ABSTRACT

(DIS)ABILITY BORDERLANDS, EMBODIED RHETORICAL AGENCY, AND ADHD METHODS OF MADNESS

by Kaydra Nicole Bui

In this thesis, I advocate for access and rhetorical agency for academics with in/visible (dis)abilities. This is also to say that my work is self-advocacy as I negotiate my positionality within academic ableism as a marginalized person with (dis)abilities. I take an intersectional and interdependent approach to (dis)ability justice and embodied rhetorics, dialoguing with borderland theory, critical race theory, feminist, and decolonial scholarship. Ultimately, I hope to model an ADHD/neuroqueer form of writing that allows me to discover the rhetorical strengths I and other neuroqueer writers have to offer while reimagining access in discursive sites of power such as the composition classroom, (dis)ability disclosure, and Student Disability Services.

(DIS)ABILITY BORDERLANDS, EMBODIED RHETORICAL AGENCY, AND ADHD METHODS OF MADNESS

A Thesis

Submitted to the

Faculty of Miami University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

by

Kaydra Nicole Bui

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

2019

Advisor: Jason Palmeri

Reader: Madelyn Detloff

Reader: Linh Dich

This thesis titled

(DIS)ABILITY BORDERLANDS, EMBODIED RHETORICAL AGENCY, AND ADHD METHODS OF MADNESS

by

Kaydra Bui

has been approved for publication by

The College of Arts and Science

and

Department of English

Jason Palmeri

Madelyn Detloff

Linh Dich

Table of Contents/Guidepost/Star Map

"As long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate." -- Gloria Anzaldúa (59).

Chapter 1: My (Dis)embodied Positioning in Academic Ableism

Origin Story Fragments of an Unlikely Protagonist

> *Academics . . . with mental disabilities are largely excluded from academic discourse. The instruments of exclusion are not visible or dramatic—men in white coats dragging people away—but quiet, insidious: We flunk out and dropout. We fail to get tenure. We take jobs as adjuncts rather than tenure track faculty. We transfer schools; we find a way to get a job or a degree elsewhere. Or not. . . . in the institutional terms of academic discourse, a sharp rhetorical divide exists between those who are allowed in and those who are not (6).*
> — Margaret Price, *Mad at School*

I wanted to find a beginning for this story, unravel the tapestry by a thread, because I know they want a beginning.

I wanted to say it began with this coping-narrative-turned-redemption-arc: I am an unlikely protagonist in academia.

I wanted to say it began with anxieties of how my white students would perceive my ethos as a young woman of color, especially as I struggled to hide memory slips, brain fog, fatigue, distractedness, and incoherent rambling. I wanted to say it began with faculty warning I would fail if I didn't meet agreements on deadlines and attendance, scolding me in their offices, suggesting I explore alternatives to academia. I wanted to say it began when I saw myself in my students struggling to communicate, attend class, and complete assignments despite their brilliance and best intentions.

I wanted to say it began with Vietnamese and Laotian American diaspora. With craving for an environment, education, and structure where I could feel valued and protected among queer, Asian American, and neuroatypical communities. I wanted to say it began when I found kinship with other graduate students who live with cultural isolation, gender discrimination, chronic depression, anxiety, and Attention Deficit Hyperactive

Disorder, and who shared their stories and strategies for survival. I wanted to say it began when I decided to "out" myself to my students as disabled and ADHD, when students both registered and unregistered with Student Disability Services felt they could then confide in and trust me to meet their needs and their strengths. I wanted to say it began with the alienation I saw in my few students of color in a room of white peers, and how we trusted to mutually let our walls down to each other.

I wanted to say it began because I couldn't focus on anything except for how my disabilities made graduate school physically impossible, so I decided to make this problem my focus. I wanted to say it began when *graduate school* disallowed my disabilities to succeed within its structure. I wanted to say it began when I began to recognize and identify my conditions as disabilities rather than my personal failures.

I wanted to say it began when I associated college with nothing but guilt, the feeling of letting down my mentors who nominated me for awards, who wrote my letters of recommendation, who guided my research, who look at me with shock and said, "I am so disappointed in you." I wanted to say it began when my sleep disorder developed, followed by my 3.9 GPA plummeting as I began failing each and every one of my classes. I wanted to say it began when my ADHD and dyslexia went undiagnosed, and I scored beneath my abilities on ACT exams, AP exams, chemistry and physics exams, the entrance exam for the "gifted" middle school. I wanted to say it began when my fifth grade teacher had a talk with my parents about my forgetfulness with assignments, which they wrote off as air-headedness. I wanted to say it began when I was five and suspicious that a veil of fog separated me from the world, that I could see a little clearer if only I could reach inside my brain and wipe its glass clean with my sleeve.

