet redefines autism not as a disease but as a core element of their identity.

Several other #ActuallyAutistic writers also openly discuss stimming in the "describing autistic life" subcategory, many proposing that stimming is a feature of autistic self-expression and communication. On April 26, 2016, @lechatsavant tweeted their enthusiasm for the National Hockey League team the Blackhawks—certainly a hobby shared by non-autistic people—writing,

> I'm gonna sprain my wrists stimming over Blackhawks goals. Very much worth it #actuallyautistic #LoudHands

At first glance, this tweet may appear benign, a glance into the hockey fandom of @lechatsavant. However, I read this tweet as offering an activist perspective on the act of stimming. For @lechatsavant, stimming is a means to express excitement over the hockey game. Non-autistic people watching the game are likely conveying their excitement in embodied ways—cheering, clapping, high-fiving their friends—and situated alongside sports fandom, stimming does not seem that atypical. By seeing stimming as a way to cheer, stimming because normalized rather than pathologized.

---

[47] @KeelanArt echoes Jason Nolan and Melanie McBride's reframing of stimming as semiosis. In their chapter, "Embodied Semiosis: Autistic 'Stimming' as Sensory Practice," Nolan and McBride imagine a world that accepts stimming as a valid and valued aspect of communication:

> If 'stimming' was an acceptable and valued aspect of social and cultural behaviour, how might it be incorporated into design or social practices? Might the expressive and embodied behaviour of stimming benefit non-autistics, who are also similarly conditioned to resist such physical utterance? This semiotic praxis also involves disrupting narratives of autism as deficit or disease and regarding it, instead, as an opportunity to realize more inclusive visions of sociality imagined by the neurodiverse. (48)

Furthermore, like @KeelanArt, @lechatsavant rejects the narrative of shame and deficit surrounding stimming and autism. Indeed, @lechatsavant includes the hashtag #LoudHands at the end of the tweet, a rally cry in the autistic activist community. The phrase "Loud Hands" responds to a prominent trend in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), a behavior modification treatment that utilizes positive and negative reinforcement to train autistic children to behave more neurotypically. In ABA sessions, autistic children are often told "Quiet Hands," an order to cease stimming or flapping. Autistic writer Julia Bascom writes about the role and impact of "Quiet Hands" on the education of autistic children on her blog:

> A student pushes at a piece of paper, flaps their hands, stacks their fingers against their palm, pokes at a pencil, rubs their palms through their hair. It's silent, until:
>
> "Quiet hands!"
>
> I've yet to meet a student who didn't instinctively know to pull back and put their hands in their lap at this order. Thanks to applied behavioral analysis, each student learned this phrase in preschool at the latest, hands slapped down and held to a table or at their sides for a count of three until they learned to restrain themselves at the words.

ABA often employs "quiet hands" as a way to train autistic children to move like non-autistic children. Critics of ABA describe it as abusive, especially when ABA specialists restrain the hands of autistic children. Therefore, Loud Hands has become a protest slogan for autistic activism, a phrase that embraces stimming and flapping as integral components of the autistic experience. By including the hashtag

#LoudHands, @lechatsavant frames their enthusiastic stimming as a rebuke to the push to get autistic children to conform to non-autistic standards.

@KeelanArt, @lechatsavant, and many other #ActuallyAutistic activists reclaim stimming not as a sign of deviance but as a form of expression and communication—in other words, a rhetorical act imbued with meaning. Yergeau[48] similarly reclaims stimming in her book chapter, "Occupying Autism: Rhetoric, Involuntarity, and the Meaning of Autistic Lives." In the chapter, Yergeau writes, "hands move, air moves, sound waves, flitting fingers, motion before eyes. Here there is meaning. Stims tell a story" (93). Indeed, much of the tweets coded as "Autistic Life" celebrate stimming and flapping as meaningful gestures. In these tweets, #ActuallyAutistic writers invoke the redefining autism *topoi* and present a neurodiverse perspective on rhetoric. They echo Yergeau and Heilker's call to conceive "of autism as a rhetoric, as a way of being in the world through language, allows us to reconstrue what we have historically seen as language deficits as, instead, language differences" (496). Thus, not only are the writers of #ActuallyAutistic redefining autism as a variation of human neurology, but they are also expanding the definition of rhetoric and communication to include neurodiverse forms of expression like stimming and flapping.

Topos 3: Witnessing Ableism

The writers of #ActuallyAutistic redefine autism according to their own experiences, valuing neurodiversity over pathology in their expressions of autistic life and identity. The stakes are high for this work, as many of the tweets document the

[48] Yergeau also celebrates stimming in her 2012 video essay, "I Stim, Therefore I Am."

discrimination and abuse autistic people face. In discussing the neurodiverse perspective of autism, Jack writes, "autism constitutes a different neurological make-up, one that carries with it considerable strengths even if it can present difficulties navigating a world designed for 'neurotypicals,' or those whose neurology accords with that of most other humans" (183). Indeed, 462 #ActuallyAutistic tweets in April 2016 named and documented experiences of anti-autistic ableism. This *topos* highlights the exigence of the hashtag, serving harsh reminders that though the #ActuallyAutistic community has redefined autism for itself and its allies, non-autistic people continue to belittle, abuse, and discriminate against autistic people.

While the #ActuallyAutistic community celebrates autism in its many forms, it also acknowledges challenges of being autistic. However, in contrast to dominant medical discourse on autism, the #ActuallyAutistic community emphasizes that hardships come not from autism itself but from non-autistic people, medical and scientific institutions, and workplaces. To make this claim, the #ActuallyAutistic writers document the ableism they experience. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the term ableism back to a 1981 issue of the feminist magazine *Off Our Backs*. In the issue, arachne rae defines ableism as "the systematic oppression of a group of people because of what they can or can not do with their bodies or minds" (39). In 1998, Simi Linton remarked at the recent inclusion of the term into the *Reader's Digest Oxford Wordfinder*, writing that the term "can be used to organize ideas about the centering and domination of the nondisabled experience and point of view" (9). Thus, the witnessing ableism *topos* enables disabled people to articulate their experiences with oppression and then organize to counter it.

By naming and documenting anti-autistic ableism, the #ActuallyAutistic community acknowledges the hardships of their lives while diagnosing society as the problem—not autism. This *topos* has multiple audiences: in many cases, they write for their autistic peers, to affirm each other's experiences. For example, on April 26, 2016, @aspiemermaid presents the social model of disability in relation to autism, tweeting that

> We are disabled not by our cognitive differences, but by an ignorant and inflexible society #autism #actuallyautistic

In this tweet, @aspiemermaid diagnoses society as ignorant and rigid, noting that it too often refuses to accommodate the cognitive differences of autistic people. @aspiemermaid echoes disabled writer and activist Eli Clare, who writes,

> Disability activists fiercely declare that it's not our bodies that need curing. Rather, it is ableism—disability oppression, as reflected in high unemployment rates, lack of access, gawking, substandard education, being forced to live in nursing homes and back rooms, being seen as childlike and asexual—that needs changing. (360)

Clare and @aspiemermaid both claim that neither cognitive nor bodily differences are to blame for the obstacles disabled people face; rather, ableism constructs pernicious barriers that disable people through isolation, discrimination, poverty, and violence.

In fact, the forty-ninth most common word in the dataset, occurring thirty-six times, is the hashtag #AbleismExists. The hashtag itself started outside of the #ActuallyAutistic community, emerging within the larger disability activism

community on Twitter. Dominick Evans, a disabled (non-autistic) filmmaker and activist, started the hashtag on April 16, 2016. Evans explains,

> One disturbing trend I have found is having friends who support LGBT, civil, women's and other rights for marginalized communities, who were telling me that ableism does not exist.... I thought that perhaps if enough disabled people were sharing their experiences with ableism, then maybe people would begin to see how absolutely terrible we are treated by a world that often sees us as invisible. (qtd. in Wanshel)

The hashtag quickly picked up steam, with other disabled people on Twitter joining in and sharing stories of their experiences with ableism. Evans writes that he wanted to create "something that non-disabled people can not ignore" (qtd. in Wanshel). Nondisabled people can overlook deny ableism in their daily lives, but by naming oppressive and marginalizing experiences of ableism, disabled writers, both in the #ActuallyAutistic community and beyond, make ableism present in dominant discourse. Indeed, nondisabled people took note of the conversations, as the mainstream press outlet *Huffington Post*, alongside feminist websites, reported on the hashtag and featured several examples of tweets.

Though #AbleismExists began outside of the autistic community, the hashtag became a way to link #ActuallyAutistic activists to the larger disability activism community. Of the thirty-six #ActuallyAutistic tweets tagged with #AbleismExists, nineteen are authored by @jrtgirl35. They use the discursive space carved out by the

hashtags to tell story after story of hardships presented by non-autistic people. On April 24, 2016, @jrtgirl35 described ableism in the workplace:

> #AbleismExists when I have to decide between wanting to keep my job and asking for the accommodations I need #ActuallyAutistic

On April 24, 2016, @jrtgirl35 described ableism in the doctor's office:

> #AbleismExists when I go to a new doctor an they ask so your over this whole autism thing right like its a common cold #actuallyautistic

On the same day, @jrtgirl35 also described ableism within their family:

> #AbleismExists when people in my own extended family bully me and treat me badly just because I'm autistic #actuallyautistic

On April 30, 2016, @jrtgirl35 described ableism in schools:

> #AbleismExists when I can be bullied so badly I fear going into school because I'm autistic an no one stops it #actuallyautistic

I quote four of @jrtgirl35's #AbleismExists tweets to present the breadth of their tweets and stories of ableism. Even within the tight length constraints of Twitter—one-hundred and forty characters—@jrtgirl35 provides brief but copious snippets of their experiences of bullying, dismissal, and stigma.

@jrtgirl35 engages in copia, a strategy of rhetorical invention taught by Erasmus in the sixteenth century. Erasmus prescribes strategic abundance, both in style and content, as a method for building persuasive arguments. In terms of illustrative examples, Erasmus suggests that "in the development of copia, then, illustrations play a leading role.... whether one is trying to convince one's audience, move them, or give them pleasure" (616). @jrtgirl deploys copia in their nineteen

tweets documenting various experiences of ableism, both revealing the abundance of ableism and the variety of its manifestations. The affordances of Twitter enable @jrtgirl35 to put forth many succinct examples that illustrate the existence and harm of ableism, constructing an argument about the presence of ableism. Evans observes that progressive activists often deny that ableism exists, but @jrtgirl35's abundant examples provide exhaustive evidence that a single autistic person encounters ableism in multiple sphere of life. Thus, through copia, @jrtgirl35's makes it difficult for nondisabled people to dismiss ableism. @jrtgirl35 contributes to the archive of narratives in #AbleismExists, illustrating an autistic perspective for observers of the hashtag. Furthermore, the abundance and diversity of examples written for both autistic and non-autistic audiences serve to move the audience to potentially organize against ableist ideologies that make work, the doctor's office, family gatherings, and school dangerous places for autistic people.

However, the purpose of these tweets is not solely to prove the existence and harmful effects of ableism on autistic people. By witnessing their own and each other's experiences of ableism, this *topoi* serves a crucial activist function: affirming their experiences in a society that largely ignores ableism as a source of oppression. Multiple tweets of @jrtgirl35's, in addition to being retweeted and liked, sparked conversation among other autistic people who had similar experiences. On April 25, 2016, @jrtgirl35 tweets:

> When #AbleismExists it's ok for the largest and most well known autism organization to call autistic people empty shells #ActuallyAutistic

User @Regallosauroid affirms @jrtgirl35's observations. The two tweeters share their experiences of being described as empty, with @Regallosauroid concluding,

> btw this is heartbreaking as hell. when i was diagnosed at age of 5, my diagnosis papers said 'the kid has empty eyes.

Here, autistic people witness each other's suffering, affirming that such treatment is indeed harmful. This justification is powerful. The witnessing ableism *topos* echoes the activist and rhetorical work of women's consciousness-raising groups in the 1970's. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell claims these groups moved toward structural changes by articulating affective, personal accounts of marginalization (134). However, the women's consciousness groups were by nature small, intimate face-to-face groups. Autistic people, on the other hand, don't necessarily live close to each other. Some do not meet another autistic person until adulthood. Therefore, the witnessing ableism *topos* on Twitter facilitates these affective, personal revelations in settings both large (as the tweets are public) and intimate (the discussions, though public, are often between two or three people sharing personal accounts of discrimination), conversations that validate autistic people's experiences and move the community toward activist interventions.

The conversations go beyond the #ActuallyAutistic community, as tweeters use other hashtags or tag people directly in their witnessing of ableism. Perhaps the most passionate, outraged criticism is directed toward practitioners and supporters of ABA. As described earlier, ABA often uses physical force to train autistic children to move and speak neurotypically. What makes ABA so frightening to many in the #ActuallyAutistic community is its use of physical force and its pervasiveness. In a

conversation with another autistic writer on Twitter, @notaspiring writes on April 1, 2016 that

> @AutisticZebra Also, the abuse of #ActuallyAutistic ppl isn't something ppl want to recognize, even though ABA is widely spread.

Here, @notaspiring classifies ABA as abuse, despite its widespread acceptance by non-autistic people as therapy for autistic students. On April 17, 2016, @LealaHolcomb calls upon supporters of ABA to listen to autistic people about ABA:

> Let #ActuallyAutistic people lead the way. They have lived experiences & know what #ABA_means. #AutismDoesntEndAt5 folks, start listening.

Again, #ActuallyAutistic writers are using their experiential expertise to push against the medicalization of autism. Furthermore, both @notaspiring and @LealaHolcomb redefine ABA in contrast to its dominant definition.

Tweets attacking ABA use a different strategy than @jrtgirl35's: rather than sharing personal illustrative examples, critics of ABA directly dismantle the warrants used to justify ABA. Proponents of ABA argue that the therapy helps autistic children adapt to society, thus arguing that autistic children need to adapt to society in order to thrive. @RewardConsent addresses non-autistic parents of autistic children directly on April 20, 2016, arguing,

> #AutismMom, #AutismDad, #AutismParent: There's no such thing as a "miracle cure" for your #actuallyAutistic loved ones. ABA is no miracle.

By tagging #AutismMom, #AutismDad, and #AutismParent, @RewardConsent directs his message to those groups, increasing the likelihood that non-autistic family members who utilize those hashtags will see the critical message. Similarly, @OMum22 responds directly to a journalist, Tasha Kheiriddin, reporting on government funding for ABA in Canada. In the Kheiriddin's article, she calls a funding cut to ABA services "a death knell" for families with autistic children. @OMum22 writes on April 13, 2016 that

> Not receiving ABA/IBI services does not signal a "death knell" for #ActuallyAutistic people @TashaKheiriddin

@RewardConsent and @OMum22 both discredit the main warrant supporting the use of ABA: that autistic children *need* this kind of help. But ABA is not a cure for autism, nor does the stoppage of ABA service end the life of an autistic person. Why support ABA, they question, if ABA is ineffective and abusive? Here, @RewardConsent and @OMum22 address the concerns of non-autistic parents of autistic children who worry that autistic children can only succeed with ABA. Instead, as @RewardConsent argues elsewhere, other therapies can actually help autistic children—music, speech, and play therapy, for example—that come without the questionable ethics and practices of ABA.

The naming and documenting of ableism in the #ActuallyAutistic community has led to tangible activist goals, specifically the closure of Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) in Canton, Massachusetts, a residential facility for disabled teenagers and young adults. A chief complaint levied against the JRC is its use of electric shocks to punish its residents, a more drastic (and dangerous) form of ABA. In a *Washington*

Post editorial, Lydia Brown tells the story of Andre Collins, a young autistic adult who was shocked for thirty-one times for reasons such as not taking off his jacket when instructed to and screaming during the shock treatment ("It's Illegal to Torture Animals, but Not Disabled People"). The use of shock treatment has been a particular target among #ActuallyAutistic activists, both on Twitter and offline. On April 22, 2016, the Food and Drug Administration announced a proposal to ban the devise that issues the electric shocks and invited the public to comment on the proposal ("FDA Proposes Ban"). JRC is the only institution to use this devise. #ActuallyAutistic writers took note of the historic step—the FDA has only ever banned one medical device previously—and utilized the hashtag to rally support for the ban, with @RewardConsent tweeting on September 23, 2016:

> #ActuallyAutistic: Contact @WhiteHouse. Ask @POTUS to finish @US_FDA Electrical Stimulation Device ban. #CloseTheJRC

As of April 2017, no decision has been made by the FDA. However, the #ActuallyAutistic community will continue to monitor the proposal's progress and urge the authorities to end the use of electric shocks on autistic people.

Toward an Activist End

I don't want to suggest that social media activism replaces offline organization, rallies, or marches. The rhetoric produced on #ActuallyAutistic Twitter circulated outside of Twitter, on other social media *and* offline sites of protest. Indeed, sixty-eight tweets are coded as "advocacy," in which the users are either circulating petitions, mobilizing people to attend a protest, or organizing community

outreach efforts. So, in addition to prioritizing experiential expertise, embracing neurodiversity, and documenting ableism, the users are coordinating activist interventions in tangible and direct ways. For example, on April 11, 2016, ASAN's Twitter account, @autselfadvocacy, requests that #ActuallyAutistic writers post pictures of their presence at rallies and protests

> #actuallyAutistic folks: going to political rallies? got pictures? Share them and let us know! would love to boost!

Though traditional rallies can be inaccessible for some autistic people, especially those who experience sensory overload, autistic people *do* indeed attend political events and advocate for autistic-positive policies and representation. For example, on April 23, 2016, @queerandcashews tweeted a photograph of three people holding protest signs in a park—such as "Happy Autism Acceptance Month! You are perfect how you are"—with the hashtags #Nothingaboutuswithoutus and #ActuallyAutistic. No context is given with this image, so it's not clear what event, if any, they are protesting. However, it is clear that autistic people have a public political presence offline, which is celebrated on #ActuallyAutistic Twitter. As scholars of digital activism have observed, these two approaches to activism—the virtual and the offline—are distinct but interrelated (Khamis and Vaughn; Garrido and Halavias; Adsanatham).

That said, the vibrancy of #ActuallyAutistic on social media should prompt rhetorical scholar to question how we assess presence. In *Mad at School*, Margaret Price problematizes the valorization of physical presence, writing that, in the university classroom, "'presence' is usually taken as empirically obvious, and as an *a*

priori good" (64). But, as Price argues, such a focus on physical presence in the classroom threatens to exclude mentally disabled students who may not be able to attend class or office hours because of depression, fatigue, or any number of obstacles. Price then encourages teachers to broaden how we think about presence, so that we see the value of neurodiverse forms of presence.

I'd suggest that a similar hierarchy exists in activism, an often unstated assumption that physical presence supersedes virtual presence. The term slactivism captures this assumption, quickly disregarding digital activism as lacking in risk, impact, and notability. Of course, Twitter activism is not some sort of activist utopia. A quarter of people in the United States still lack broadband Internet, creating a barrier for those who cannot access Twitter in the first place (Vick). Twitter has made strides in developing accessibility features but still provides challenges for people who visit the site via a screenreader (Christopherson).[49] And disabled people, especially those who are multiply marginalized, experience harassment on Twitter. User @FleetSparrow tweets a warning to #ActuallyAutistic people of harassment from a specific person, highlighting a larger problem that marginalized peoples face on Twitter:

> Heads up my fellow #Disabled and #ActuallyAutistic friends! There's an acc. going around called "EuthanizeTards" harassing people. Be safe!

[49] Katie Ellis and Mike Kent's *Disability and New Media* discusses the tension of accessibility in regards to new media: "the web provide people with disability important opportunities for education, employment, entertainment, and social interaction. The possibilities for people with disability to participate in broader society via digital avenues are an important outcome and focus of the move to Web 2.0. Yet, the increasingly complex online environment that produces a richer experience for Internet user creates accessibility problems that the World Wide Web sought to alleviate" (77).

Feminist scholars have long been drawing attention to the realities of being a woman on the Internet, the harassment they face and the attempts of silencing—which, because harassment is often coupled with violent threats, is quite effective (Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler, and Barab; Duggan; Herring; Megarry). Disabled people similarly experience persecution on Twitter. To come out as autistic is to reject narratives of shame surrounding the identity while also opening oneself up to ableism in the form of exclusion and discrimination—a profound risk to Twitter activism.

Despite all the barriers and risks to participating in Twitter activism, as my literature review and analysis reveal disability activists online continue to celebrate it as a more accessible form of activism. Furthermore, while it may be difficult to quantify the impact of any social movement—online or off—I propose that the writings of #ActuallyAutistic activists do have an impact, and not just for the #ActuallyAutistic writers who express gratitude that the community exists. In Fall 2016, while I was coding the tweets, I saw traces of #ActuallyAutistic rhetoric circulating in mainstream discourses of autism. First, in October 2016, Autism Speaks shocked autism advocates and professionals by changing its mission statement. Notably, for the first time since its inception in 2005, Autism Speaks no longer seeks a cure for autism (Diament). Furthermore, terms like struggle, hardship, and crisis have been removed. C.J. Volpe, Autism Speaks' spokesperson, explains "Our mission statement was updated to reflect the evolving strategic direction of Autism Speaks and current needs in the autism community" (qtd. in Diament). This drastic shift in tone and purpose caught the attention of both disability-related and mainstream news

sources, with *Huffington Post*, *New York Magazine*, and *Parent Herald* reporting on the change.

Autistic activists, including ASAN and #ActuallyAutistic writers on Twitter have long been advocating against the focus on curing autism. Indeed, one-hundred and sixty tweets in April 2016 critiqued "cure rhetoric," such as @miss_scandi's tweet on April 2, 2016:

> We don't need a cure; we're not missing pieces. We need to be treated like humans, not a science experiment #REDinstead[50]
>
> #ActuallyAutistic

There is no public evidence that the Board Members read #ActuallyAutistic tweets and decided to change the mission statement. However, autistic activists have been defiantly and prolifically expressing sentiments such as @miss_scandi's, likely the source of Autism Speaks' "evolving strategic direction." This came one year after Autism Speaks finally appointed hired autistic people to its Board of Directors, another shift potentially encouraged by #ActuallyAutistic's criticism of Autism Speaks.

On an even larger scale, 2016 Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton became the first presidential nominee to release a detailed plan to support autistic children and adults. Similarly to the revised Autism Speaks mission statement, Clinton's plan never refers to a cure and instead proposes strategies to sustain employment, schooling, and healthcare opportunities for autistic people. Clinton's proposal, though never to be enacted, reflects many of the concerns

[50] #REDInstead refers to the autistic-led campaign against Autism Speaks' Light It Up Blue. Rather than wearing blue, #ActuallyAutistic activists wear red on April 2 to celebrate their autistic identities.

discussed in the #ActuallyAutistic community: it addresses employment, schooling, and healthcare, and by rejecting the deficit-model of autism, the plan refuses to contribute to the cultural stigma surrounding autism, which ASAN noted and applauded ("ASAN Praises Clinton Campaign"). Both Autism Speaks' revised mission statement and Clinton's plan signal a change in dominant discourse on autism, which is moving away from a deficit model of autism and toward a more positive—though not quite neurodiverse—model of autism and autism advocacy. Thus, #ActuallyAutistic Twitter is contributing to an evolving conversation about autism and shaping it.

Just as Price urges teachers to complicate exclusive notions of presence, I similarly urge that activist rhetoric and activist communities acknowledge different forms of neurodiverse presence—such as hundreds of autistic people joining their diverse voices on Twitter to resist ableist assumptions about autism in the month of April. The discourse of the #ActuallyAutistic community is circulating beyond Twitter. Using Twitter and other social media platforms, #ActuallyAutistic community members have invented radical *topoi* that resist pathological models of autism and instead embrace autism as a variation of the human experience. As more non-autistic people heed the call to listen to autistic people, attitudes, policies, and mission statements about autism will employ the #ActuallyAutistic *topoi*. #ActuallyAutistic writers use Twitter as a springboard, then, a space to invent arguments, build community, and organize moments of resistance. In other words, through virtual presence, #ActuallyAutistic activists on Twitter demonstrate their

rhetoricity, offering empowering and nuanced models for autism, rhetoric, and activism.

Chapter 4: Creating an Accessible Legacy: Professional Writing as Disability Activism within the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)

As this dissertation has documented, activism can happen in different spaces: civic buildings, a renovated shelter, and Twitter. In this chapter, I explore how activism can also occur in professional organizations, particularly in settings that are historically inaccessible for people with disabilities. Academia is one such workplace culture, one that, as scholars in the field of rhetoric of composition have repeatedly argued, can be ambivalent, unwelcoming, or even hostile to disabled teachers and scholars (Price *Mad at School*; Price et al., Kerschbaum, Jones, and Eisenman; Dolmage *Academic Ableism*; Brueggemann "Becoming Visible"; Oswal). This is true in universities, departments, and especially conferences. In her article "Access Imagined: The Construction of Disability in Conference Policy Documents," Margaret Price writes, "conferences are often among the *least* accessible spaces that people with disabilities encounter in the course of our work, since they combine the typical inaccessibility of public spaces with the fact that most participants are on unfamiliar ground" ("Committee on Disability Issues"). Air travel, local transportation, hotels, the conference location, conference culture, and more can erect countless hurdles for disabled people. And yet, scholars of all levels, from graduate students to senior scholars, are expected to present their research consistently at conferences. This expectation puts disabled scholars in the uncomfortable situation of choosing between navigating potentially unfamiliar and inaccessible spaces or

missing out on opportunities to network and further develop their research projects—and thus their careers.

In response, disability studies scholars in various fields have advocated for increased accessibility at conferences: pushing conference organizers to include a quiet space, post clear signage, consider accessibility when choosing venues, and provide guidelines on making presentations accessible. Increasingly, conference organizers are also circulating accessibility guides to all participants, guides with information about the accessibility features and barriers in the conference venue and/or city. This advocacy has been especially vibrant—and effective—in rhetoric and composition's premier annual conference, the Conference of College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Today, CCCC is seen by disability studies scholars as an imperfect but still welcoming organization, one that, while it may miss the mark from time to time, overall values the presence and participation of disabled scholars. A core reason for that reputation is the work of the Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition (CDICC), which was charged with the task of continuing to "work with the NCTE/CCCC and the Convention Program Chair to make the convention increasingly accessible" ("Committee on Disability Issues"). One approach to this task has been the creation of the CCCC Accessibility Guide, a document crafted by volunteers that details accessibility issues and affordances at the conference venues each year. Starting in 2011, the Accessibility Guide quickly became a mainstay and expectation of CCCC attendees. The guide itself is straight-forward in both tone and design, providing information useful for people with diverse disabilities to plan their conference experience. While the length and depth of the

guide has changed over time, a trend I explore later in this chapter, the overall function has remained the same: each guide describes the accessibility features and barriers in the conference venue, airport, and city, so that disabled attendees can prepare for their trip.

In this chapter, I frame the CCCC Accessibility Guide as a text that leverages a professional writing genre—the conference guide—toward an activist goal. I examine how the guide's creation and circulation work to move CCCC as an organization toward disability awareness in both its institutional structure and culture. To generate this cultural shift, the authors of the guide deployed many of the same strategies disability activists outside of academic do, especially a personal investment in the advancement of people with disabilities and a collaborative approach to writing and activism. By crafting and distributing the Accessibility Guide to conference attendees, the guides' authors and the CDICC provide disabled attendees the knowledge they need to navigate the conference, while initiating a wider dialogue about disability and accessibility within the organization and its leadership.

I support my claims with interviews of almost all the CCCC Accessibility Guide authors from the first six guides: 2011-2016. I interviewed Margaret Price (2011), Muffy Walter (2012), Tracy Donhardt (2014), Lauren Cagle (2015), Ellie Browning (2015), Casie Cobos (2016), and Jay Dolmage (CDICC Chair from 2011-2015 and uncredited author of the 2013 guide).[51] I conducted these interviews in Summer 2017 over Skype or phone. Interviews took between thirty and sixty minutes, and I recorded each with the consent of the interviewees (see Appendix 1 for

[51] This project was declared to be "not human subjects research" by the University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board, and thus did not require IRB approval.

interview questions). These interviews reveal the tremendous labor that went into producing these documents and the disability awareness they ushered into CCCC as a conference and an organization.

I begin this chapter by situating my project in conversations about activism within institutions. The Accessibility Guide is an institutional text that uses a professional writing genre to change the institutional culture, thus technical writing offers a language and framework for approaching the document as an activist text. I review conversations about institutional critique and social justice approaches to professional writing, a move that both illustrates the relevance of this chapter to the field of Writing Studies and justifies my approach to the Accessibility Guide as both a procedural and an activist text. Then, I provide a history of disability and access within CCCC followed by a description of the Accessibility Guide as a genre. Afterward, I examine interview findings in which I focus on two main themes: (1) the activism of composing the guide and (2) the guide itself as an activist genre. The major themes are divided into smaller sub-issues that detail the drafting process and reflection of the authors. This chapter differs from my previous chapters in that, outside of the lit review, my analysis focuses on the interviews rather than theoretical or framing texts. My purpose in this chapter is to document the stories of the labor, collaboration, and institutional change enacted by the authors' guides. Therefore, the body of the chapter focuses solely on their interviews, documenting the often invisible labor that goes into forming genres and shifting professional cultures toward accessibility and inclusion.

Professional Writing as a Medium for Activism

The other forms of activism I have analyzed in this project all take place in community groups—the 504 sit-in protestors, the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, and the #ActuallyAutistic community on Twitter. Much scholarship on activist rhetoric looks to similar groups, organizations and communities formed outside of the established and dominant system. However, increased attention to both institutional critique as an activist methodology and activism in professional writing has broadened how the field of rhetorical studies conceives of where and how activism occurs. In the landmark 2000 article "Institutional Critique: A Rhetorical Methodology for Change," James E. Porter et al. argue that institutions are rhetorically constructed, and thus, susceptible to reflection, challenge, and ultimately change. The authors write,

> Though institutions are certainly powerful, they are not monoliths; they are rhetorically constructed human designs (whose power is reinforced by buildings, laws, traditions, and knowledge-making practices) and so are changeable. In other words, we made 'em, we can fix 'em. Institutions R Us. Further, for those of you who think such optimism is politically naive and hopelessly liberal and romantic, we believe that we (and you, too) have to commit to this hypothesis anyway, the alternative—political despair—being worse. (611)

For Porter et al., then, institutional critique offers an activist approach to improving institutions—and thus hope that people can work within seemingly omnipotent power structures toward activist ends.

Porter et al. point to the crafting of institutional documents as a means for setting off institutional change. They acknowledge the work of WPAs to shape administrative culture and policies through the Wyoming Resolution, which condemned the exploitation of writing teachers and called for CCCC to take action on behalf of underpaid, overworked composition faculty. In 1987, the CCCC Executive Committee adopted the policy and set up a task force for studying the labor conditions of composition teachers. Indeed, multiple authors have taken up the Wyoming Resolution as a site of study, tracing how the document shaped—or did not shape—CCCC as an institution.[52] The Wyoming Resolution is not the only CCCC policy to get scholarly attention: Scott Wible, Geneva Smitherman, Valerie Felita Kinloch, Jerrie Kobb Scott, Dolores Y. Straker, Laurie Katz, and many other Writing Studies scholars have examined the impact of the 1974 Students' Right to Their Own Language on education policy and pedagogical practices. Of the statement, Wible writes,

> The CCCC's 1974 publication of the Students' Right resolution marked the organization's entry into broader public conversations about educational politics and language policy, and rhetoric and

[52] Although Porter et al. point to the Wyoming Resolution as an example of institutional critique creating institutional change, writing that documents such as the resolution "discursively construct guidelines that then become part of a national institution," other scholars would resist the casting of the Wyoming Resolution as an example of institutional change. James Sledd (1991), for example, details the ways that the Wyoming Resolution was diluted and eventually put aside by the task force tasked with studying and implementing its recommendations. James C. McDonald and Eileen E. Schell (2011) agree with Sledd's criticisms of the CCCC's handling of the resolution but also acknowledge that it ultimiately changed the culture of CCCC: "Even though the CCCC reform efforts angered and disappointed many invested in the Wyoming Resolution, the resolution has served as a symbolic and material location from which to argue for improved working conditions for contingent faculty, WPAs, and others in the profession" (373).

> composition scholars have engaged in similar debates that emerged since that time. (10)

Therefore, scholars have, for decades, recognized the potential of CCCC statements and policies to shift culture both within and outside of the organization.

The CCCC Accessibility Guide, as this chapter demonstrates, exists as a institutional document, one written by people within the organization to not only make the conference more accessible but to also shift the culture of CCCC to greater disability awareness. The CCCC Accessibility Guide, alongside the Wyoming Resolution and Students' Rights to Their Own Language, illustrate Porter et al.'s claim: that we can indeed change institutions from within. The guide also echoes a larger conversation within professional and technical writing about the role of activism and social justice in the research and teaching of technical writing. In their article "Disrupting the Past to Disrupt the Future: An Antenarrative of Technical Communication," Natasha Jones, Kristen R. Moore, and Rebecca Walton issue a call for technical communication scholars to seek out and study community-based technical communication, arguing that

> community-based technical communication . . . provides a foundation for expanding TPC [technical and professional communication] audiences. Not merely users but active cocreators, citizens of all kinds require technical communication that demands more expansive, inclusive approaches to communication practices and to the theories that undergird knowledge making. (7)

Thus, they rally the field to broaden how technical communication is traditionally defined—occurring only in corporations—and to examine how everyday people in community groups and activists create technical communication.

Jones, Moore, and Walton articulate an emerging trend within professional and technical writing to study the way communities, activists, and volunteers leverage technical writing outside of corporations (Colton and Holmes; Miller; Eble and Gaillet). Miles A. Kimball writes, "As technology becomes further integrated into our daily lives, however, we should expect to see not only more complex user interactions involving institutional technical communication, but also more technical communication happening outside, between, and through corporations and other institutions" (67). The Accessibility Guide exists in this very liminal space: occurring officially within an institution, but being produced by volunteers without the guidance of CCCC's leadership and with the intention to push CCCC's leadership to address accessibility more robustly and overtly. As the interviews illustrate, the guide engages in institutional critique in this liminal space: by utilizing the language and genre of the institution, the guides' authors aim to push CCCC's institutional cultural toward greater disability awareness and justice.

Disability and Access within CCCC

To understand the importance of the guide, I need to situate it within the history of disability at CCCC. Today, CCCCs is known to be a welcoming and inclusive environment for people with disabilities, featuring a thriving Disability Studies Standing Group, dozens of disability-themed presentations each year, and six

travel grants for faculty and graduate students presenting on disability. But CCCC was not always this progressive in regards to disability. In the book chapter "Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition [CDICC]," featuring a conversation of the founders and sustainers of the CDICC, Patricia Dunn remembers of 1990's,

> I remember when I was working on my dissertation, back in 1990. Any CCCC proposals I sent regarding LD [learning disabilities] were rejected; any CCCC proposals I sent regarding anything else were accepted. For several years, I simply gave up trying to present at CCCC on learning disabilities because I needed to get myself on the programs. (Dolmage et al. 65)

In the interview, Jay Dolmage recounts a similar trend, recalling, "I really really remember a time when we were not including the word disability in proposals to Cs because none of those were getting accepted." Members of the CDICC, then, felt that disability was not only absent on the program but also its presence seemingly discouraged by the proposal reviewers. Disability rhetoric scholars had to sneak their research onto the program.