I wanted to say it began in elementary school, when my immigrant parents taught me that I was strong for a girl. That I was smart and naturally gifted. That good grades were a source of praise, pride, and eased anxieties, knowing that their daughter could compete in this hostile world. I wanted to say it began with my grandfather working one of three jobs as a janitor at Purdue University, where his children would have the opportunity to attend higher education through employee scholarships. I wanted to say it began when my father was nine years old, leaving his home during the fall of Saigon by armed helicopter. I wanted to say it began with my mother wading through the night swamps of Laos as a child, fleeing to Thailand and carrying a legacy of survival that I am a product of.

The problem is that I'm trying to begin the problem with me, and not the system. The ableist institution, the white patriarchal capitalist structure, the generational trauma induced by colonial violence. The systemic suffering of my communities have become clearer and clearer to me only because I have what I have: diasporic upbringing as a queer Asian American woman with "invisible" disabilities. ADHD, executive dysfunction, idiopathic hypersomnia, chronic depression, and a verbal processing disorder to name a few. My positionalities are my lenses and entry points for negotiating compassion, reform, and pedagogies of access.

I am your unlikely protagonist. I am writing this in the doorway—one hand faltering on the knob, the other tightening to a fist. I am disposable to your structure, but I am indispensable to your justice.

Hero's Quests

There is no inspiring story arc that led to my thesis work—only my recurrent experiences of academic exclusion and ableism driving me to a corner, coercing my attention towards the shared wounds of my communities. This work is catalyzed from an intense desire to heal our suffering by reclaiming disability pride and rectifying ableist practices and paradigms in academia. This is a labor of survival because I cannot envision the luxury to choose otherwise.

I invest my energies towards elevating my disabled, queer, colonized, and POC/WOC communities in academic spaces. In the same breath, this energy is towards honoring *myself*. As a tactic of self-preservation and self-nurture, here I am advocating for *myself* as a teacher-student worth including in critical pedagogy, accessibility, and power structures. Here I am navigating my experiences, my harmful internalizations, and my praxis through critical self-reflection, questioning, and reframing. Here I am finally beginning the work of my *own* healing to make this labor sustainable. To commit wholeheartedly to disability accessibility and empowerment, I hope to honor, reframe, and render my "invisible" experiences as visible.

In all its limitations of time, scope, and practicality, this thesis is merely one of my first steps towards flipping ableist power scripts in academia. Several interconnected, key focus areas guide the personal, institutional, and disciplinary justice sought in this work:

> **Interdependence:** I am guided by Audre Lorde's call for "interdependence of (nondominant) mutual difference" as a model for intersectional work with borderland, decolonial, POC, feminist, and queer-identifying scholars who share common goals with (dis)ability justice. How can we hear out and explore student experiences with "invisible" disabilities intersecting with other marginalized identities? How do experiences with disability intersect with whiteness and privilege? How does ableism interlock with other systemic oppressions built in academia, such as racism and classism?
>
> **Borderlands:** How can framing disability within borderland theory and rhetorics offer generative approaches to understanding and negotiating in/visibility, identity performance, and accessibility? Within white abled hegemonies that destabilize my sense of belonging and identity, how can borderland activist-scholars guide me in healing, finding my footing, and gaining strength to move forward with this lifelong work?
>
> **Embodied identities:** How can embodied experiences, knowledges, meaning-making center our understandings of disability and disability intersections? What are the consequences of disembodying identity from academic discourse, pedagogy, accessibility services? How can embodied rhetorics ground critical approaches to accessible pedagogies and academic support structures?

> **Reform of access and praxis:** How can these intersectional and embodied considerations of disabilities reframe accessibility and challenge ableist paradigms in academia, especially within abled timelines, accommodation negotiation, and Student Disability Services?

My research scope is largely motivated by the affordances and limitations of my own positionality as a middle-class, queer, Southeast Asian-American woman with "invisible" disabilities. In navigating my own narrative, I hope to illuminate areas of solidarity while also remaining reflexively critical and avoiding "speaking for" the non-homogenous experiences of others.

I also do not want to pretend to cast an overly ambitious, if not harmfully wide net of intersectional focus in this work. Instead, I would like to echo the honesty of Gilborn et al.'s work at the intersections of race, class, and disability in education (36):

> [We] did not set out to focus equally on every possible dimension of identity and equality—indeed, we doubt that any project and team of researchers could possibly do justice to *every possible* intersectional dynamic. [...] Indeed, different scholars approach intersectionality from different places, often privileging one set of identities and issues in their analysis (Bhopal & Preston, 2012).