CCCC was not only seemingly reluctant to include talks on disability, but they also were reluctant to think about accessibility in broad or radical ways. Sushil Oswal, a blind scholar and member of CCCC, reminisces,

> There was an ongoing argument with me and Urbana for making arrangements for my disability. I argued that they need to make accommodations for everyone. And they always just wanted to know

> how to give you what you needed. "We will accommodate you (singly)." But they would never admit they needed to be an organization that needs to be accessible to everyone. (Dolmage et al. "Committee" 68)

Thus, CCCC deployed what Dolmage calls a retrofit, a "component or accessory added to something that has already been manufactured or built" ("Mapping Composition" 20). In other words, rather than changing the organization itself to welcome people with different disabilities, CCCC only provided needed accommodations for the individual on a needs-basis. This approach is insufficient, argues Dolmage and other disability studies scholars, as it places the onus of accessibility on the individual and rarely meets the various and nuanced needs of disabled participants. Unfortunately, this approach is not unique to CCCC. As asserted above, academia generally is inaccessible and at times even hostile toward disabled faculty and staff.

CCCC and other academic conferences continued to subtly or overtly erect barriers for people with disabilities. However, the late 1990's and early 2000's marked a shift in academic culture because more and more disabled scholars were joining the ranks of faculty. Education scholar Stephen B. Thomas suggests that the number of disabled students enrolled in college surged after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, thus leading to more disabled students continuing to graduate school and becoming faculty. This timeline coincides with the emergence of Disability Studies (DS) as a field. DS gained attention in the humanities in the late 1990's, especially after Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's groundbreaking

book, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, was published in 1997. Two years later, Brenda Brueggemann published *Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness*, signaling the introduction of disability studies to the field of rhetoric and composition. The 1999 CCCC would be a critical year for disability studies within composition studies: Brueggemann presented on a panel on disability within the field with Patricia Dunn, Linda Feldmeier White, Barbara A. Heifferson, and Johnson Cheu; famous disability studies scholar and activist Simi Linton delivered a keynote address; and the Disability Studies Standing Interest Group—then called the "Teaching about/with Disability SIG" met and hosted a "passionate discussion" about disability in the profession (Dolmage et al. "Committee" 58-60). Brueggemann et. al's panel evolved into the 2001 *College Composition and Communication* article titled "Becoming Visible: Lessons in Disability." Thanks to the advocacy for disability rhetoric scholars, disability finally had a marked presence within CCCC.

Perhaps the biggest advancement for disability scholars within CCCC was the creation of the Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition (CDICC) in 2003. The CDICC was tasked with promoting access at the conference and within the field of Writing Studies. To that end, the committee published the CCCC Policy on Disability Issues in 2006, which acknowledged disability as a political identity, a theoretical framework, and an asset to the organization. In my interview with Dolmage, he explains that the policy statement signaled a turn for the CDICC and CCCC: "we felt like the policy statement really validated us as a committee, and it helped us to start forming relationships with the executive committee and with the

chairs from year to year." CCCC members invested in disability finally had a direct connection to the Executive Committee, and thus access to more resources. Armed with the policy statement, the CDICC (led by Cynthia Leweicki-Wilson until 2011, Dolmage from 2011-2015, and Stephanie Kerschbaum beginning in 2016) began to ask for more from the CCCC Executive Committee, pushing for a designated quiet room at every conference and an access table with information about accessibility in the conference venue. The committee also crafted a handout titled "How to Make Your Presentation More Accessible," which evolved into the website *Composing Access: An Invitation to Creating Accessible Events*.

Despite the advocacy of the CDICC in the early aughts, CCCC still grappled with inaccessible conferences. Dolmage recounts the 2010 CCCC in Louisville, KY, explaining,

> There was fallout [during and afterward] because it was a really really inaccessible space. Things were really really far apart in that conference, and people couldn't get from one place to the other. Anyone. I mean it was just there was no real map for where how to get around, and people were late to the panels. People were missing panels, and it was really bad. (Skype Interview)

The venues selected to host CCCC continued to be inaccessible, with little work being done by the organizers to rectify access issues. What was needed, according to members of the CDICC, was a new document, a genre that would advocate for accessibility by pointing out, both for disabled members and the organizers, access issues in a conference venue.

Such a guide was on Price's mind and the topic of an email from her to Dolmage just before 2010 CCCC:

> I wonder if another item for the CDICC agenda might be to appoint a liaison to the local arrangements committee with the task of facilitating a local accessibility sheet each year. The APHA [American Public Health Association] has an awesome accessibility guide for each of their annual conferences.... Maybe we could tell the executive committee or whoever makes this decision that this ought to be part of the charge of the local arrangements committee and that we are available to help. (Price Phone Interview)

Price's suggestion came from an extensive knowledge of accessibility guides in academic organizations, for she had studied disability and access-focused policy documents from eight different professional organizations for her 2009 article, "Access Imagined." The article analyzes how disability policies "explains, mandates, and in some cases enacts" accessibility, and Price had a vision to expand CCCC's policy documents to more overtly enact accessibility in the conference space.

The Evolving Genre of the Accessibility Guide

Price's suggestion became a reality for the 2011 CCCC in Atlanta, where she wrote the inaugural Accessibility Guide that would set the standard for guides to come (a review of the guide's authors and lengths can be found in Table 4.1 below). The first CCCC accessibility guide was a simple three-page document with information about navigating the airport, requesting an accessible taxi, reserving an

accessible hotel room, and enjoying local attractions and restaurants. The guide is black-and-white, with no design elements beyond bolded, italicized, and underlined headings and subheadings. The guide does not feature any images to match Price's verbal descriptions, so Price also circulated an online Flickr album with forty-five photos and detailed image descriptions of the conference venue. The photos include hotel entrances (useful for people with mobility disabilities), carpet patterns (useful for people with sensory issues), the bathroom stalls (useful for wheelchair-users), and other features of the building. The Accessibility Guide was a hit at CCCC 2011; Price had heard that Chris Anson, that year's program chair, exclaimed, "We need to institute this [the accessibility guide] from year to year!" (Skype Interview). And thus, a tradition was born.

The CDICC has published a guide annually since Price's success at the Atlanta CCCC. The process for choosing an author is simple: the chair of the committee asks if any member of the CDICC or of the Disability Studies Standing Group lives close to the venue and wants to volunteer to write the guide. In 2012, Muffy Walters enthusiastically volunteered to write guide for the conference in St. Louis. She expanded the guide to five pages that covered the same information as Price's guide with added detailed information about the surrounding conference hotels. She did not include images or link to a virtual photo album in the guide. Unlike Price, who lived in the conference city, Walters lived about a four and a half hour drive from St. Louis, so she wasn't able to spend much time on site beyond the initial tour.

Year	Location	Author(s)	Page Length	Images Included?
2011	Atlanta	*Margaret Price*	3	Yes. The guide included a link to an online picture gallery.
2012	St. Louis	*Muffy Walters*	5	No.
2013	Las Vegas	*Jay Dolmage* (uncredited)	9	No.
2014	Indianapolis	*Tracy Donhardt, Jay Dolmage*	14	Yes, three maps of the conference venue.
2015	Tampa	Co-Chairs: *Ella (Ellie) Browning and Lauren Cagle*. Committee Members: Erin Trauth, Dan Richards, Stephanie Philips, Zachary (Zac) Dixon	39	Yes, several with alt-text descriptions of the images.
2016	Houston	Co-Chairs: *Casie Cobos*, Geneva Canino. Committee Member: Stephanie Wheeler	41	Yes, several with alt-text descriptions of the images.

Table 4.1: An Overview of the Accessibility Guide over the First Six Years. I italicized the names of people I interviewed for this chapter.

No one volunteered to write the 2013 guide for Las Vegas. (Both Cagle and Dolmage suggest in their interviews this was a byproduct of the conference being held far away from universities with strong Rhetoric and Composition programs.) As chair of the CDICC, Dolmage decided to write the guide himself. Writing the guide was a challenge because he lives in Canada, but he thought the alternative—offering

no accessibility guide at all—was unacceptable. He visited the conference hotel on a separate work trip, took notes, and composed the guide, acting as the uncredited author (the guide lists Michael Intinarelli as the author, but Dolmage does not remember why Intinarelli is credited as the Local Accessibility Coordinator; Intineralli did not respond to my requests for an interview). The guide is slightly longer this year at nine pages. Thanks to existing accessibility guides for the city of Las Vegas, Dolmage was able to expand upon the accessibility issues of the conference hotel rooms, the airport, and the city of Las Vegas itself.

The 2014 CCCC Accessibility Guide for Indianapolis also struggled with a lack of available local disability studies scholars. A local faculty member volunteered to do the work but stopped replying to emails, leaving Local Arrangements Chair Tracy Donhardt and Dolmage to collaborate to create the guide: Donhardt surveyed the conference location and sent her notes to Dolmage. Having never visited the conference site himself, Dolmage had to craft the guide using only Donhardt's notes. The 2014 guide includes ten pages of textual descriptions of the city, airport, and conference venue, as well as four pages of maps of the conference venue (without verbal descriptions of the maps).

2015 represented a significant shift in the Accessibility Guide. Local Accessibility Committee Co-Chairs Lauren Cagle and Ellie Browning pushed CCCC to designate their committee as an official committee within Local Arrangements. Doing so allowed Cagle and Browning to recruit four volunteers who would receive compensation in the form of free registration. As the following sections will document, the expanded workforce facilitated an expansion and revamp of the guide:

the 2015 Accessibility Guide for Tampa is thirty-nine pages long, and includes dozens of pictures with image descriptions and often overlooked accessibility information, such as the conference venue's emergency procedures, the wheelchair accessibility of the hotel pool, and contact into for scooter rentals. CCCC did not offer the 2016 Local Accessibility Co-Chairs for Houston, Casie Cobos and Geneva Canino (Canino did not respond to my requests for an interview) the same level of support, but they still produced a thorough forty-one page guide. Although I do not discuss the 2017 and 2018 guides in this chapter, I can report that those guides feature a similar length and level of detail as the guides immediately preceding them.

The Activism of Composing the Guide

Many CCCC attendees learn about the Accessibility Guide each year from the WPA-L (Writing Program Administrators Listserv), on Facebook, or on Twitter. The document itself stands as an argument about the importance of accessibility within CCCC, but what is not apparent is the hours upon hours of labor that go into its creation. Like all activism, as thoroughly discussed in my second chapter, the public displays are dependent on unseen behind-the-scenes work. In my interviews with the authors of the 2011-2016 guides, all of them commented on the amount of time, care, collaboration, education, research, and writing that went into producing the guide. In this section, I bring that invisible labor into the light, illustrating how the different guide authors described the work of putting together the guide. I divide this section into five reoccurring themes, themes that illustrate the activist process of creating the

guide: (1) devoting access labor, (2) enacting personal passion, (3) educating the self and others, (4) designing as activism, and (5) revising across space and time.

Devoting Access Labor

Activism is often the product of committed and enthusiastic volunteers, people who are not paid for the work they devote to a cause. Similarly, advocating for accessibility requires time and energy, and so often it's done by disabled people and their loved ones. Within disability studies and disability activism, this work is called access labor, a term meant to draw attention to the work of making inaccessible spaces accessible. The Accessibility Guide involves countless hours of unpaid access labor each year. Before the guide hit the inboxes of CCCC attendees, the authors tour venues—often multiple times—, contact the conference venue and local restaurants and hotels, write the guide, and revise the guide. Dolmage remarked on the amount of work, explaining, "I mean it's a lot harder than publishing an academic article. It's more work" (Skype Interview).

A significant aspect of drafting the guide is brainstorming which information was needed to adequately prepare disabled people for the venue. For Price, this meant asking the representatives from the conference venue extensive questions about how they maintained the space. She explains, "it was kind of fun to have like a behind-the-scenes look at the hotel. We had long conversations with the person who'd been assigned to us about things like 'when are the carpets shampooed?' [and] 'please please do not shampoo the carpets for us'" (Skype Interview). Price's description of the conversation illustrates two of the consistent challenges of creating the

accessibility guide: (1) imagining various access issues for different CCCC attendees and (2) communicating with a hotel staff that may not be trained on or concerned with accessibility, an external educational function I explore later. Price was worried about the scent of the carpet shampoo causing problems for people with chemical sensitivities (intense smells can cause migraines or allergic reactions), a concern that is often overlooked in official Americans with Disabilities (ADA) audits.[53]

Before visiting the Marriott in Tampa, Cagle and Browning researched other accessibility guides—doing what Cagle called a "rhetorical genre analysis"—to create a checklist for auditing the venue. Looking to accessibility guides from other professional organizations, Cagle and Browning drew up a checklist that included details about the hotel's temperature, Braille signage, acoustics, and parking—information that could be useful for people planning on how they would navigate the space. The checklist enabled them to capture accessibility details that had been overlooked in previous iterations of the guide, such as the availability of wheelchair lifts in the hotel pool. Cagle and Browning also took copious photographs of the space that would then be inserted into and described in the Accessibility Guide. Browning cited the photographs as the most time-consuming yet helpful part of the research process:

> We were constantly taking pictures, and Cagle and I went down there a couple of times to make sure that we had a very thorough understanding of both the convention space and they also main conference hotel. I think if we really had the time, we would have

[53] As Dolmage notes in our interview, ADA Audits often focus on legal minimums and requirements—so, measurements of a hallway or wheelchair ramp—rather than broader or more radical approaches to access.

> done I think even more. But, you know, it gets to a point where you just . . . run out of time.

The inclusion of the photographs into the guide itself marked a departure of the Accessibility Guide. Cagle and Browning were able to expand the accessibility guide and include dozens of photographs and image descriptions because they had volunteers, a first for the Accessibility Guide. They had advocated early on in the process to be included in the Local Arrangements as *Chairs* of the Local Accessibility Committee—typically, the author of the guide wasn't granted a Chair title, though other local committees, such as Hospitality, are—and thus were able to provide free conference registration for four volunteers (in total, the 2015 committee had five volunteers, but due to CCCC restrictions on committee membership, only four were considered official committee members).

As Cagle explains, the inclusion of volunteers shifted the expectations of the guide, and thus, the genre evolved: "because we had the volunteers we were expected to produce a really detailed product. And so it sort of that it sort of went both ways in terms of enabling but also creating certain expectations around the guide." For the first time since the guide's inception, the authors were able to spread the labor to multiple people—a whooping seven, including volunteers and the co-chairs—leading to a more extensive, detailed guide than had ever been distributed at CCCCs. Price's inaugural guide contained a link to an online photo album, but no one had included photographs in the following three years. The inclusion of photographs directly in the guide marked a new trend for the CCCC Accessibility Guide, one that has been maintained in the 2016 and 2017 guide. By featuring visual evidence of the

accessibility or lack of accessibility in the venue—alongside text descriptions of the images— the 2015 Guide offered robust options for people to interact with the information. However, as Browning notes, this innovation required extensive time and effort from their team of seven people.

Unfortunately, Cobos and Canino did not experience the same levels of support from the 2016 Local Arrangements Committee as Cagle and Browning did, and volunteers were not compensated. Cagle and Browning had shown Cobos their documentation of receiving full committee status in 2015 and all the benefits that promised. Cobos explained, "So I guess that's why I was expecting something different. But it didn't happen." Even though they did not receive the benefits of official committee status, Cobos and Canino felt obligated to produce a robust guide, similar to the one created by Browning and Cagle the prior year. Since Cobos lived in downtown Houston, she was able to tour and take the photographs of the venue multiple times. Canino and Wheeler then collaborated to write the guide based on Cobos' notes.

Discussions of the overwhelming amount of labor reflect one of the biggest issues of the Accessibility Guide: the amount of uncompensated labor that goes into the critical document. Some of the authors receive one night in the conference hotel for free (Cagle and Browning were the only people I talked to who were offered a room for the whole conference), but otherwise, there is no monetary compensation for this work. Dolmage calls this a structural issue, noting that he never felt comfortable dictating specific expectations of the guide since the authors were always graduate students or nontenured faculty (Skype Interview). Dolmage's point illustrates the

relationship between resources and the genre of the guide: the format and length of the guide was often dictated by available resources. Price concurs that the lack of institutional support is a burden for the authors, especially because the people volunteering to do access labor are disabled themselves. Both Dolmage and Price have insider knowledge of the workings of CCCC—Dolmage as the former chair of the CDICC and Price as a former member of the CCCC Executive Committee. For them, they envision access as something that should be integrated into the infrastructure of the organization, not something produced by the unpaid labor of precarious scholars and then tacked onto the website. Dolmage ties this tension to one universal to activism generally, expressing that, "My experience with so many forms of activism is constantly trying to negotiate the labor and the labor involved" (Skype Interview).

If the Accessibility Guide takes up so much time, why do people volunteer to write it? Just like activism that occurs outside of academia, the guides' authors were drawn to the work because of a personal and scholarly commitment to accessibility and disability. Almost all of the people I spoke with are deeply invested in disability studies as a field—some identify as disabled, others as allies. They came to this project with a sense that this work matters and speaks to them as scholars, teachers, activists, and humans.

For Price, the amount of work was balanced by her enthusiasm for the project. She felt as though she could merge her scholarship and her activism:

> It felt kind of like doing a qualitative study—like that same kind of excitement and investigative quality. It also felt like the same kind of

> mix of "This so interesting and I'm learning so much. And oh my god it's so much work, but also hey! I'm really making a difference here. I'm really doing something that has a concrete good that I can look at and point to." (Phone Interview)

Others expressed a similar excitement for the opportunity to make something tangible and useful. Cagle said, "We both had intellectual commitments already to disability theory and were very excited about the option to put it into practice. So there was just kind of some personal enthusiasm." Cagle's Co-Chair Browning agreed, explaining, "We shared a mutual interest in disability studies from a scholarly perspective but also from a personal perspective. Both of us have either friends or family with disabilities. It was something we really felt strongly about." Therefore, though all the authors agreed that the Accessibility Guide was a lot of work, they felt compelled to put in the hours because of the project itself. This enthusiasm motivated guide authors to innovate and expand the guide; in fact, Walters, Canino, Browning, Dolmage, and Cagle all had ideas for further developing the guide in multimodal and creative ways.

Educating the Self and Others

The guide itself serves as an educational text, informing both nondisabled and disabled conference-goers about the accessibility features of the conference space. However, in addition to the guide, the process itself has proven to be educational—both for the guides' authors and the people they interact with while researching and composing the guide.

As the Local Chair for the 2014 CCCC in Indianapolis, Donhardt had to step in and help compose the guide when the original guide author stopped replying to her and Dolmage's emails. Donhardt was the only person I spoke with who did not have a background in disability studies, so for her, the whole experience was educational. Donhardt recalls one specific experience, when Dolmage had asked her if there was an outdoor space for guide dogs to relieve themselves: "I never thought I would be coming go tour a corner of downtown areas and to see where dogs could to be taken to do this business." Donhardt's experience illustrates how the act of composing the guide forces its authors to consider aspects of accessibility they had never considered before. Donhardt is now aware of how accessibility components, such as the availability of outdoor spaces for guide dogs, impact disabled conference attendees in unexpected ways.

Cagle and Browning had similar experiences in that they learned about accessibility from their volunteers, and their volunteers learned about accessibility from them. One volunteer was knowledgeable about food sensitivities and allergies and took the lead on that topic, thus educating the rest of the committee. Conversely, Cagle and Browning had to teach the volunteers how to correctly write alt-text (a written description of an image, so people accessing the guide via screenreader could have the pictures described to them). Cagle recounts,

> None of the volunteers had any background in disability studies disability activism or just basic like accessibility work—which is, on the one hand, supercool that they were interested in helping out, and I like to think those people now when they go into conference spaces

> have a different awareness. But the flipside of that was we had to train people how to write alt text, which was not something we even expected to.

By the end of the process, both the volunteers and the co-chairs gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of accessibility. And as Cagle hopes, the volunteers potentially carry this newfound knowledge about disability and accessibility to different spheres, thus contributing to the outreach of disability awareness outside of disability-specific efforts.

In addition to learning about accessibility on the job, the guides' authors unintentionally educated people around them. Both Price and Walters describe calling different local businesses to inquire about their access, and through these conversations, business owners and workers began aware of potential issues. Walters, for example, would ask restaurants in St. Louis if they were wheelchair accessible:

> And they [would] say "yes." I said, "do you have stairs going into the front door?" [They replied] "Oh! We do." I was, like, "okay then it's not [accessible]" [...] So there was this other issue of talking to people and asking questions. They became aware that they had problems with their establishments.

Similarly, Price prodded taxi companies taxi companies that advertised as offering access vehicles, asking what exactly they meant by accessible—was there space for a wheelchair in the trunk? A lift? These conversations prompted the businesses they spoke with to re-consider how they were defining accessibility.

These stories illustrate that the process of writing the guide was informative and educational; in other words, the genre itself enacts disability awareness beyond the intended audience. Authors, volunteers, and businesses learned about accessibility throughout this process, enabling them to act as advocates for access in future conversations and endeavors. Thus, I'd suggest, there's an activist component to researching and composing the guide, as it prompts discussions about disability and access and moves individuals to better account for issues of inaccessibility and injustice.

Designing as Activism

For many of the guide's authors, it wasn't enough for the guide to provide information about accessibility—it needed to be accessible itself.[54] That way, the people who needed the information the most could easily read and digest it. The guide has historically been circulated as a PDF, but that alone does not make the guide an accessible document to read through. People using screenreaders can hear the text of the document, but the images still need to be described via text. Browning was proud of her work on the 2015 Guide for "making the space accessible through the guide but making the guide itself accessible as well." She notes that pictures and captions were a central component of enacting access, explaining,

> And one of the things I'm really proud of us for including among all the pictures [...] is pictures of the carpets. You know there's a busy carpet in this particular room but it is a different thing to actually show

[54] This echoes the scholarship of professional writing scholars such as Jones, Stephanie Wheeler, Jason Palmeri, Jeff Carter, and Mike Markel, and more—scholars who advocate for accessible document design and the inclusion of disabled people in the imagined audience.

> a picture of that carpet because it communicates a lot more rhetorically in that sense for someone who's thinking about those things.

Browning, Cagle, and the volunteers then had to describe the images, so that people using a screenreader could access the information conveyed in picture.

But more than image descriptions, the guide had to be easily navigable for people with screenreaders. In 2015 and 2016, the document was over forty-pages long. What if a person accessing the guide via screenreader wanted to get to the information on page 34—would they have to listen to all thirty-three pages prior? Not necessarily. An author of a PDF can mark subject headings, so the assistive technology can recognize the different sections and allow the reader to skip sections until they get to the section they want. For Cagle, this was all new: "I was frantically e-mailing Jay. . . [I had] never done any sort of accessibility check on a PDF before. I learned so much about accessibility doing this project." Cobos echoed Cagle, explaining that one of her goals was to "learn enough to make this [the 2016 Accessibility Guide] accessible." Since no data exists about the disabilities of attendees—other than individual requests for accommodations—the guides' authors had to imagine a diversely disabled audience in order to design a document that could be accessed by as wide range of people. By creating a document that could be accessed by people using screenreaders, the guides' authors explicitly acknowledged their disabled audiences, illustrating the activist potential of document design in professional writing contexts.

Revising Across Space and Time

The guide evolved in dynamic ways each year, a product of collaborative revision across space and time. Dolmage, as chair of the CDICC until 2015, offered feedback each year throughout the writing process. In fact, every author mentioned Dolmage by name as a key figure in enacting the guide. Price describes,

> Jay was so thoroughly a cheerleader and a support during this process. [...] I ran the guide by him multiple times before it was published, and he gave substantial suggestions, and I did rewrites. He was really really present as part of the process and helping me manage any challenge that might come up. (Phone Interview)

Donhardt also expressed gratitude for Dolmage's presence throughout the process. Indeed, for the 2014 Guide, Donhardt and Dolmage worked closely together, with Donhardt supplying the information about the venue itself—through notes and photographs—and Dolmage composing the guide while in Canada. He did not see the conference venue until he arrived to the conference. Thus, revision was not restrained by national borders—rather, the authors created a network of support and feedback facilitated by digital tools, making it so that regional proximity was not a requirement for partnership.

Additionally, authors built upon the guides that came before theirs, practicing revision not constrained by time. Cobos cited the 2015 Guide as a source of inspiration for her guide: "I really admired the way the guide that Cagle put together, and some of ours was really reliant on theirs. And I don't know that we could have done what we did if they hadn't done theirs first." In addition to the guide as a model, Cagle had video conferenced with Cobos and Canivo to outline the process of putting

together the guide. Similarly, Browning cited Price's 2011 Guide as their starting point and discussed the importance of building upon what came before:

> I think it's important to kind of draw on what came before you and see what folks are doing well and what folks maybe could've done a little bit better. [...] I haven't really looked too much at the guides that came after us. But my hope is that they kind of like continue doing well what we did well but then also maybe build on the things that we could have done better.

The authors saw themselves as working with the people who composed the guides before them *and* the people who would compose future guides. In that sense, revision occurred across time, with previous, current, and future versions of the guide interacting, overlapping, and evolving throughout the process. Given disability activism's embrace of interdependence, it is no surprise that disability studies scholars in writing studies similarly deploy an interdependent stance in their crafting of professional/activist texts (Sins Invalid; Kafer). They envision the guide not as the product of a single or even two authors' work, but rather, a collaborative effort of scholar-teachers committed to the inclusion of disability and access that spans across borders and years.

The Activism of the Guide

I have detailed how the process of putting together the guide is rooted in disability activist principles. The guide itself also embodies disability activism, especially as it works to shift institutional culture toward greater accessibility and

acceptance of embodied difference. Of course, the guide does not work alone in this: alongside the guide, the CDICC's website *Composing Access* offers tangible tips for organizing accessible conferences and conference papers. Furthermore, the CDICC and Disability Studies Standing Group staff an Access Table at each CCCC, providing resources on presenting accessible conference papers, interaction badges (color-coded paper that communicates the level of interaction the wearer is ready for), a list of all disability-related talks, and a print version of the Accessibility Guide. So the Accessibility Guide is part of a larger ecology of disability activism within CCCC. That said, the Accessibility Guide heavily circulated CDICC document on Twitter, Facebook, and the WPA-L before the conference itself and is linked to at the conference website and the local arrangements page. While it works in conjunction with other accessibility-related handouts, the guide also stands apart as a document endorsed not just by the CDICC but also the CCCC Executive Committee.

In this section, I outline the ways the guides' authors saw the guide itself as an activist text or did not. In coding the interviews, I traced three dominant themes: (1) supporting disabled attendees, (2) shifting CCCC culture toward disability awareness, and (3) reaching toward awareness but not justice.

Supporting Disabled Attendees

The impetus for the guide was making CCCC a more accessible experience for disabled attendees. As documented above, academic conferences have historically been exclusive and even hostile to disabled scholars. Such overwhelming and constant inaccessibility sends a message to disabled scholars: you are not welcome

here. The Accessibility Guide combats that messaging by asserting that disabled scholars are valued members of the community and they do indeed belong in CCCC's ranks.

Many of the guides' authors describe how the guide worked to support disabled CCCC members in their preparation for the conference. Walters, for example, recalls people talking to her at the Access Table, saying, "'oh you know, having the guide online—this is helpful to be able to see this information before I got here.'" Indeed, this was a frequent comment, that disabled attendees found the information in the guide invaluable for planning purposes. In doing so, the guides' authors found it helpful to imagine a diverse audience with diverse needs. Unlike other conference guides that focus primarily on mobility, visual, and auditory disabilities, the authors attempted to write to audiences with varying disabilities. Browning explains, "So I think what we were trying to do is [...] to really give as much information as we could about the conference sites and where folks were going to be going potentially and speak to as many different people who might be reading that guide for as many different reasons as they might be." The guide was intended to speak to people with various disabilities and give them as much information as possible to plan and navigate the conference. Because the guides' authors imagined an expansive definition of disability, they crafted a document that spoke to people who may have been excluded from not only conferences but also other disability-focused initiatives.

Allowing disabled CCCC members to plan their conference experience was seen by Cagle and Cobos as an activist act. Cagle speaks at length to this function of the guide and its connection to activism:

> We both hoped was that we could produce something that would free up time and space for people to engage in the other kinds of self advocacy they might need to do. [...] [The guide] sort of changes the discourse around this event more broadly but in a very specific individual level. We want to take action to enable other people to save themselves time and energy. Because so often that's what we demand of disabled people just to exist in the world. [...] We demand their time and energy, and that's oppressive. There's no way around it.

Cagle's remarks illustrate how paradigm-shifting a comprehensive Accessibility Guide can be. In addition to serving as an argument about the inclusion of disability at the conference, the guide allows disabled people to focus their energies and attention toward other needed forms of advocacy and self-care. Thus, the guide is a tool for resisting ableism, a way of volunteers—both disabled and nondisabled—to share the load of ensuring access.

Shifting CCCC Culture

The guides' authors reported receiving feedback that the guide was important for individual disabled conference goers, but they also observed the ways the guide transformed the culture of CCCC to be a more inclusive, disability-friendly conference space. One way the guide integrated disability awareness into CCCC was

by addressing more than just the disabled attendees. While disabled CCCC members were the priority, they were not the only intended audience. Dolmage explains,

> I think there's another group of people who didn't necessarily think they'd use [the guide] but now really do use it because it just becomes a good way to navigate—thinking through where they're going, what the space is like for a wide variety of reasons. (Skype Interview)

Indeed, many of the guides' authors echoed Dolmage's point, expressing that they wanted their guide to be useful for people who did not necessarily identify as disabled. One of Browning's goals in creating the guide was to "speak to as many different people who might be reading that guide for as many different reasons as they might be." Cobos mentions that nondisabled nursing parents, for example, may read the guide to learn where the lactation room is located. Walters calls this the "mantra of accessibility," invoking a core principle of disability studies and Universal Design: "if things are as inclusive as they can be in regards to disability, they're as inclusive as it can be for everybody."

Though the guides' authors focused on the needs of disabled people, they also intended for the guide to make CCCCs are more inclusive and accessible experience for everyone. Writing for the disabled members while also writing for CCCC as a whole enabled the guide to circulate wider and make a greater intervention. This is seen especially in the 2015 Accessibility Guide for Tampa and the following guides. For the first time, in 2015, the guide gives direction on how to find the gender neutral bathrooms—not an explicit disability issue but surely an access issue for transgender CCCC members. Similarly, this is the year the guide announced the location and

times of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. While alcohol and drug addiction is legally considered a disability, it is often overlooked in discussions of access. By imagining a large and diverse audience, the authors of the guides not only addressed a diversity of accessibility needs but also invited people who may not identify as disabled to read the guide, and thus, learn more about accessibility.

In addition to addressing and educating nondisabled people in the guide, the guide itself made an argument about disability and access within CCCC. Walters notes, "just doing this every year for the conference does make a statement to the organization that this is important and this is something that matters." The guides' authors, then, are indeed engaging in both rhetorical and activist purposes when composing and circulating the guide, as the guide itself pushes CCCC to prioritize access each and every year. Cagle mediates on the impact of the guide:

> So [with] accessibility and disability, it's really easy to make them go away if it's just you and I having a conversation on my Facebook wall. But now that there's a document, and that document is linked to the front page of the CCCC page about the conference. . . . It's real now. And so when somebody wants to talk about accessibility they don't have to do as much work to make the case that accessibility is relevance.

Cagle continues, "[the guide] literally sort of changes the dynamics of conversation. . . . I think [activism] is when you can change discourse in a way that balance of power shifts people's ability to intervene." Walters' and Cagle's thoughts on the guide's

impact illustrate the significance of the document in terms of establishing an institutional *ethos* of access and disability, an *ethos* the organization is now expected to carry out because of its public support of disability and access. Thus, even if the leadership of CCCC did not care about accessibility (Dolmage and the guides' authors note that the leadership's support of the guide and the CDICC varied each year, depending on who was the Program Chair), the guide itself and its placement on the CCCC homepage makes it easier for disability advocates within CCCC to open a dialogue with the CCCC leadership.

The guide facilitates conversations about disability and access beyond the CCCC leadership and the CDICC. Cagle observes that when the guide is released, people discuss it on social media: "My sense is that the online conversation . . . around disability, accessibility has become bigger. And also there are people who get involved in that conversation who wouldn't necessarily have before." The guide's presence sparks a conversation among conference-goers, before the conference itself, about access and disability—something that had not been a part of CCCC's culture beforehand, at least outside of the community of disability studies scholars. This is disability awareness—the recognition that disabled people exist, that they are often excluded, and that institutions should make an active effort to include disabled people.

Cobos also noted that the guide initiated larger conversations about disability and was thrilled to see how it prompted people to reflect on their teaching practices. Cobos recalls,

> I also feel like people said that, "this would be really useful to have at my school because I don't think we think about some of these things." Or they said, "this will be useful information because it's challenged me in how I think about my students." Or "how I can change the classroom setting?"

The culture shift is not necessarily limited to just the conference space of CCCC, then. Given that CCCC focuses on the teaching of writing, the guide presents an exciting opportunity to prompt CCCC members to consider how they are addressing disability on their campuses and in their classrooms.

As Cagle argues, this shift in discourse, and thus shift in culture, is one of the ways the guide serves as an activist text. While the document may appear as simply an example of disability-related professional writing, the guides' authors recollections reveal how the guide empowered and included disabled people within CCCC while pushing CCCC as a whole toward greater disability awareness. This is the root of institutional change, working within an institution to transform the structure and culture. When asked if she saw the guide as activism, Price responds definitively: "There's never been a question in my mind that working for institutional change is activism. And if the institution is academia itself or is an academic organization that's still activism—just like the classroom is a part of the real world."

Reaching Toward Awareness—But Not Justice

While the guides' authors overwhelmingly articulated that the guide has helped to change CCCC culture, some also noted the limitations of the guide in

enacting true structural transformation. Cobos speaks to her own limited powers in enacting access: "I couldn't change the space. I couldn't change the carpet or anything, but I could, you know, give people a heads up: hey this carpet, it's busy or not busy. Here's what it looks like or here's a description of what it looks like." Cobos acknowledges that she can't change the physical structure of the conference venues to make them more accessible. Her power, instead, lies in notifying conference goes about obstacles.

Dolmage agrees and goes further: for him, the guide is not an activist text because it allows CCCC to continue choosing inaccessible spaces. He explains,

> It doesn't seem like in the foreseeable future they [CCCC Executive Committee] are going to be choosing venues based on accessibility. Instead they'll choose whatever they want and we'll have to figure out how accessible it is and make that clear to the people who come but not in a way that can make much change. (Skype Interview)

While Dolmage notices the *cultural* changes within CCCC—such as increased participation in the Disability Studies Standing Group meeting—he insists that the institution itself still does not prioritize accessibility. If it were to, he argues, it would make accessibility a core concern in choosing venues.

Price brings up a separate institutional barrier in the guide's work toward disability justice: a lack of institutional memory and support. She is frustrated by the increased workload and decreased support for some of the guide authors, such as Cobos: "I was shocked to find out how much work the authors of the [2016] guide

had done with zero support." Price connects the changing level of support from year-to-year to an ongoing tension between CCCC and the CDICC:

> There is sort of this constant tension between we're the ones who do access best—we being the disabled people and members of the CDICC and members of the standing group— and yet every time we do this and do a great job, CCCC is unsurprisingly is like, "great thanks!" We don't necessarily want that to be our role. That's an organizational responsibility. So I think that's led to problems with whether people doing the work or getting enough support. (Phone Interview)

While Price does see the guide as an activist text and an activist pursuit, she, like Dolmage and Cobos, are reluctant to declare CCCC a utopia for disabled people. CCCC as an organization does value the guide; though the authors may not always be compensated or supported adequately, the guide is posted on the CCCC website, and the authors are recognized by formal resolutions each year. That said, according to Dolmage, Cobos, and Price, the organization continues to rely on volunteer labor to merely point out accessibility issues instead of embedding accessibility into organization's structure.