Similarly, I acknowledge that my disability-centered research largely privileges issues intersecting with race, which truthfully comes from converging reflections on disability and Asian American diaspora in my own life, in part stimulated by graduate course readings in biopolitics, critical race theory, and borderland rhetorics. I am also motivated by the calls of disability and composition scholars such as Margaret Price, who urge needed intersectional research of "mental disability with factors including class, race, gender, and sexuality" (231). Of course, disability and race intersections implicate varying loci of identity and power that are important to my understandings, research, and discussion. I want to heed Gilborn et al.'s caution by acknowledging that I am unable to give equal weight to *all* factors that boil to the surface, though I hope to at least gesture towards these intersectional and interdependent areas for future work.

Despite my best efforts, I have revised much of this writing to better fit the traditional, neurotypical sense of progression, compartmentalization, and coherence. If I had a choice, this would be a visually mapped website, a bulletin of note clusters pinned by connecting threads, an interactive multimedia exhibit, or a multifaceted object you could rotate in your hands. While this thesis is split into two major parts, I would like you to think of these dividers through chapters, headers, and other visual breaks as permeable membranes. These containers bleed into one another and share blood. For those who attempt to follow my ways of moving, or for those who want to pursue their own ways of moving, here I offer a guidepost/roadmap/starmap of sorts to navigate chapter contents that compound but may also be engaged with nonlinearly. You may also follow all detour signs, rest stops, and unmarked secret paths as you wish.

This first chapter is centered on finding my footing for my (dis)embodied positionalities. I continue tracing my path of experiences that have culminated to shape the heart of my research goals. In order to talk about disability, I negotiate how disability

language is used within this writing, in part by reflecting on my own relationship with disability language and briefly tracing disability language in both pathologizing and reclaimed contexts. I then negotiate my unique approach to embodied, neuroqueer writing in this thesis that melds narrative, poetic, and traditional academic genres.

Many of the themes seeded in Chapter 1 reiterate, transform, and amass nuance throughout Chapter 2. In the second half of this winding journey, I ground understandings of disability in theoretical frameworks of borderlands and embodied identities, knowledges, and language. By bringing POC, decolonial, queer, and womxn scholars into dialogue, I also begin shaping an approach to disability justice that is interdependent with other social justice work. My reflections and supporting scholarship then concern issues of rhetorical agency and accessibility in academia, especially pertaining to language in American Disabilities Act (ADA) policies, Student Disability Services, disability disclosure, and ADHD diagnostics. Finally forced to a close, I linger on major implications and suggestions for structural and pedagogical reform.

Negotiating & Reclaiming Disability Language

"Disability" is a word loaded with oppression and empowerment, with ostracization and community, depending on how and by whom it is used, because as Geoffrey Reaume argues, "No term in the history of madness is neutral" (qtd in Price 9). When I reflect on my early notions of disability, a dim, sterile memory resurfaces. . .

I was in seventh grade the first time a doctor suggested that I may have depression. She tried to be kind. "If a patient had a cold, we'd treat them with medicine. If you're sick with depression, treating you with medicine is no different." I felt discomforted by her invasive assumptions and by the clinical characterization of being "sick," despite knowing it was true: I was depressed. With my mother in the room, I felt uncomfortable expressing any affirmation. Like many Asian American families, we didn't openly talk about our private sufferings while growing up. At least, not yet. We didn't readily trust doctors who profited from our visits, who often glanced over our health concerns to prescribe medication as a simple fix. My mother and I both left the clinic that day without talking about it.

Years later, I understand the doctor's encouraging efforts to destigmatize mental illness and medication for my mother and I as well-meaning. But I realize that her inclination to treat my depression solely in terms of chemical deficiencies still missed the bigger picture, as all doctors have throughout my life. I am always treated as an isolated system of dysfunctions. But to what extent is my "sickness" symptomatic of the capitalist, patriarchal environment that has shaped me and shaped the traumas I have inherited from generations of Southeast Asian women, refugees, and survivors before me?

Medical treatment of the body is only part of the picture. I need the whole damn *system* to undergo radical treatment. In *Claiming Disability*, Simi Linton critiques psychiatric traditions that aim disability intervention on the personal and medical level, neglecting how to instead "intervene to alter the environment" (6). I am reminded of my university

psychiatrist, an older white man, who suggested I "lower my expectations" of my graduate program and academia's labor culture. Instead, it is my body and my habits that need revision to perform "good work." His approach reflects the tradition's "endorsement of the idea of 'normalcy,' which centers certain types of behavior, functioning, and appearance" upheld by deficit models of disability (Linton 6). But against whose "normalcy" is *dis*ability, *dis*order, and mental *illness* defined? Against whose models of "health" is disability highlighted as a negative, deviant, defect? Price advocates for the theoretical and activist stance of disability studies, which argues that "disability is a mode of human difference, one that becomes a problem only when the environment or context treats it as such" (4). Clinical, positivist, and deficit centered notions of disability often eclipse how disability is *constructed* within sociopolitical environments, motives, and values.

Convenient how *ableds* get to name *disability*. Convenient how those outside our experiences get to designate our realities to us, based on their abled norms and terms of legitimacy. I feel trapped in this language. Catherine Prendergast highlights that "to be disabled is to be disabled rhetorically," since nonnormative ways of "making sense" to ableds are rendered as nonsensical, illogical, invalid (202). I extend this argument by asserting that *to be prescribed language within an ableist paradigm is to be disabled rhetorically.* For many, disability language perpetuates deficit models of disability while removing responsibility of the disabling environment that defines disability, one that does not construct a validating space for such disabilities to thrive or be conceived of as "normal." I am tired of the oppressor's language in my mouth.

[The path continues ahead, but off to the left, a portal can be found in the undergrove. You may transport to continued discussion of rhetorical agency in the epilogue if you wish. Mind any cognitive turbulence in the spacetime skip.]

When I think of the power in naming a people, an experience, or a reality, I think of how Gloria Anzaldúa describes beauty in the naming of Chicanx people (63):

> Chicanos did not know we were a people until 1965 when Ceasar Chavez and the farmworkers united and *I Am Joaquín* was published and *la Raza Unida* party was formed in Texas. With this recognition, something momentous happened to the Chicano soul—we became aware of our reality and acquired a name and a language (Chicano Spanish) that reflected that reality. Now that we had a name, some of the fragmented pieces began to fall together.

I am moved by how naming can render visibility, legitimacy, and community for a people, as it did in epistemic, material, and sociopolitical ways for the Chicanx people. I am moved in thinking of both the deprivation and availability of language tools that can reflect, navigate, negotiate, and make manifest our realities and its "fragmented pieces."

For me, some of the "fragmented pieces" fell together in high school when I first came across the terms *neurotypical* and *neuroatypical* within Tumblr discourse to describe those who do and do not fit dominant cognitive norms. Terms like neuroatypical and neurodiverse had originated by and for autistic communities, but have since gained traction and expanded working definitions among other communities who identify as marginalized by abled cognitive norms (Price). Nick Walker, Athena Lynn Michaels-Dillon, and Melanie

Yergeau coined a related term *neuroqueer* that, as Yergeau explains, "signifies ways of being, thinking, and moving that have been typified as marginal, deviant, minoritized, and/or different." I find myself resonating with the flexibility of how neuroqueer can serve as identity marker, adjective, and verb. Nick Walker says it best: "A neuroqueer individual is an individual whose identity has in some way been shaped by their engagement in practices of neuroqueering. Or, to put it more concisely (but perhaps more confusingly): you're neuroqueer if you neuroqueer." Encountering these self-referent terms, however imperfect or heteroglossic in its communal working definitions, was transformative for me: I felt equipped with tools of solidarity. By extension, I could finally begin to access a critical worldview that validated me and necessarily challenged ableist norms in the very act of *naming* them.

While I felt safe in claiming neuroatypical and neuroqueer, for most of my life, identifying with *disability* never struck me as a possibility, even after diagnoses for depression, anxiety, and ADHD. Perhaps it was because I thought disability was a marker that a doctor had to explicitly bestow me. Perhaps it was the stigma the word carried or my own misconceptions of what disability was supposed to look like. Like the hesitance I've felt in claiming *queer* and claiming *Asian*, I wondered: Are my experiences legitimate enough? Do I have any right to claim marginalization? Am I encroaching? Or do I belong in the spaces, communities, and movements attached to these identities? And if I do belong, what would it mean to explicitly politicize myself this way? What would I risk, what would I gain?