Though Dolmage is reluctant to call the guide as it stands now activism, he does have visions for how the guide can evolve. When asked what Dolmage envisions for the future of the guide, he imagines a more overtly political text that invites engagement:

> In some cases, [the guide] may need to become a little bit more political. I think we may need to be thinking about the fact that we

> can't keep just using the guide to cover for these inaccessible spaces. It could become more activist, too, you know. So yeah what would happen if . . . we had a guide in the future that came with, you know, stickers that you could put up when there are inaccessible spaces? (Skype Interview)

The guide, then, would serve less as a "heads up" of accessibility obstacles and would facilitate discussion and intervention about accessibility issues in conference venues. This could then move the CCCC Executive Committee to prioritize access when choosing venues.

Cobos also has a vision of a more inclusive, accessible future CCCC—one that goes beyond the guide to enact radical accessibility in multiple ways. She ponders:

> [Future CCCC and guide authors should] make sure like that this conference is not just for the people with money, or for faculty who have tenure track jobs, or for people who can walk two miles because there are not enough conference hotels—or like there was in Portland, and there was no direct conference hotel. I would hope those things start getting thought about as future sites are getting picked.

Cobos thinks about access more broadly than singularly related to disability. She also incorporates a class critique, acknowledging that conference travel can be a financial burden for people outside of the tenure track. For Cobos and Dolmage, then, the guide can open a conversation about larger issues of access and diversity within CCCC. They recognize the strides CCCC has taken since the CDICC began

organizing and the cultural shift the guide has ushered in, but they also hope to see a more activist, intentional organization that prioritizes access as a core value.

Toward an Accessible Future

Walters has a unique opportunity: in addition to writing the 2014 guide, she is currently co-writing with Abby Knoblauch the 2018 CCCC Accessibility Guide for Kansas City, Missouri. She, then, has a unique perspective of not only reflecting on her past experiences but also integrating those reflections into a future guide. She has trained the Local Arrangements Committee—not just those on the Accessibility subcommittee—to ask restaurants questions about wheelchair accessibility and dietary needs, thus spreading out the access labor to a larger group. In addition to adapting the process, she is excited about incorporating the knowledge she has gained as a disability studies scholar and from the more recent guides:

> I'm more aware [of what accessibility issues to address] because [the guides] gotten better every year, and people have done them better every year. And I'm more aware just because of my own work and disability studies that disabilities cover a large array of things. So . . . I want this to be as inclusive as possible.

Thus, Walters sees her work as building on the previous guides and an opportunity to incorporate her knowledge as a disability studies scholars. Furthermore, by having a more expansive understanding of disability, Walters envisions an even more inclusive guide that speaks to the concerns of diverse CCCC members.

Walters is not the only person writing internal documents advocating for inclusion for the 2018 CCCC in Missouri. In the summer of 2017, the Missouri NAACP issued a travel advisory for the whole state because of a state-wide law weakening employment discrimination protections (SB43), a rash of hate crimes against people of color, and continued police violence against black people. During this conversation, the CCCC Black, Latinx, American-Indian, and Asian/Asian-American Caucuses issued a statement condemning SB 43 and urging the Executive Committee to move the locations of CCCC. The statement echoed concerns verbalized by CDICC members about conference location selection:

> We advocate for increased transparency regarding the decision-making process in the selection of conference locations. How much does NCTE consider the atmosphere and the way it affects conference participants' safety, and the safety of marginalized communities? In addition, we advocate for NCTE/CCCC policy that designates a sense of accountability to these diversity statements in decisions that have real effects on people's bodies. Not every state is the same for everyone, and it should not be the responsibility of targeted groups to face opposition and be put in the position to defend these concerns to members who are not the subjects of these threats and danger. ("Joint Statement")

The statement operates as both an internal—composed and signed by CCCC members—and external—the statement was not signed by members of the Executive Committee—push for institutional change. The cross-caucus authors focused not only

on the immediate risks of the 2018 conference but future conferences: does CCCC prioritize the safety and inclusion of its marginalized members when choosing conference locations? How do CCCC and its parent organization, NCTE, actually enact the pledges they make in diversity statements? Many caucuses and groups, including the Disability Studies Standing Group, issued statements of support of the statement in the following weeks.

On September 11, 2017, the CCCC Executive Committee announced its decision to remain in Kansas City for the 2018 conference. The reaction was shift. On September 28, 2017, the Queer Caucus announced its intentions to hold a virtual caucus meeting in lieu of its regular in-person meeting ("CCCC 2018 Queer Caucus Meeting"). On October 5, 2017, the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition, a standing group within CCCC, emailed its membership its decision to cancel its annual Wednesday night meeting for the 2018 CCCC (Mastrangelo). Both groups issued a statement explaining their decision and declaring their solidarity with the Black, Latinx, American-Indian, and Asian/Asian-American Caucuses. The identity-based caucuses and standing groups pushed back on the CCCC's decision, arguing that the safety of marginalized bodies is more important than the financial implications of moving or canceling a conference. These documents serve as record of this discussion and the activism by the organization's members to re-orient CCCC toward social justice. Though the initial statement by the Black, Latinx, American-Indian, and Asian/Asian-American Caucuses did not convince the Executive Committee to move locations, it did encourage CCCC to re-think how it would approach the 2018 Conference. The Executive Committee established a task

force committed to social justice and activism (SJAC) to plan a safe and activist 2018 CCCC (Inoue).

The CDICC is not alone in its pursuit of social justice, inclusion, and activism within Writing Studies' premier professional organization. Indeed, multiple groups within the organization utilize professional writing genres to articulate a vision for a more accessible, more diverse, and more welcoming CCCC. These documents circulate within and outside of the organization, demonstrating our field's long-standing commitment to activism and social justice. The conversation surrounding the 2018 CCCC location demonstrates, again, the activist potential of professional writing genres. By developing an institutional critique of CCCC, the various caucuses within CCCC alter the paradigms and expectations of academia generally. Especially in a time of austerity, where both universities and professional organizations are pressured to prioritize cutting costs and raising money, institutional critique provides a crucial avenue for community members to argue for diversity, accessibility, and inclusion.

Conclusion: A Future for Disability Activism

> *Disability justice is a vision and practice of . . . . this yet-to-be, a map that we create with our ancestors and our great grandchildren onward, in the width and depth of our multiplicities and histories, a movement toward a world in which every body and mind is seen as valuable and beautiful.*
>
> *--Sins Invalid (60-61)*

> *I,* we*, need to imagine crip futures because disabled people are continually being written out of the future, rendered as the sign of the future no one wants. . . .We must begin to anticipate presents and to imagine futures that include all of us.*
>
> *--Alison Kafer (46)*

Disability activism is about looking back while moving forward. Sins Invalid and Alison Kafer propose a disability activist approach to time, one that imagines a future where disability is embraced as an essential thread in society's tapestry. In this dissertation, I analyzed past manifestations of disability activism—some in the very recent past. The examined case studies demonstrate the dynamism, adaptability, and persuasive power of disability activism, providing a roadmap for future instances of disability activism to build upon. As I studied the rhetorical strategies of disability activism, I witnessed disability activism in action—a witnessing that deepened my analysis and my commitment to this research topic. This collapse of time—studying the past while observing/participating in the present—reinforced for me the arguments I made throughout this dissertation. For this conclusion chapter, I look back on the major themes of this dissertation and reflect upon how we can use the lessons of past disability activism to better understanding present and future iterations of disability activism.

Looking Back to My Main Claims

Disability rhetoric as a field has argued that, despite their exclusion from rhetorical history and theory, disabled people can and do communicate, argue, and persuade (Dolmage; Price; Kerschbaum; Brewer; Lewiecki-Wilson; Brueggemann). I build upon this scholarship by asserting that disabled people can not only be rhetors but also activists. By focusing on disability activism, this project argues that disabled people are not just rhetorically capable but also politically powerful.

In their pursuit of political change, disability activists persuasively leverage embodied difference. Whether at protests or on social media, disability activists display their bodies as rhetorical texts. In the 504 sit-in, disability activists occupied a government building while hundreds of fellow disabled people and nondisabled allies demonstrated their support in a rally directly outside—the United Nations Plaza in San Francisco, yet another civic space. The protestors invited reporters to witness their activism, resulting in photographs and videos of the protest circulating across the nation. The protestors strategically displayed their disabled bodies as civically powerful, occupying a government building for an astounding twenty-four days, and thus challenged dominant notions of citizenship.

By leveraging the disabled body as a tool for creating political change, disability activists reject narratives of shame and stigma that dismiss the disabled body as weak, passive, and incapable. Furthermore, as I argue in Chapter 1, disability activists such as the 504 sit-in protestors demonstrate the rhetorical power of embodied difference. While rhetorical theory has traditionally assumed a nondisabled body and prescribed normative forms of gesture, disability activists illustrate how embodied difference can actually be incredibly persuasive. When making their

demands, disability activists roll in wheelchairs, communicate in American Sign Language, and stim in enthusiasm, among many other disabled forms of expression. While traditionally, our ableist society has attempted to hide or erase embodied difference through institutionalization, segregated education, and social isolation, disability activists reclaim embodied difference as a valued and beloved rhetorical asset in the pursuit of justice.

But the disabled body's source of rhetorical power isn't limited to just its public display and its impact on nondisabled audiences. When disability activists invent arguments, they draw from the wisdom generated from living in their bodies and learning to survive in an ableist world; in particular, disability activism embraces embodied caregiving as an essential component of their rhetorical ecology—the system of social, political, and textual factors that enable and shape the production of a public text (Rivers and Weber). While nondisabled society may assume a body that needs care is weak and incapable of producing activist texts, within disability activism, caregiving is rhetorical work that brings people together, builds coalitions, and strengthens the resolve of activists. As each case study illustrates, survival work, collaboration, and caregiving are not seen as marginal to disability activism but integral.

As I assert in Chapter 2, Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson's behind-the-scenes survival work—securing food, ensuring risk reduction, providing shelter—enabled them to survive the harsh realities of street life for disabled trans women in the 1960's and 1970's. Through the interdependent caregiving of the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries—the shelter and activist group Rivera and

Johnson created—multiply-marginalized disabled and nondisabled people were able to organize intersectional activist interventions. In both their behind-the-scenes survival work and public activism, Rivera and Johnson tapped into their experiences of disability, frailty, and oppression as sources for rhetorical invention, and thus, envisioned caregiving as a central component of their activist praxis. Caregiving is critical in creating the conditions in which disabled people can come together, organize, and deliver activist rhetoric.

Disability activism's embrace of caregiving-as-activism illustrates that disability activism takes many different forms and occurs in many different sites. While disability activists have successfully planned traditional forms of street protests—such as the 504 sit-in and the public rallies S.T.A.R organized—disability activists have also focused on overlooked activist genres, genres that facilitate institutional change in profound ways. I explore one such genre in Chapter 4, the Conference for College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Accessibility Guide. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, academia has historically been unfriendly, and even hostile, to disabled people. This hostility often manifests as inaccessible conference spaces, making it difficult for disabled scholars to pursue important professionalization opportunities, such as presenting research and networking with other scholars.

In an effort to eradicate ableist barriers at the conference, scholar-teacher-activists within CCCC craft an annual accessibility guide as a way of raising awareness about disability and access within CCCC. Policy documents, then, become a means of shifting institutional culture to be more accommodating and inclusive of

disabled community members. A single policy document may not dismantle the ableism that is so endemic in academia, of course. But the crafting and circulation of the CCCC Accessibility guide signals to disabled people that they do indeed belong in academic settings while encouraging nondisabled CCCC attendees to recognize the presence of disabled people and the barriers they face. Disability activists are not bound by genre restrictions. They remix, appropriate, and create new genres in various settings, understanding that dismantling ableism requires different forms depending on the rhetorical situation and audience.

Just as disability activism emerges in many forms, it manifests in many sites. The flexibility of disability activism is a critical feature, as disabled people can't always access traditional sites of activism: the National Mall in DC, for instance, poses obstacles for people who live far away from DC and avoid air travel because of accessibility issues. Disability activists can, and often do, organize in virtual spaces, as they allow disabled people to advocate for social change without encountering the accessibility barriers so present outside their home. In Chapter 3, I examine how autistic activists take to Twitter to position themselves as the experts on autism, affirm the value of autistic people and culture, and testify to the various forms of ableism they experience in their daily lives. Disability activists, then, use the affordances and constraints of social media to their advantage, writing rhetorically rich micro-texts that have the potential to be circulated far and wide. Because disabled people have different needs, disability activism cannot be limited to spaces traditionally associated with activism. Disability activism transcends the genre, form,

and spatial boundaries of traditional forms of activism, occurring anywhere and anyhow disabled people can communicate their demands for justice.

Looking to Disability Activism Today

In the case studies I examined, disability activism rejects the stigma associated with disability and instead embraces embodied difference, caregiving, and generic/spatial flexibility as rich sources for rhetorical invention and delivery. These case studies, I believe, offer a way of reading present cases of disability activism. And conversely, present cases of disability activism offer the opportunity to expand the framework I've described in this project. I was able to test out this theory while conducting research for this project. In 2017, a Republican-led Congress and White House moved to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), a 2010 healthcare law that prohibited insurance plans from discriminating against people with pre-existing health conditions and greatly expanded Medicaid, among other provisions. Disability activists were especially outraged by proposed cuts to Medicaid, as those cuts would threaten funding for personal attendants—professional caregivers who support disabled people in their daily needs, such as bathing, dressing, and getting to work. Personal attendants facilitate independence, allowing some disabled people to live at home and participate in society rather than live in isolation at an institution.

In response, activists from ADAPT (Americans Disabled Attendant Programs Today) staged a die-in in Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office. Some sat in wheelchairs, other laid on the floor, mimicking corpses to demonstrate the high stakes of their demands. The organizers knew they could build upon the activist

strategies of the past: displaying their disabled bodies by occupying a government space, just as the 504 sit-in protestors did (Raff). But the ADAPT organizers faced additional challenges, challenges that required new strategies. Unlike law enforcement at the 504 sit-in, the Capitol Police had no concern about the optics of arresting visibly disabled people, and soon, police officers forcibly removed forty-three demonstrators from the office. As the protestors were carried to the police van, they yelled passionately—their voices often breaking—"No Cuts to Medicaid! Save Our Liberty!"

While people paid very little attention to die-in initially, soon people across the country were watching live video of disabled activists aggressively ripped from their wheelchairs from police. Photos circulated on social media of police officers carrying disabled people against their will as they chanted for Medicaid funding. Similarly to disability activists of the past, they leveraged their embodied difference for activist means, positioning their bodies in forbidden places to direct people's attention to ADAPT's demands. However, they also had to contend with state interference and even violence. The stakes were higher than ever, and the disability activists used this to their advantage, maintaining their chants while police removed their bodies from the protest. Their audience was not just the Senate but the nation, and they mobilized people to resist the proposed repeal to healthcare. And just like the 504 sit-in activists, they won: as I write this conclusion in April 2018, the ACA remains the law of the land.

Looking to Tomorrow

As disability activism continues to respond to ableist public policy, I believe disability activism will also further develop an intersectional praxis in both its outward activist texts and its behind-the-scenes processes. Of course, intersectionality is already a discussion topic within disability activism. In my first chapter, I noted how black disability activists complicate the white-washed legacy of the 504 sit-in protest. In Chapter 2, I argued for an intersectional approach to examining disability activism in other civil rights struggles, arguing that Rivera and Johnson illustrate the transformative power of merging disability activism with trans liberation. Yet, both disability studies scholars and disability activists assert that discussions of intersectionality remain on the periphery. In response, disability studies scholars and activists have called for increased attention to intersectionality on two fronts: for disability activism to more seriously engage with race and gender, and for racial justice and feminist movements to more seriously engage with disability (Kafer and Kim 122-123).

Fortunately, progress is being made on this front. Women of color are increasingly being recognized as leaders within disability activism: queer autistic activist of color Lydia Brown, for instance, is a prominent figure in autism activism, especially known for her grassroots organizing, digital writing, and public policy advocacy for autistic people of color. Talila "TL" Lewis brings together disability and racial justice rhetorics to advocate for incarcerated deaf/disabled people with her organization HEARD (Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of Deaf). Alice Wong, a disabled woman of color, created the Disability Visibility Project. The project creates, amplifies, and curates disabled media that is "intersectional, multi-modal, and

accessible" ("About DVP"). Each of these case studies offer scholars of disability activism opportunities to investigate how intersectional disability activists bring together rhetorics of race, gender, sexuality, and disability across different forms of media.

Furthermore, these case studies point to a future of disability activism. Sins Invalid, a performance and activist group for disabled people of color, proposes disability justice as a way for disability activism to move forward:

> A Disability Justice framework understands that all bodies are unique and essential, that all bodies have strengths and needs that must be met. We know that we are powerful not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them. We understand that all bodies are caught in these bindings of ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state and imperialism, and that we cannot separate them. These are the positions from which we struggle. We are in a global system that is incompatible with life. There is no way stop a single gear in motion — we must dismantle this machine. (14-15)

Disability justice, as articulated by the writers of Sins Invalid, seeks the dismantling of all forms of oppression that harm the bodies of disabled people. In this pursuit, disability justice centers the needs of queer and non-white disabled people and recognizes how sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia impact disabled bodies in complex ways.

Despite the work of Brown, Lewis, Wong, and Sins Invalid, disability activism has not quite actualized the intersectional promise of disability justice. Many

disability advocacy groups continue to have mostly-white leadership and focus on disability in isolation from other identities (Brown, K.). A focus on intersectionality, then, moves us to a future in which disability activism models radical, multidimensional access. By attending not just to disability, multidimensional access can ensure the inclusion of bodies marked by difference in different ways: does organizing happen in environments that are architecturally, culturally, and linguistically accessible for disabled people from various backgrounds? This question can powerfully transform not just organizing spaces within disability activism but also other movements, facilitating more meaningful intersectional coalitions among activist groups. If we acknowledge that our liberation is bound together, we can move to create a future world in which truly no body is left behind.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How did you come to be the Local Accessibility Committee Co-Chair? What responsibilities and duties did that role entail?
2. Can you describe the behind-the-scenes labor that crafting this guide required? How many hours did you spend creating this guide?
3. One of the things I'm observing is how the CCCC accessibility guides have evolved over time. What was your model when creating this guide? What was your guiding philosophy when crafting the accessibility guide?
4. Did you experience any challenges in creating the guide, and how did you overcome them?
5. What role did CCCC as an organization have in directing your work with the guide? What kind of support or feedback did they provide?
6. How was the guide distributed? What was the reception and reaction to the Accessibility Guide?
7. What kind of service credits or recognition, if any, did you receive from your department for developing the guide?
8. To what extent do you see creating the accessibility guide as activism?
9. Based on your observations as a Local Accessibility Committee Co-Chair and a regular CCCC attendee, to what extent has the Accessibility Guide changed the culture of CCCC in terms of disability awareness and disability justice?
10. Do you have anything else to add?

Bibliography

29 United States Code. Section 701. 1973. *Cornell Law School*, law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/29/7011.

29 United States Code. Section 794. 1973. *Cornell Law School*, law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/29/794.

70% bitter (@miss_scandi). "We don't need a cure; we're not missing pieces. We need to be treated like humans, not a science experiment #REDinstead #ActuallyAutistic." *Twitter,* 2 April 2016, 10:51, twitter.com/miss_scandi/statuses/716322096431804417.

"A Policy on Disability in CCCC." *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, 2006, http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/disabilitypolicy. Accessed 12. Oct. 2017.

"Ableism, N." *OED Online*, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2016.

"About World Autism Awareness Day." *Autism Speaks*, 25 July 2012, autismspeaks.org/what-autism/waad/about-world-autism-awareness-day.

ace mcgayne (@cheetahpeople). "hi im #actuallyautistic and i can tell you most of the facts on ur school's autism poster [sic] are either bullshit or unhelpful." *Twitter,* 6 April 2016, 18:18, twitter.com/cheetahpeople/statuses/717763391490801664.

Adsanatham, Chanon. "Building a Digital Counterpublic: Civic Affordances of Twitter under Thai Authoritarian Government." *Social Media in Asia:*

Changing Paradigms of Communication, edited by Azman Azwan Azmawati and Rachel E. Khan, Cambridge Scholars of Publishing, 2016, pp. 130-153.

Allen, Danielle S. *Talking to Strangers : Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown V. Board of Education.* University of Chicago Press, 2004.

American Psychiatric Association, and American Psychiatric Association, eds. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*. 5th ed., American Psychiatric Association, 2013.

Americans with Disabilities Act. 42 United States Code. § 12114(b). *Cornell Law School*, law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/12114.

Anderson, Robert C. "Faith in Access: Building Conversation between Religion and Disability." *Disability Studies Quarterly,* vol. 26, no. 3, 2006.

Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. Aeterna, 2015.

---. *Topics.* In *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton University Press, 1984.

Arola, Kristin L., and Anne Frances Wysocki, eds. *Composing(media) = Composing(embodiment): Bodies, Technologies, Writing, the Teaching of Writing.* Utah State University Press, 2012.

Associated Press. "Handicapped Use Protests to Push HEW to Implement '73 Bias Law." Photograph, *New York Times,* 11 April 1977, p. 12, Microfilm.

Austin, Gilbert. *Chironomia*. In *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, 2nd ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001, pp. 889-897.

Autism Champion (@aspiemermaid). "We are disabled not by our cognitive differences, but by an ignorant and inflexible society #autism

#actuallyautistic." *Twitter,* 26 April 2016, 11:11, twitter.com/aspiemermaid/statuses/724903606625914883.

Autistic Native (@Mitsawokett). "As a Neurodiverse disabledWOC, # activism is the only time I get a platform to speak as a disabledWOC." *Twitter,* 1 April 2014, 9:59, twitter.com/Mitsawokett/status/451010900435419136.

Autistic Self Advocacy Network. "ASAN Condemns White House Autism Proclamation." *Autistic Self Advocacy Network,* 1 April 2017, autisticadvocacy.org/2017/04/asan-condemns-white-house-autism-proclamation/.

---. "ASAN Praises Clinton Campaign for Autism Policy Statement, Calls on Other Campaigns to Follow." *Autistic Self Advocacy Network*, 5 Jan. 2016, autisticadvocacy.org/2016/01/asan-praises-clinton-campaign-for-autism-policy-statement-calls-on-other-campaigns-to-follow/.

---. (@autselfadvocacy). "#actuallyAutistic folks: going to political rallies? got pictures? Share them and let us know! would love to boost!" *Twitter*, 11 April 2016, 23:50, twitter.com/autselfadvocacy/statuses/719658843492327425.

Bailey, Moya. "'The Illest:' Disability as Metaphor in Hip-Hop Music." *Blackness and Disability: Critical Examinations and Cultural Interventions*, edited by Christopher Bell, Michigan State University Press, 2011, pp. 141-148.

Barnartt, Sharon N., and Richard K. Scotch. *Disability Protests: Contentious Politics 1970-1999.* Gallaudet University Press, 2001.

Baron-Cohen, Simon. *Mindblindness*. MIT Press, 1995.

Baron-Cohen, Simon, Alan M. Leslie, and Uta Frith. "Does the Autistic Child Have a 'Theory of Mind'?" *Cognition,* vol. 21, 1985, pp. 37–46.

Bascom, Julia. "Before You Donate to Autism Speaks, Consider the Facts." *Autistic Self Advocacy Network*, 1 April 2016, autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/AutismSpeaksFlyer_color_2017.pdf.

Bates, Margaret (@MargaretBates1). "Don't donate to autism Speaks, don't light up blue and speak with #ActuallyAutistic ppl to get the real facts." *Twitter,* 2 April 2016, 20:22, twitter.com/MargaretBates1/statuses/716345164307046400.

Baynton, Douglas C. "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History." *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th ed., edited by Lennard J. Davis, Routledge, 2013, pp. 17-33.

Bell, Alexander Graham. "Upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race." *Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 2, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1884.

Bell, Arthur. *Dancing the Gay Liberation Blues: A Year in the Homosexual Liberation Movement*. Simon and Schuster, 1971.

Bell, Christopher M. "Introducing White Disability Studies: A Modest Proposal." *The Disability Studies Reader,* 2nd edition, edited by Lennard Davis, Routledge, 2006, pp. 275-282.

Ben-Moshe, L., and J. J. Powell. "Sign of Our Times? Revis(it)ing the International Symbol of Access." *Disability And Society,* vol. 22, no. 5, 2007, pp. 489-505.

Biesecker, Barbara. "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 140-161.

Blythe, Stuart. "Coding Digital Texts and Multimedia." *Digital Writing Research: Technologies, Methodologies, and Ethical Issues*, edited by Heidi A. McKee and Danielle Nicole DeVon, Hampton Press, 2007, pp. 203–228.

"Board Members." *Autism Speaks*, autismspeaks.org/about-us/board-directors. Accessed 6 May 2017.

Boster, Dea H. *African American Slavery and Disability: Bodies, Property, and Power in the Antebellum South, 1800-1860.* Routledge, 2013.

Brewer, Elizabeth. "Psychiatric Disability and Rhetoricity: Refiguring Rhetoric and Composition Studies in the 21st Century." Dissertation. Ohio State University, 2014.

Brown, Keah. "Disabled People of Color Struggle to be Heard." *The Establishment,* 14 Oct. 2016, theestablishment.co/disabled-people-of-color-struggle-to-be-heard-b6c7ea5af4b4.

Brown, Lydia. "It's Illegal to Torture Prisoners and Animals, but Not Disabled People." *Washington Post*, 22 July 2014, washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/07/22/its-illegal-to-torture-prisoners-and-animals-but-not-disabled-people.

---. "The Significance of Semantics: Person-First Language: Why It Matters." *Autistic Hoya,* 4 Aug. 2011, autistichoya.com/2011/08/significance-of-semantics-person-first.html.

---. “Undoing Racism & Anti-Blackness in Disability Justice.” *Autistic Hoya*, 14 April 2015, autistichoya.com/2015/04/undoing-racism-anti-blackness-in.html.

Browning, Ellie. Skype Interview. 14 June 2017.

Brueggemann, Brenda Jo, et al. “Becoming Visible: Lessons in Disability.” *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 52, no. 3, 2001, pp. 368-398.

Brueggemann, Brenda Jo. *Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness*. Gallaudet University Press, 1999.

Buchanan, Lindal. *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors.* Southern Illinois University Press, 2005.

“Building Networks of Support.” *Patient No More*, The Paul Longmore Institute on Disability, longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu/patient-no-more/building-networks-support.

Cagle, Lauren and Ellie Browning. “CCCC 2015 Accessibility Guide: Tampa.” CCCC, http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/CCCC/Convention/2015/Accessibility-Guide.pdf. Accessed 12. Oct. 2017.

Cagle, Lauren. Skype Interview. 6 June 2017.

Campbell, Jane, and Mike Oliver. *Disability Politics: Understanding our Past, Changing our Future*. Routledge, 2013.

Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. “The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron.” *Communication Studies*, vol. 50, no. 2, 1999, pp. 125–137.

Carey, Allison C. *On the Margins of Citizenship: Intellectual Disability and Civil Rights in Twentieth-Century America.* Temple University Press, 2009.

Carter, Jeff and Mike Markel. "Web Accessibility for People with Disabilities: An Introduction for Web Developers." *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2001, pp. 225–233.

"CCCC 2018 Queer Caucus Meeting." *CCCC Queer Caucus*, ccccqueercaucus.org/2017/09/28/cccc-2018-queer-caucus-meeting/.

Charlton, James I. *Nothing about Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*. University of California Press, 2000.

Cho, Sumi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 38, no.4, 2013, pp. 785-810.

Christiansen, Adrienne E., and Jeremy J. Hanson. "Comedy as Cure for Tragedy: ACT UP and the Rhetoric of AIDS." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* vol. 82, no. 2, 1996, pp. 157-170.

Christopherson, Robin. "A Brief History of Accessibility on Twitter in Ten Tweets to Mark Twitter's 10th Birthday." *AbilityNet*, 21 March 2016, abilitynet.org.uk/blog/brief-history-accessibility-twitter-ten-tweets-mark-twitters-10th-birthday.

Cicero. Excerpt from *Orator*. Trans. H. M. Hubbell. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, edited by Patricia Bissell and Bruce Herzberg, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001, pp. 339-343.

Cisneros, Josue David. *The Border Crossed Us: Rhetorics of Borders, Citizenship, and Latina/o Identity.* University Alabama Press, 2013.

Clare, Eli. “Stolen Bodies, Reclaimed Bodies: Disability and Queerness.” *Public Culture,* vol. 13, no. 3, 2001, pp. 359-365.

Clifford Simplican, Stacy. *The Capacity Contract: Intellectual Disability and the Question of Citizenship.* University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Cobos, Casie and Geneva Canino. “CCCC 2016 Accessibility Guide: Houston.” CCCC, https://u.osu.edu/composingaccess/files/2016/09/2016-CCCC-Accessibility-Guide-2l9dewx.pdf. Accessed 12 Oct. 2017.

Cobos, Casie. Skype Interview. 12 June 2017.

Cohen, Stephan L. *The Gay Liberation Youth Movement in New York: An Army of Lovers Cannot Fail*. Routledge, 2008.

Colton, Jared S., and Steve Holmes. “A Social Justice Theory of Active Equality for Technical Communication.” *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2016, pp. 4-30.

“Committee on Disability Issues.” *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, ncte.org/cccc/committees/disabilityissues. Accessed Oct. 12. 2017.

Composing Access. Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition, osu.edu/composingaccess/. Accessed 12 Oct. 2017.

Cone, Kitty. “Kitty Cone 504 Sit-In Victory Speech.” *SoundCloud*, uploaded by timesawastin, March 2015, soundcloud.com/timesawastin/kitty-cone-504-sit-in-victory-speech-april-1977.

---. “Short History of the 504 Sit in.” *Disability Rights and Education Defense Fund*, dredf.org/504-sit-in-20th-anniversary/short-history-of-the-504-sit-in/.

Cooper, Marilyn M. “The Ecology of Writing.” *College English*, vol. 48, no. 4, 1986, pp. 364-375.

Crandall, Brian. “Disabled Man Upset about Post Office Access.” *WJAR*, 27 May 2015, turnto10.com/archive/disabled-man-upset-about-post-office-access.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241–1299.

D’Lil, HolLynn. *Becoming Real in Twenty-Four Days: One Participant’s Story of the 1977 Section of 504 Demonstrations for Disability Rights*. Hallavaland Productions, 2015.

Davies, Diana. “Marsha P. Johnson Pickets Bellevue Hospital to Protest Treatment of Street People and Gays.” Photograph. 1968-1975. Web. 1582203. Diana Davies Collection, New York Public Library Digital Collection, New York City, NY. digitalcollections.nypl.org/. Accessed 23 Mar 2017.

Davis, Kathy. “Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful.” *Feminist Theory*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2008, pp. 67-85.

Davis, Lennard J. “Introduction: Disability, Normality, and Power.” *The Disabilities Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, Routledge, 1997, pp. 9-27.

DeLaure, Marilyn Bordwell. “Planting Seeds of Change: Ella Baker's Radical Rhetoric.” *Women's Studies in Communication,* vol. 31, no. 1, 2008, pp. 1-28.

Delicath, John W. and Kevin Michael Deluca. "Image Events, the Public Sphere, and Argumentative Practice: The Case of Radical Environmental Groups." *Argumentation,* vol. 17, 2003, pp. 315-333.

DeLuca, Kevin Michael. *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism.* Guilford Press, 1999.

Devereaux, Shaadi. "Why These Tweets Are Called My Back." *The New Inquiry*, 19 Dec. 2014, thenewinquiry.com/why-these-tweets-are-called-my-back/.

DeYong, Shannon (@IndubitablyISFP). "@katiecouric @autismspeaks If you want to support #ActuallyAutistic people, please listen to us & do #RedInstead! Not #LIUB - that hurts us." *Twitter,* 2 April 2016, 5:57, twitter.com/IndubitablyISFP/statuses/716489695350226944.

Diament, Michelle. "Autism Speaks No Longer Seeks Cure." *Disability Scoop*. 14 Oct. 2016, disabilityscoop.com/2016/10/14/autism-speaks-no-longer-cure/22884/.

Dolmage, Jay, et al. "Octalog III: The Politics of Historiography in 2010." *Rhetoric Review,* vol. 30, no. 2, 2011, pp. 109-134.

Dolmage, Jay, et al. "Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition: A Conversation with the Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition." *Listening to our Elders,* edited by Samantha Blackmon, Cristina Kirklighter, and Steve Parks. Utah State University Press, 2011. pp. 56- 86.

Dolmage, Jay. *Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education.* University of Michigan Press, 2017.

--- (uncredited). “CCCC 2013 Accessibility Guide: Las Vegas.” *CCCC*. https://www.disabilityrhetoric.files.wordpress.com/cccc-2013-accessibility-guide-las-vegas-by-cdicc.doc. Accessed 12 Oct. 2017.

---. *Disability Rhetoric*. Syracuse University Press, 2014.

---. *Disabled Upon Arrival: Eugenics, Immigration, and the Construction of Race and Disability*. Ohio State University Press, 2018.

---. “Mapping Composition: Inviting Disability in the Front Door.” *Disability and the Teaching of Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and Brenda Brueggemann, Bedford/St. Martin, 2007, pp. 14-27.

---. Skype Interview. 15 June 2017.

Donawerth, Jane, ed. *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900: An Anthology*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

---. *Conversational Rhetoric: The Rise and Fall of a Women's Tradition, 1600-1900*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2011.

Donhardt, Tracy and Jay Dolmage. “CCCC 2014 Accessibility Guide: Indianapolis.” *CCCC*. ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/CCCC/Convention/2015/Accessibility-Guide.pdf. Accessed 12 Oct. 2017.

Donhardt, Tracy. Phone Interview. 25 May 2017.

“DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria.” *Autism Speaks*, 29 July 2013, autismspeaks.org/what-autism/diagnosis/dsm-5-diagnostic-criteria.

Duberman, Martin. *Martin B. Duberman Papers*. Cassettes 2886, 2228, New York Public Library Archive & Manuscripts, New York City, NY. Accessed 24 Oct. 2016.

Duberman, Martin. *Stonewall*. Plume, 1994.

Duggan, Maeve. *Online Harassment*. Pew Research Center, 2014. pewinternet.org/2014/10/22/online-harassment/.

Eble, Michelle F., and Lynee Lewis Gaillet. "Educating 'Community Intellectuals': Rhetoric, Moral Philosophy, and Civic Engagement." *Technical Communication Quarterly,* vol. 13, no. 3, 2004, pp. 341-354.

"Educating a Nation." *Patient No More*, The Paul Longmore Institute on Disability, longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu/patient-no-more/educating-nation.

Egan, Lisa. "I'm Not a 'Person with a Disability': I'm a Disabled Person." *XO Jane*, 9 Nov. 2012, xojane.com/issues/i-am-not-a-person-with-a-disability-i-am-a-disabled-person.

Ehmer, Susan. *HEW Protest by Handicapped*. Photograph, *San Francisco Chronicle,* 6 April 1977, p. 9, Microfilm.

Eiesland, Nancy L. *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. Abingdon Press, 1994.

Ekins, Richard, and Dave King. *The Transgender Phenomenon*. SAGE, 2006.

Ellis, Katie, and Mike Kent. *Disability and New Media*. Routledge, 2011.

Elmore, Kimberly. "Embracing Interdependence: Technology Developers, Autistic Users, and Technical Communicators." *Rhetorical AccessAbility: At the*

Intersection of Technical Communication and Disability Studies, edited by Lisa Meloncon and Caleb A. James, Baywood Publishing, 2013, pp. 15-38.