In the crucible of graduate school, these questions reached a melting point. Never in life have I tried so hard to perform as abled, and despite my tireless efforts, it was the first time I could no longer "pass." Not in its grueling labor culture, not in graduate seminars, not in the program's abled timeline (all of which I'll unpack later). When I looked in the eye my bodymind's incompatibilities with academia, I had a "coming out" to both myself and faculty as *disabled*. As an identity that is more institutionally recognized, I came to realize that I *needed* to claim disability for self-protection, and because I was cornered into no other truth. Claiming disability came from finally centering failures not on myself, but on the structures that have failed to support and include *me*. It was at this juncture of claiming disability that I began framing my narrative as an underdog RPG hero/superhero/anime protagonist. After all, I *do* seem to check off a mash-up of tropes and then some:

- ☑ Threatened by authorities who antagonize my "harmful" superpowers
- ☑ Disguise "true" identity when necessary
- ☑ Meet other heroes who teach me the value of claiming my powers
- ☑ Train to level up in character, ability stats, and mentorship of others
- ☑ Attempt to achieve what no one believes I can
- ☑ Risk safety in seeking to infiltrate and bring justice to institutions
- ☑ Form secret hero support systems, redeem some enemies, gain allies along the way

I frame this hero's quest light-heartedly, but truthfully, this is also how I've found strength and grounding. For me, claiming identities has often been guided by informative pain and dissonance within exclusionary structures, followed by a deep ache to connect to others who know this pain. I crave to heal through shared solidarity, coping, unlearning,

and resistance. Linton describes how the term *disability* has been reclaimed from its clinical origins by the disability community, disability rights activists, and disability studies scholars:

> When disability is redefined as a social/political category, people with a variety of conditions are identified as people with disabilities or disabled people, a group bound by common social and political experience. These designations, as reclaimed by the community, are used to identify us as a constituency, to serve our needs for unity and identity, and to function as a basis for political activism (12).

Like claiming *queer* and claiming *Asian*[1], for me, claiming *disability* granted me a sense of access to community, a home in an identity, and indeed a fiery "basis for political activism" in my self-presentation, day-to-day conversations, and pedagogical practices. The more openly I have identified with and talked about my experiences with disabilities, the more friends, family, peers, colleagues, and students have felt solidarity or encouragement to reach out to me about their allyship or kindred experiences. To echo Margaret Price, "In my own experience, claiming disability has been a journey of community" (21). The more I have asserted my "invisible" disabilities as visible, the more I have attracted the love, conversation, and strength of my own kind that, for me, were worth the harms I also risked.

While I find myself centering *disabled* as one of my primary identities, others prefer the "person-first" language of "having disabilities." This stems from a history in which the terms "the disabled" or "the handicapped," were replaced in the mid-70s by "people with disabilities" to reclaim identity that is not reduced to disabilities alone (Linton 13). Negotiations of how communities re/claim disability reminds me of a question I saw in an ADHD Facebook group for womxn: "Do you say *I am ADHD* or *I have ADHD*?" This negotiation of person-first language was sparked by similar discussions seen in autistic communities. But I feel squeezed by static language and binary logic. ADHD nouns me, verbs me, adjectives me, neuroqueers me. There's something I like about the self-referent term "ADHDer" that has generated from the ADHD community, where ADHD could be read as something we *do*. I switch between "being ADHD" and "having ADHD" depending on who I'm framing ADHD to and what I'm emphasizing in my ever-fluctuating power relationship with ADHD. In many ways, I value ADHD as intrinsic to the "real me" in my creativity, passions, intensity, detail-oriented nature, iterative and associative thinking. Other times, I'd laugh, explaining, "Sorry, ADHD made me tune out, can you repeat what you just said?" or "My ADHD hyperfocused on the wrong thing for six hours straight, so I didn't finish the readings." By framing the actions or agency of ADHD, I feel better able to explain that my behaviors are not always voluntary, especially when I feel antagonized by ADHD's extreme brain fog, executive dysfunction, and fatigue that disconnect from my desires, intentions, and agency. So I both *have* ADHD and *am* ADHD. I am disabled. I am an ADHDer.

I continue learning from those who have reclaimed "disabled" to continue flipping the power script in critical ways. Sparked by disability rights activist Imani Barbarin

[1] Connections among my claiming of disabled, queer, and Asian identities are further unpacked in the second chapter.