Endres, Danielle and Samantha Senda-Cook. "Location Matters: the Rhetoric of Place in Protest." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 97, no. 3, 2011, pp. 257-282.

Enoch, Jessica. "A Woman's Place Is in the School: Rhetorics of Gendered Space in Nineteenth-Century America." *College English,* vol. 70, no. 3, 2008, pp. 275-295.

Erasmus, Desiderius. *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*. In *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, 2nd ed., edited by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001, pp. 359-428.

Erevelles, Nirmala. *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Erevelles, Nirmala and Andrea Minear. "Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies,* vol. 4, no. 2, 2010, pp. 127-145.

"FDA Proposes Ban on Electrical Stimulation Devices Intended to Treat Self-Injurious or Aggressive Behavior." *Federal Drug Administration*, 22 April 2016, fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm497194.htm.

Feder, Barnaby J. "They Weren't Careful What They Hoped For." *The New York Times,* 29 May 2002, nytimes.com/2002/05/29/nyregion/they-weren-t-careful-what-they-hoped-for.html.

"Fight Sickle Cell Anemia." *The Black Panther,* 25 Sept. 1971.

Fleet Sparrow (@FleetSparrow). "Heads up my fellow #Disabled and #ActuallyAutistic friends! There's an acc. going around called "EuthanizeTards" harassing people. Be safe!" *Twitter*, 17 April 2016, 21:00, twitter.com/FleetSparrow/statuses/721911133431410691.

Fleischer, Doris Zames, and Frieda Zames. *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation.* Temple University Press, 2001.

Flynn, Elizabeth A., Patricia Sotirin, and Ann Brady, eds. *Feminist Rhetorical Resilience*. University Press of Colorado, 2012.

Gan, Jessi. "'Still at the Back of the Bus': Sylvia Rivera's Struggle." *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies,* vol. 19, no .1, 2007, pp. 124-140.

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies*. Columbia University Press, 1996.

---. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory." *NWSA Journal,* vol. 14, no. 3, 2002, pp. 1-32.

---. "The Politics of Staring: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography." *Disability Studies, Enabling the Humanities*, edited by Sharon L. Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Modern Language Association, 2002, pp. 56-75.

Garrido, Maria, and Alexander Halavais. "Mapping Networks of Support for the Zapatista Movement." *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice,* edited by Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers. Routledge, 2003, pp 165-184.

Gladwell, Malcolm. "Small Change." *The New Yorker*, 4 Oct. 2010, newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell.

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on a Spoiled Identity*. Jenkins, JH & Carpenter, 1963.

Gokhale, Deepali. "InterSEXion: A Vision for a Queer Progressive Agenda." *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, edited by Maurianne Adams et al., Routledge, 2014, pp. 388-390.

Gossett, Reina. "SRLP10 Honoree Profile: When Janet Mock talks about Sylvia Rivera on Twitter." *Sylvia Rivera Law Project*, 15 Oct. 2012, srlp.org/srlp10-honoree-profile-when-janet-mock-talks-about-sylvia-rivera-on-twitter/.

Gouldin, Carrie. "Blurgh! The ThinkGeek Blog - April Charity Revealed; Help Us Choose May!" *ThinkGeek*, 8 April 2011, thinkgeek.com/blog/2011/04/april-charity-revealed-help-us.html.

Gregg, Richard B. "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest." *Philosophy & Rhetoric,* vol. 4, no. 2, 1971, pp. 71-91.

Griffin, Leland M. "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements." *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* vol. 38, 1952, pp. 184-88.

Guerra, Juan. *Language, Culture, Identity and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities*. Routledge, 2016.

Happy Birthday, Marsha! happybirthdaymarsha.com. Accessed 24 Mar. 2017.

Harmon, Amy. "Neurodiversity Forever: The Disability Movement Turns to Brains." *The New York Times*, May 9, 2004,

nytimes.com/2004/05/09/weekinreview/neurodiversity-forever-the-disability-movement-turns-to-brains.html.

Harrington, Dana. "Remembering the Body: Eighteenth-Century Elocution and the Oral Tradition." *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric,* vol. 28, no.1, 2010, pp. 67–95.

Hauser, Gerard A., and Erin Diana McClellan. "Vernacular Rhetoric and Social Movements: Performances of Resistance in the Rhetoric of the Everyday." *Active Voices: Composing a Rhetoric of Social Movements*, edited by Sharon McKenzie Stevens and Patricia M. Malesh, SUNY Press, 2009, pp. 23-46.

Hawhee, Debra. *Bodily Arts : Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece.* University of Texas Press, 2004.

Hayden, Sara. "Re-claiming Bodies of Knowledge: An Exploration of the Relationship between Feminist Theorizing and Feminine Style in the Rhetoric of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective." *Western Journal of Communication,* vol. 61, no. 2, 1997, pp. 127-163.

Hedva, Johanna. "Sick Woman Theory." *Mask Magazine*, 6 Jan. 2016, maskmagazine.com/not-again/struggle/sick-woman-theory.

Heilker, Paul, and Melanie Yergeau. "Autism and Rhetoric." *College English,* vol. 73, no. 5, 2011, pp. 485–497.

Herring, Susan C. "The Rhetorical Dynamics of Gender Harassment On-Line." *The Information Society*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 151-167, 2006. DOI: 10.1080/019722499128466.

Herring, Susan, Kirk Job-Sluder, Rebecca Scheckler & Sasha Barab. "Searching for Safety Online: Managing 'Trolling' in a Feminist Forum." *The Information Society,* vol. 18, no. 5, 2002, pp. 371–384.

Hill, Corinna. "Angry that I'm Deaf." *The Buff and Blue*. 14 April 2014, thebuffandblue.net/?p=12984.

"Hillary Clinton's Plan to Support Children, Youth, and Adults Living with Autism and Their Families." *HillaryClinton.Com,* 5 Jan. 2016. Accessed 2 Nov. 2016.

Hillary, Alyssa. "Yes, That Too: Why Actually Autistic Tag." *Yes, That Too*, 2 Sept. 2014, yesthattoo.blogspot.com/2014/09/why-actually-autistic-tag.html.

Hogg, Charlotte. *From the Garden Club: Rural Women Writing Community*. University of Nebraska Press, 2006.

Holcomb, Leah (@LealaHolcomb). "Let #ActuallyAutistic people lead the way. They have lived experiences & know what #ABA_means. #AutismDoesntEndAt5 folks, start listening." *Twitter,* 17 April 2016, 22:33, twitter.com/LealaHolcomb/statuses/721813800878489600.

hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. South End Press, 1981.

"I Am Autism Commercial by Autism Speaks." *YouTube*, uploaded by Find Yaser, 3 Nov. 2016.

Inoue, Asao. "CCCC 2018 Update - Task Force on Social Justice and Activism at Cs." *Infrequent Words*, 25 Sept. 2017, asaobinoue.blogspot.com/2017/09/as-you-likely-know-ccccs-executive.html.

Institute on Disability/UCED. *2016 Disability Statistics Annual Report*. Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and

Demographics, 2016, disabilitycompendium.org/sites/default/files/user-uploads/2016_AnnualReport.pdf.

Jack, Jordynn. *Autism and Gender: From Refrigerator Mothers to Computer Geeks*. University of Illinois Press, 2014.

Jackson, Cassandra. *Violence, Visual Culture, and the Black Male Body*. Routledge, 2011.

Jamieson, Lynn. "Boundaries of Intimacy." *Families in Society: Boundaries and Relationships*, edited by Linda McKie and Sarah Cunningham-Burley, The Policy Press, pp. 189-206.

JD (@AnEndInItself). "There's no need to solve me, cure me, fix me or change me. It's much easier (and cheaper) to listen to me. #ActuallyAutistic #WAAW2016." *Twitter,* 5 April 2016, 16:57, twitter.com/AnEndInItself/statuses/717380636667940870.

Jersey, Dave (@RewardConsent). "#AutismMom, #AutismDad, #AutismParent: There's no such thing as a "miracle cure" for your #actuallyAutistic loved ones. ABA is no miracle." *Twitter,* 20 April 2016, 14:16, twitter.com/RewardConsent/statuses/722775833299947520.

---. "#ActuallyAutistic: Contact @WhiteHouse. Ask @POTUS to finish @US_FDA Electrical Stimulation Device ban. #CloseTheJRC." *Twitter,* 23 Sept. 2016.

Johnson, Courtney (@C_Squared2911). "For #WorldAutismAwarenessDay, PLEASE listen to those of us who are #actuallyautistic. Our voices- whether in speech or otherwise- matter." *Twiter,* 2 April 2016, 17:13, twitter.com/C_Squared2911/statuses/716297387816394753.

Johnson, Marsha P. "Rapping with Marsha P. Johnson." *Out of the Closets : Voices of Gay Liberation,* edited by Karla Jay and Allen Young, University Press, 1992.

"Joint Statement on the NAACP Missouri Travel Advisory and SB 43 by the NCTE/CCCC Black, Latinx, American Indian, and Asian/Asian American Caucuses." 15 Aug. 2017, docs.google.com/document/d/17Abgh6YTDead41h-8srDlb1NuKsPLh4oDIg260lHq04/.

Jones, Natasha N., Kristen R. Moore, and Rebecca Walton. "Disrupting the Past to Disrupt the Future: An Antenarrative of Technical Communication." *Technical Communication Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2016, pp. 211-229.

Jones, Natasha and Stephanie Wheeler. "Document Design and Social Justice: A Universal Design For Documents." *Writing about Writing: A College Reader*, 3rd ed., edited by Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017, pp. 654-673.

Joyce, Mary. *Digital Activism Decoded: The New Mechanics of Change*. International Debate Education Association, 2010.

Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Indiana University Press, 2013.

Kafer, Alison and Eunjung Kim. "Disability and the Edge of Intersectionality." *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Disability,* edited by Clare Barker and Stuart Murray, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 123-138.

Kalidi, Sam. "Who Really Threw That First Brick At Stonewall?" *Queerty*, 14 Aug. 2015. queerty.com/who-really-threw-that-first-brick-at-stonewall-20150814. Accessed 23 March 2017.

Kasino, Michael. *Pay It No Mind: The Life and Times of Marsha P. Johnson.* Frameline Films. Video. 2012.

Kearns, John. *John J. Kearns Papers*. Collection #108. Audio Tapes 1, 6 7. LGBT Community Center National History Archive, New York City, NY. Accessed 25 Oct. 2017.

KeelanArt (@KeelanArt). "Proud to be autistic, I stim without shame. #AutismAcceptance #AutisticArt #actuallyautistic @autselfadvocacy." *Twitter,* 25 April 2016, 00:28, twitter.com/KeelanArt/statuses/724741983290441728.

Kerschbaum, Stephanie. "On Rhetorical Agency and Disclosing Disability in Academic Writing." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2014, pp. 55-71.

Kerschbaum, Stephanie L., James M. Jones, and Laura T. Eisenman, eds. *Negotiating Disability: Disclosure and Higher Education*. University of Michigan Press, 2017.

Khamis, Sahar, and Katherine Vaughn. "Cyberactivism in the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions: Potentials, Limitations, Overlaps and Divergences." *Journal Of African Media Studies,* vol. 5, no. 1, 2013, pp. 69-86.

Kimball, Miles A. "Cars, Culture, and Tactical Technical Communication." *Technical Communication Quarterly,* vol. 15, no. 1, 2006, pp. 67-86.

Kimi-chan (@xxmusicsavedmex). "If you want the truth about us, listen to someone #ActuallyAutistic. #BoycottAutismSpeaks and do the right thing. #WorldAutismAwarenessDay." *Twitter,* 2 April 2016, 13:32, twitter.com/xxmusicsavedmex/statuses/716362623789449217.

Kinloch, Valerie Felita. “Revisiting the Promise of ‘Students' Right To Their Own Language’: Pedagogical Strategies.” *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 57, no. 1, 2005, pp. 83-113.

Klebine, Anna. “‘Hell Hath No Fury like a Drag Queen Scorned’: Sylvia Rivera’s Activism, Resistance, and Resilience.” *OutHistory*, outhistory.org/exhibits/show/tgi-bios/sylvia-rivera. Accessed 6 Jan 2016.

Kozlowska, Hanna. “In The US, People with Disabilities Are Three Times As Likely To Be Victims of Serious Violence.” *Quartz,* 14 June 2017, qz.com/1029694/people-with-disabilities-in-the-us-are-three-times-as-likely-to-be-victims-of-serious-violent-crimes/. Accessed 28 March 2018.

Krista (@lechatsavant). “I'm gonna sprain my wrists stimming over Blackhawks goals. Very much worth it #actuallyautistic #LoudHands.” *Twitter,* 26 April 2016, 2:47, twitter.com/lechatsavant/statuses/724776887529181185.

Kuppers, Petra. "The Wheelchair's Rhetoric: The Performance of Disability." *TDR: The Drama Review,* vol. 51, no. 4, 2007, pp. 80-88.

Lake, Randall A. “Enacting Red Power: The Consummatory Function in Native American Protest Rhetoric.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* vol. 69, no. 2, 2009, pp. 127-142.

Lewiecki-Wilson, Cynthia. “Rethinking Rhetoric Through Mental Disabilities.” *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2003, pp. 156-67.

Lewiecki-Wilson, Cynthia, and Brenda Jo Brueggemann, eds. *Disability and the Teaching of Writing: A Critical Sourcebook.* Bedford St. Martin’s, 2007.

Lewiecki-Wilson, Cynthia, et. al. “Two Comments on ‘Neurodiversity.’” *College English,* vol. 70, no. 3, 2008, pp. 314–325.

Liebowitz, Cara. “I Am Disabled: On Identity-First Versus Person-First Language.” *The Body Is Not an Apology*, 20 March 2015, thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/i-am-disabled-on-identity-first-versus-people-first-language/.

“Life inside the Building.” *Patient No More*, The Paul Longmore Institute on Disability, 16 July 2015, youtube.com/watch?v=Ap8EZkWtTRY.

Linton, Simi. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. New York University Press, 1998.

“Locked in for Autism.” *Caudwell Children*, caudwellchildren.com/galleries/locked-in-for-autism/.

Longmore, Paul K. *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability.* Temple University Press, 2003.

Lunsford, Andrea. “Rhetoric, Feminism, and the Politics of Textual Ownership.” *College English*, vol. 61, no. 5, 1999, pp. 529-544.

MacKinnon, Catharine A. “Intersectionality as Method: A Note.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* vol. 38, no. 4, 2013, pp. 1019-1030.

“Marsha P. Johnson & Randy Wicker.” *Making Gay History*, Podcast, makinggayhistory.com/podcast/episode-11-johnson-wicker/.

Mary (@Marikunin). “Off to another sensory overloaded day at work. #actuallyautistic #work.” *Twitter,* 9 Feb. 2012, 2:05, twitter.com/Marikunin/status/167549727406161921.

Mastrangelo, Lisa. "[Coalition] Announcement regarding Coalition session at Cs." Received by Ruth Osorio, 6 Oct. 2017.

Mattingly, Carol. *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2000.

McCaughey, Martha. *Cyberactivism on the Participatory Web.* Routledge, 2014.

McDonald, James C., and Eileen E. Schell. "The Spirit and Influence of the Wyoming Resolution: Looking Back to Look Forward." *College English,* vol. 73, no. 4, 2011, pp. 360-378.

McGee, Michael Calvin. "'Social Movement,': Phenomenon or Meaning?" *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, 2nd ed, edited by Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne, Strata Press, 2006, pp. 115-26.

Meekosha, Helen. "Decolonising Disability: Thinking and Acting Globally." *Disability and Society,* vol. 26, no. 6, 2011, pp. 667-682. doi 10.1080/09687599.2011.602860.

Megarry, Jessica. "Online Incivility or Sexual Harassment? Conceptualising Women's Experiences In The Digital Age." *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 47A, 2014, pp. 46-55.

Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Miller, C. R. "A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing." *College English*, vol., 40, no. 6, 1979, pp. 610–617.

Moe, Peter Wayne. "Revealing Rather Than Concealing Disability: The Rhetoric of Parkinson's Advocate Michael J. Fox." *Rhetoric Review,* vol. 31, no. 4, 2012, pp. 443-60.

Mollow, Anna. *Sex and Disability*. Duke University Press, 2012.

Moore, Leroy. "Black History of 504 Sit-In for Disability Rights: More than Serving Food – When Will the Healing Begin?" *San Francisco Bay View: National Black Newspaper*, 11 Feb. 2014, sfbayview.com/2014/02/black-history-of-504-sit-in-for-disability-rights-more-than-serving-food-when-will-the-healing-begin/.

Morris, Charles E. "Archival Queer." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 1, Spring 2006, pp. 145-151.

Morris III, Charles E., and K. J. Rawson. "Queer Archives/Archival Queers." *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric,* edited by Michelle Ballif, Southern Illinois University Press, 2013, pp. 74-89.

Mossman, Mark. "Visible Disability in the College Classroom." *College English,* vol. 64, no. 6, 2002, pp. 645- 659.

Muñoz, José Esteban. "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts." *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory,* vol. 8, no. 2, 1996, pp. 5-16.

"No Movement is Perfect." *Patient No More*. The Paul Longmore Institute on Disability, 16 July 2015, youtube.com/watch?v=sfvWOESpHZ4.