(@Imani_Barbain), the hashtag #AbledsAreWeird organizes a shared narrative space for personal encounters with harmful, discriminatory behavior by ableds. These critical stories, layered with touches of wry humor, foster solidarity while educating others on everyday ableism. This was the first time I encountered the word "ableds" to nominalize abled people, to subversively highlight *their* privilege of abled identity and norms. "Ableds" is also more expansive than the term "neurotypicals" or NTs, which is limited to cognitive-based norms and privileges. I am reminded of LGBTQ+ communities who would sigh with exasperation, "The *straights* are at it again." This naming of the dominant, privilege norm mirrors how marginalized groups have been historically reduced to "the disabled" and "the homosexuals." There is a connection, too, in the various naming of whiteness by POC communities ("whitey," "yt pipo," and my recent favorite, "colonizers"). I will also refer to ableds in this writing to underscore the kinds of bodies and brains that are systemically privileged and taken as the unnamed, homogenizing default.

It's clear that there is no universal terminology that best communicates or establishes non-homogenous identities that are excluded by abled norms. While this may lead to fragmentation of communities, I find great value in the communally reflexive working definitions and uses of language, which are variably negotiated and re/created to fit our non-monolithic needs and realities. For myself and for this writing, I have been toying with the term *(dis)ability*—seeing how it feels in the mouth/heart, how it holds up in communication and understanding, what meanings it does or doesn't evoke. For the purposes of this thesis, (dis)ability may connote the negotiability of and resistance against seeing (dis)abilities as inherently broken, ill, something to be cured or fixed in the ableist paradigm. It may connote that the *dis-* in *disability* is violently and discriminatorily imposed by the disabling language, ideologies, and structural mechanisms of ableist culture. (Dis)ability may also maintain accessible understandings and sense of community, since widespread solidarity has been established within the reclaimed identity of *disability*. By subtly but tactfully refiguring *(dis)ability* rhetorically, I hope to use it as a critical tool of empowerment. Throughout this writing, I may shift between uses of *disability* and *(dis)ability* to highlight how the terms are doing different work.

Similarly throughout this work, I will echo Stephanie Kerschbuam assertion that "in/visible disabilities" are not necessarily covert:

> Passing. Masquerade. Coming out. Covering. As the range of these terms suggests, disability disclosure is not a singular event, not a once-and-for-all action, but, rather, an ongoing process of continuously, in a variety of setting and contexts, performing and negotiating disability awareness and perceptibility (1).

While the overlapping discourses of "coming out," "passing," and "covering" among people of color, LGBTQ+, and (dis)ability communities do not equate their contexts, these terms reveal areas of common ground in how marginalized bodyminds must constantly negotiate the "visibility," disclosure, and performance of their identities. The act of covering and coming out, however, may be voluntary or involuntary. In *Mad at School*, Price complicates individual agency in (dis)ability disclosure, arguing that "invisible" and "hidden" misnomers that commonly label mental and social (dis)abilities "may become vividly manifest in forms ranging from 'odd' remarks to lack of eye contact to repetitious stimming" (18). My

embodied identities manifest multidimensionally in the classroom, whether or not I am deliberative of it. There are things I cannot control: How I am overtly a young, Asian womxn. How my speech is involuntarily "littered" with feminine inflections and "filler words" stereotyped as lacking masculine forms of intelligence, confidence, or eloquence. I cannot control how I regularly stumble over and slur my speech, how I struggle to spell words on the board, how I take a significant amount of time to grade and offer feedback on major projects, how I sometimes lose my place in listening and speaking, how I tremble when I am nervous, how I can be sluggish with brain fog or chronic sleepiness. The "invisibility" of my (dis)abilities are questionable. One's agency circumstantially varies in negotiating how, when, and where to minimize perceptibility of (dis)ability while highlighting normative qualities favorable to ableist structures.

In the minutiae of externalized (dis)ability behaviors through daily interactions, I also think of how my (dis)abilities have been indirectly seen and acknowledged by educators all my life. They would often question why I was sleeping through classes, misreading directions, forgetting assignments, and struggling with time-sensitive work despite my apparent capabilities. Price argues, "Like queerness, psychosocial disability is not so much invisible as it is apparitional, and its 'disclosure' has everything to do with the environment in which it dis/appears" (18). Why else would I have to "come out" as (dis)abled or having ADHD and hypersomnia in order to explain behaviors that were written off as laziness? Our ways of being have tangible and visible manifestations, but are rendered as in/visible symptoms through corrective ableist lenses, the same norm which imposes the *dis-* in disability. In/visibility is less a symptom of (dis)ability and more so a symptom of a paradigm complicit in (dis)ability erasure.[2]

While I myself claim and identify with being neuroatypical, neuroqueer, and (dis)abled, those I hope to reach may not identify with these terms. As much as claiming identity markers is my personal choice, it is also a social-political move, one that carries dis/empowerment that shifts with context. And so I do my best to not impose my own language for self-identification onto others.

Long, Wandering, ADHD Approach to Neuroqueer Rhetoric

Walk the talk, they say. *Put your money where your mouth is.*

But isn't your mouth also the money? Isn't *your* kind of talking the valid currency—the standard I must twist my mouth to fit? The default bodymind that most structures of power are predicated on? In "What Does it Mean to Move?: Race, Disability, and Critical Embodiment Pedagogy," Christina Cedillo interrogates the implications of dominant positionalities latent in academic discourse.

[2] If this thesis were an exhibit space without an enforced chronological arrangement, you might find yourself wandering to "Interdependent Rhetorical Agency to Interpret, Name, and Speak for Oneself" in Chapter 2.

> Students learn to compose with default notions of communication and reception aimed at the whitestream, that version of reality 'principally structured on the basis of white, middle-class experience' (Grande 330). To this habituated impression, I would add ablebodiedness, since notions about what it means to be fully human merge race and disability as categories of deficiency.

I ground this work in how Cedillo threads language, power, subjectivity, and embodiment as inseparable; we cannot isolate one without implicating the others. Jay Dolmage traces how academia—in its teachings, discourse, and power structure—is steeped in histories and present manifestations of nationalist, colonizing, ableist eugenics. "The 'invisibility' of privileged bodies lends credence to the discourses advanced through those bodies, equating their speech with objectivity as though said discourses were not products of specific standpoints," Cedillo argues. Prescribing Standard English discounts that our material, subjective, discursive experiences are varied. To presume that discourse can be "isolated" from the bodies who shape them only perpetuates power and homogenization centered in whiteness, Western rationalism, and abled-bodymindedness. In Cedillo's experiences as a Chicanx academic with (dis)abilities, she testifies, "I am automatically expected to perform in identical ways as my white colleagues, to engage new ideas as they do as though the only real difference between us is an ethnic label rather than an epistemology"—if identity is a mere political marker rather than a way of knowing and being. A violence and erasure occurs in separating cultural identity from embodiment, epistemology, and language.

As I work through my own body and identities within this writing performance, I want to remain mindful of how Dolmage describes (dis)ability as a way to *move*. Turning *walk the talk* on its head, to *really* put theory into praxis, how can I also *talk the walk*? That is, how can I speak the way I move? What does this mean for me? For my (dis)abilities, which is my way of moving though my body, my thinking, my composing? Even now, I feel claustrophobic in this linear format. I feel estranged by my own talking in this genre. I want to liberate *my* ways of moving through writing.

So allow me the liberty to scene cut, and trust me on the jump.

In my junior year of college, I came home one evening to find the fallen body of our aloe vera, slumped at the foot of its pedestaled pot. Despite our forgetfulness to care for it, the aloe had lived in my family's home just as long as I have. My mom would use its nectar to soothe her cooking burns. In its cramped quarters and brittle soil, the succulent somehow persisted and grew to be massive, heaving the weight of its toothed feelers towards the window. It must have finally toppled from its pot when stretching for a clutch of curtained light, attempting to survive the circumstances we neglected it in. Something about this sight deeply unsettled me and I turned away.

[A good friend of mine is a Latinx fiction writer and literature major. In college, he once pointed out to me, "You know, you often start a new story in the middle of one story without explanation. So I follow along, wondering where this is going, until the connection that sparked the new story makes a surprise appearance."]

I thought the aloe vera would have died long before this. When we continued leave it out on the hardwood and neglect it for several days longer, I thought we were *letting* it die. Finally, my dad (who endearingly dubs the aloe as a "monster" for its chaos of tentacle-like anatomy) repotted it in fresh, spacious soil and moved it to the sunroom. Then something unexpected happened: the aloe vera would not stop sprouting life. Tiny green feelers kept poking up from the soil in droves, and still do to this day. Suddenly we had a nursery of succulents overflowing our sunroom. My dad told me that the aloe's major root had twisted by its intent to survive, now had space and mobility to send offshoots to the soil's surface, allowing incessant growth in all directions.

["Do you think the winding way you tell stories is a product of femininity? As opposed to more Western, masculine, teleological, action-driven narratives?"

"Yeah, it's probably that and my ADHD."]

I know why I feel cramped. Why I feel so hungry and stir-crazy in this tradition, writing in this straight-jacket document. I am returning to my roots. Like the aloe vera, I am uprooting, shaking my feet out from this grave plot that no longer serves my growth. I feel tangled in Rhodes' contemplations on the *rhizome* of knowledge:

> In botany, and in my garden, a rhizome is known as *rootstock*, which grows and spreads through multiple nodes underground, and which might send up a flower from any and all of those nodes. For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome is [...] a mapping rather than a tracing of knowledge. It works with planes and interconnected and tangled lines rather than through vertical and hierarchical lines [...] They write: "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo."