Nolan, Jason, and Melanie McBride. “Embodied Semiosis: Autistic ‘Stimming’ as Sensory Praxis.” *International Handbook of Semiotics*, edited by Peter Pericles Trifonas, Springer Netherlands, 2015, pp. 1069–1078.

norman, Lauren (@jrtgirl35). “#AbleismExists when I can be bullied so badly I fear going into school because I'm autistic an no one stops it #actuallyautistic.” *Twitter,* 24 April 2016, 22:42, twitter.com/jrtgirl35/statuses/724352920314109955.

norman, Lauren (@jrtgirl35). “#AbleismExists when I go to a new doctor an they ask so your over this whole autism thing right like its a common cold #actuallyautistic.” *Twitter,* 24 April 2016, 22:30, twitter.com/jrtgirl35/statuses/724349735029641216.

norman, Lauren (@jrtgirl35). “#AbleismExists when I have to decide between wanting to keep my job and asking for the accommodations I need #ActuallyAutistic.” *Twitter,* 24 April 2016, 22:32, twitter.com/jrtgirl35/statuses/724350377018155008.

norman, Lauren (@jrtgirl35). “#AbleismExists when people in my own extended family bully me and treat me badly just because I'm autistic #actuallyautistic.” *Twitter,* 24 April 2016, 22:44, twitter.com/jrtgirl35/statuses/724353273285754881.

norman, Lauren (@jrtgirl35). “When #AbleismExists it's ok for the largest and most well known autism organization to call autistic people empty shells #ActuallyAutistic.” *Twitter,* 25 April 2016, 9:55, twitter.com/jrtgirl35/statuses/724642948592328704.

Nothing, Ehn. “Introductions: Queens against Society.” *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*, Untorelli Press, untorellipress.noblogs.org/files/2011/12/STAR.pdf. Accessed 23 Mar 2017.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

O'Toole, Corbett Joan. *Fading Scars: My Queer Disability History.* Autonomous Press, 2015.

Olkin, Rhoda. *What Psychotherapists Should Know About Disability.* Guilford Press, 1999.

Osorio, Ruth. “Embodying Truth: Sylvia Rivera’s Delivery of Parrhesia at the 1973 Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally.” *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2017, pp. 151-163.

Oswal, Sushil K. “Access to Digital Library Databases in Higher Education: Design Problems and Infrastructural Gaps.” *Work*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2014, pp. 307-317.

Owens, Kim Hensley. “Revelations and Representations: Birth Stories and Motherhood on the Internet.” *Textual Mothers, Maternal Texts: Representations of Mothering in Contemporary Women’s Literatures*, edited by Elizabeth Podnieks and Andrea O’Reilly, Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2010, pp. 351–66.

Palmeri, Jason. *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2012.

"Panthers Back Handicapped Demonstrators." *San Francisco Chronicle,* 8 April 1977, Microfilm.

Pelka, Fred. *What We Have Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement.* University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.

Penney, Joel, and Caroline Dadas. "(Re)Tweeting in the Service of Protest: Digital Composition and Circulation in the Occupy Wall Street Movement." *New Media & Society*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2013, pp. 74-90.

Perelman, Chaïm, and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.

Perry, David M. and Lawrence Carter-Long. *The Ruderman White Paper on Media Coverage Of Law Enforcement Use of Force and Disability*. Ruderman Family Foundation, 2016, http://rudermanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/MediaStudy-PoliceDisability_final-final.pdf.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. "Cripstory." *Patient No More*, The Paul Longmore Institute on Disability, longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu/patient-no-more/cripstory.

"Political Theater." *Patient No More*, The Paul Longmore Institute on Disability, longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu/patient-no-more/political-theater.

Porter, James E., et al. "Institutional Critique: A Rhetorical Methodology for Change." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2000, pp. 610-642.

Prendergast, Catherine. "On the Rhetorics of Mental Disability." *Towards a Rhetoric of Everyday Life: New Directions in Research on Writing, Text, and*

Discourse, edited by Martin Nystrand and John Duffy, University of Wisconsin Press, 2003, pp. 189-206.

Prenosil, Joshua D. "The Embodied Enthymeme: A Hybrid Theory of Protest." *JAC,* vol. 32, no. 1/2, 2012, pp. 279–303.

Price, Margaret, et. al. "Disclosure of Mental Disability by College and University Faculty: The Negotiation of Accommodations, Supports, and Barriers." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2017, dsq-sds.org/article/view/5487/4653. Accessed 12. Oct. 2017.

Price, Margaret. "Access Imagined: The Construction of Disability in Conference Policy Documents." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 29, no.1, 2009, dsq-sds.org/article/view/174/174. Accessed 12 Oct. 2017.

---. "Accessibility Guide for Atlanta, GA." *CCCC*, 2011, margaretprice.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/atlanta-accessibility-guide-2011.pdf. Accessed. 12 Oct. 2017.

---. "The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain." *Hypatia*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2015, pp. 268-284.

---. "Disability Studies Methodology: Explaining Ourselves to Ourselves." *Practicing Research in Writing Studies: Reflexive and Ethically Responsible Research*, edited by Katrina M. Powell and Pamela Takayoshi, Hampton Press, 2012, pp. 159-186.

---. *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life.* University of Michigan Press, 2011.

---. Phone Interview. 23 May 2017.

"Quiet Hands." *Just Stimming,* 5 Oct. 2011, juststimming.wordpress.com/2011/10/05/quiet-hands/.

Quintilian. *Institutes of Oratory.* In *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, edited by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001, pp. 359-428.

rae, arachne. "open letter to disabled lesbians." *Off Our Backs,* vol. 39, no. 1, 1981, p. 39.

Raff, Jeremy. "Why Americans With Disabilities Fear Medicaid Cuts." *The Atlantic,* 10 July 2017, theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/07/why-disabled-american-fear-medicaid-cuts/533085/.

Rand, Erin J. *Reclaiming Queer: Activist and Academic Rhetorics of Resistance*. University of Alabama Press, 2014.

Ratcliffe, Krista. *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2005.

raven (@femmemystique_). "@SamsungCanada Let's not [light it up blue]! #ActuallyAutistic people DO NOT support AS. We'd love to offer alternate orgs to support if anyone would listen!" *Twitter,* 1 April 2016, 16:03, femmemystique_/statuses/715917625126232064.

Reindal, Solveig Magnus. "Independence, Dependence, Interdependence: Some Reflections on the Subject and Personal Autonomy." *Disability & Society,* vol. 14, no. 3, 1999, pp. 353-367. doi 10.1080/09687599926190.

Rivera, Sylvia, and Arthur Bell. "Interview with Christopher Thompson." *Gay Flames*, no. 7, 1970. Archived at reinagossett.com/sylvia-rivera-star-and-arthur-bell-gay-activist/. Accessed 23 Mar 2017.

Rivera, Sylvia. "Bitch on Wheels." *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*. Untorelli Press, pp. 32-39, untorellipress.noblogs.org/files/2011/12/STAR.pdf. Accessed 23 Mar 2017.

---. "I'm Glad I Was in the Stonewall Riot." *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*, Untorelli Press, pp. 12-14, untorellipress.noblogs.org/files/2011/12/STAR.pdf. Accessed 23 Mar 2017.

---. "Queens in Exile, the Forgotten Ones." *Genderqueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*, edited by Joan Nestle, Clare Howell, and Riki A. Wilchins, Alyson Books, 2002, pp. 67-85.

---. "Transvestites: Your Half Sisters and Half Brothers of the Revolution." *COME OUT!* vol. 2, no. 8, 1972, p. 10.

---. "Y'All Better Quiet Down." *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*, Untorelli Press, pp. 30-31, untorellipress.noblogs.org/files/2011/12/STAR.pdf. Accessed 23 Mar 2017.

Rivers, Nathaniel and Ryan Weber. "Ecological, Pedagogical, and Public Rhetoric." *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 187-218, Dec 2011.

Roches Rosa, Shannon Des. "How 'Autism Warrior Parents' Harm Autistic Kids." *The Establishment*, 22 Sept. 2016, theestablishment.co/how-autism-warrior-parents-harm-autistic-kids-6700b8bf6677.

Rose (@Rose198172). "#AutismSpeaks10 #autismchampions I shouldn't have to fight the stigma you created by 'I am Autism' and 'Autism Everyday'. #Actuallyautistic" *Twitter*, 1 Mar. 2015, 21:33, twitter.com/Rose198172/status/572268500187787265.

Roseneil, Sasha. "Why We Should Care About Friends: An Argument for Queering the Care Imaginary in Social Policy." *Social Policy & Society,* vol. 3, no. 4, 2004, pp. 409- 419.

Royster, Jacqueline Jones and Gesa Kirsch. *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies.* Southern Illinois University Press, 2012.

Russell, Emily. *Reading Embodied Citizenship: Disability, Narrative, and the Body Politic.* Rutgers University Press, 2011.

Sanger, Karren L. "Functions of Freedom Singing in the Civil Rights Movement: The Activists' Implicit Rhetorical Theory." *Howard Journal of Communications*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2009, pp. 179-195.

Savarese, Emily Thornton, and Ralph James Savarese. "'The Superior Half of Speaking': An Introduction." *Disability Studies Quarterly,* vol. 30, no. 1, 2009.

Schalk, Sami. *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction*. Duke University Press, 2018.

Schweik, Susan. “Lomax's Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504.” *Disability Studies Quarterly,* vol. 31, no. 1, 2011.

Scott, Jerrie Cobb, Dolores Y. Straker, and Laurie Katz, eds. *Affirming Students' Right to Their Own Language: Bridging Language Policies and Pedagogical Practices*. Routledge, 2009.

Selzer, Jack, and Sharon Crowley, eds. *Rhetorical Bodies.* University of Wisconsin Press, 1999.

Sequenzia, Amy. “The Gymnastics of Person First Language.” *Ollibean*, ollibean.com/the-gymnastics-of-person-first-language/.

Serombeharambe (@Regallosauroid). “@jrtgirl35 btw this is heartbreaking as hell. when i was diagnosed at age of 5, my diagnosis papers said “the kid has empty eyes.”” Twitter, 25 April 2016, 12:21.

Shakespeare, Tom. “The Social Model of Disability.” *The Disability Studies Reader*, 5th ed, edited by Lennard Davis, Taylor and Francies, 2017, pp. 195-204.

Shapiro, Joseph. *No Pity*. Three Rivers Press, 1994.

Shepard, Benjamin. “From Community Organization to Direct Services: The Street Trans Action Revolutionaries to Sylvia Rivera Law Project.” *Journal of Social Service Research,* vol. 39., no. 1, 2013, pp. 95-114. doi. 10.1080/01488376.2012.727669.

---. “Sylvia and Sylvia’s Children: A Battle for a Queer Public Space.” *That’s Revolting!: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation*, edited by Mattilda Sycamore, Soft Skull Press, 2008, pp. 123-140.

Shoyer, Deanne (@OMum22). “Not receiving ABA/IBI services does not signal a "death knell" for #ActuallyAutistic people @TashaKheiriddin.” *Twitter,* 13 April 2016, 20:18, twitter.com/OMum22/statuses/720330362191093761.

Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Theory*. University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Sins Invalid. *Skin, Tooth, and Bone*. *The Basis of Movement is Our People: A Disability Justice Primer.* Sins Invaid, 2016.

Skylar Gordon (@queerandcashews). “#nothingaboutuswithoutus #asan #autism #actuallyautistic @ History Park at Kelley Park https://www.instagram.com/p/BEjSvB4RfnI/.” *Twitter,* 23 April 2016, 10:18, twitter.com/queerandcashews/statuses/723929166580723712.

Sledd, James. “Why the Wyoming Resolution Had to be Emasculated: A History and a Quixotism.” *Journal of Advanced Composition*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1991, pp. 269-281.

smith, s.e. " Why Are Huge Numbers of Disabled Students Dropping Out of College?” *Alternet*, 20 June 2014, alternet.org/education/why-are-huge-numbers-disabled-students-dropping-out-college. Accessed 28 March 2018.

Smitherman, Geneva. “‘Students’ Right to Their Own Language’: A Retrospective.” *The English Journal,* vol. 84, no. 1, 1995, pp. 21-27.

Snow, Kathie. “Person First Language.” *Disability Is Natural*, sccoe.org/depts/students/inclusion-collaborative/Documents/Person-First_Language_Article.pdf.

Sowards, Stacey K. and Valerie R. Renegar. “Reconceptualizing Rhetorical Activism in Contemporary Feminist Contexts.” *Howard Journal of Communications*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2007, pp. 57-74.

Spider Doof Warrior (@chromesthesia). “It's just not accurate to rely solely on autism narratives by parents and "experts". #actuallyautistic people live it and understand better.” *Twitter,* 20 April 2016, 17:31, twitter.com/chromesthesia/statuses/722825111019991040.

Stevens, Sharon McKenzie and Patricia M. Malesh. “Introduction: Active Voices.” *Active Voices: Composing a Rhetoric of Social Movements*, edited by Sharon McKenzie Stevens and Patricia M. Malesh, SUNY Press, 2009, pp. 1-22.

Stewart, Charles. “A Functional Approach to the Rhetoric of Social Movements,” *Communication Studies,* vol. 31, no. 4, 1980, pp. 298-305.

Strauss, Anselm L., and Juliet M. Corbin. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Sage Publications, 1990.

Sullivan, Patricia, and James E. Porter. *Opening Spaces: Writing Technologies and Critical Research Practices*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997.

Swetlitz, Ike. “Some Medical Students Still Think Black Patients Feel Less Pain Than Whites.” *STAT: Reporting from the Frontiers of Health and Medicine,* 4 April 2016, statnews.com/2016/04/04/medical-students-beliefs-race-pain/.

Sylvia Rivera Law Project. srlp.org/. Accessed 24 Mar. 2017.

Syverson, Margaret A. *The Wealth of Reality : An Ecology of Composition.* Southern Illinois University Press, 1999.

"The History Behind DPN." *Deaf President Now*. Gallaudet University. 2013, gallaudet.edu/about/history-and-traditions/deaf-president-now/the-issues/history-behind-dpn.

(@theochz). "If you truly care and support autistic people take your time to listen to #ActuallyAutistic people instead of a hate group that silences us." *Twitter,* 2 April 2016, 14:58, twitter.com/theochz/statuses/716263442697609220.

"The Question of Equality Show." *Testing the Limits*. Transcript. *Testing the Limits Records*, Tape #113, Call No. MssCol 3614. Box 15 foot 7. New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts, New York City, NY. Accessed 2017 Oct. 24.

Titchkosky, Tanya. *Reading and Writing Disability Differently: The Textured Life of Embodiment*. University of Toronto Press, 2007.

Turner, Bryan. "Outline a Theory of Human Rights." *Citizenship and Social Theory*, edited by Bryan Turner. *SAGE*, 1993.

Tusler, Anthony. "From left in helmet might be Frank Moore, in the Greek fisherman's hat is Dale Dahl, and Steve Dias with We Shall Overcome sign." *About Disability*, aboutdisability.com/pages/504I.html.

uninspirational (@notaspiring). "@AutisticZebra Also, the abuse of #ActuallyAutistic ppl isn't something ppl want to recognize, even though ABA is widely spread." *Twitter,* 1 April 2016, 19:01, twitter.com/notaspiring/statuses/715962233797406724.

Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation. *Fundamental Principles*. 1976.

Vick, Karl. "The Digital Divide: A Quarter of the Nation Is Without Broadband." *Time,* 30 March 2017, time.com/4718032/the-digital-divide/.

Vidali, Amy. "Rhetorical Hiccups: Disability Disclosure in Letters of Recommendation." *Rhetoric Review,* vol. 28, no. 2, 2009, pp. 185-204.

Wade, Cheryl Marie. "It Ain't Exactly Sexy." *The Ragged Edge: The Disability Experience from the Pages of the First Fifteen Years of* The Disability Rag, edited by Barrett Shaw, Advocado Press, 1994.

Wallis, Claudia. "'I Am Autism': An Advocacy Video Sparks Protest.'" *Time Magazine*. 6 Nov. 2009, http://content.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1935959,00.html.

Walters, Muffy. "CCCC 2012 Accessibility Guide: St. Louis." *CCCC*. http://www.ncte.org/library/nctefiles/groups/cccc/convention/2012/cccc2012accessibilityguide.pdf. Accessed 12 Oct. 2017.

---. Phone Interview. 31 May 2017.

Walters, Shannon. "Autistic Ethos at Work: Writing on the Spectrum in Contexts of Professional and Technical Communication." *Disability Studies Quarterly,* vol. 31, no. 3, 2011.

---. *Rhetorical Touch: Disability, Identification, Haptics*. University of South Carolina Press, 2014.

Wan, Amy J. *Producing Good Citizens: Literacy Training in Anxious Times.* University of Pittsburg Press, 2014.

Wanshel, Elyse. "People Who Are Not Disabled Need To Check Out #AbleismExists Right Now." *The Huffington Post*, 22 April 2016,

huffingtonpost.com/entry/dominick-evans-ableismexists-twitter-discrimination-against-disabled-people_us_571902c9e4b0c9244a7b2eb9#.

Wendell, Susan. *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*. Routledge, 2013.

West, Isaac. "PISSAR's Critically Queer and Disabled Politics." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies,* vol. 7, no. 2, 2010, pp. 156-175.

Wible, Scott. *Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.: The Role of Composition Studies*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2013.

Wood, Tara. *Disability and College Composition: Investigating Access, Identity, and Rhetorics of Ableism.* Dissertation. University of Oklahoma, 2014.

Yergeau, Melanie. "Clinically Significant Disturbance: On Theorists Who Theorize Theory of Mind." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2013.

---. "Disable All the Things." *Computers and Writing 2014 Keynote*. Pullman, WA, 2014.

---. "I Stim, Therefore I Am [Loud Hands Blogaround]." *YouTube* uploaded by kuiamalynne, 26 Jan. 2012, youtube.com/watch?v=s2QSvPIDXwA.

---. "Occupying Autism: Rhetoric, Involuntarity, and the Meaning of Autistic Lives." *Occupying Disability: Critical Approaches to Community, Justice, and Decolonizing Disability*, edited by Pamela Block et al., Springer Netherlands, 2016, pp. 83–95.

Yergeau, Melanie, et al. "Multimodality in Motion: Disability & Kairotic Spaces." *Kairos,* vol. 18, no. 1, 2013.

Young, Stella. “I Am Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much.” *TED Talk*, April 2014, ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much . Accessed 28 March 2018.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*. Sage, 2011.

Zarefsky, David. “A Skeptical View of Movement Studies.” *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest,* 2nd ed, edited by Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne, Strata Press, 2006, pp. 126-34.