Now *this* connects. The rhizome's entangled, nonlinear betweeness is a way of knowing, a way of moving I identify with. From a neurotypical and teleological perspective, ADHD's associative logics and storytelling are often corrected for disjointedness and for wandering from a focused point. Yergeau describes how characteristics of the neuroqueer rhizome and rhizomatic neuroqueer can resist narrow ideas of "focus":

> Associational thinking, executive dysfunction, obsession, dysfluency, stiltedness, hallucinations, motoric awkwardness—these are all methods and cognitive processes that are typically mapped onto neurodivergent bodyminds. As well, these are processes and methods known for their unpredictable unfoldings, for their capacities to defy point, purpose, and fixity.

How often I've been taught that my ADHD processes of associative thinking and composing were "incoherent," "tangential," "roundabout," "obscure," and "unfocused" with "fingers in too many pies." But the narrowed attention of *ableds* misses the bigger, intuitive, ecological picture. They see the surface "offshoots," but not the interwoven roots beneath. My ADHD is rhizomatic, drawing lines across seemingly disparate points to constellate a narrative picture.

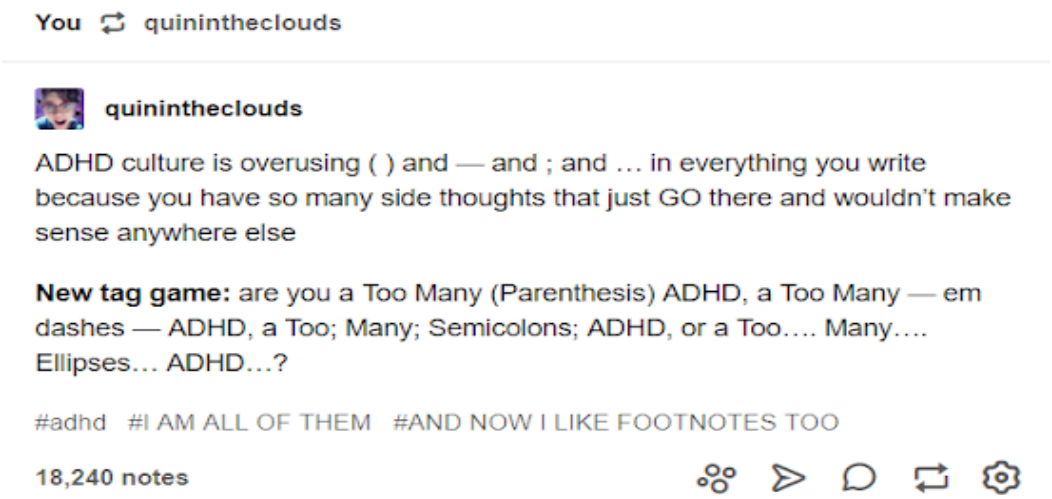
During my freshman year of college, a professor (who would later create the program of Engaged Learning) advised me that my diverse disciplinary interests, however conflicting it might seem to "choose" between them, were my strength rather than weakness. In a structure that forced a disciplinary focus despite being a liberal arts institution, this "strength" didn't seem to have any supported, tangible place. Still, the idea seeded in me, expanding roots, constellating across nodes. In my university, I became the first student to major in rhetoric and composition by proposing an interdisciplinary curriculum that synthesized courses in composition, sociolinguistics, philosophy, new media studies, digital humanities, and social sciences. With courses taught in their respective departments and fields, my education was compartmentalized, yet in confluence—I was the conductor who actively, creatively, and kairotically orchestrated its many parts, harmonizing theories, questions, problems, and methods across the rhizome.

And so I've come to reclaim my ADHD's "distracted" associative logics as a superpower of *synthesis*. But who can teach me how to truly wield rather than compromise these powers? This document reads from beginning to end, paragraph to paragraph, chapter to chapter, point A to B to C, thesis to support to conclusion. I feel compartmentalized, disarranged. While brain cells can be extracted and studied in a dish hours after death, Yale neuroscientist Nenad Sestan cautions, "the problem is, once you do that, you are losing the 3D organization of the brain" (Greenfieldboyce). So what happens when you force a beginning and end on the rhizome that is "always in the middle" (Deleuze and Guattari qtd in Rhodes)? What do you lose when flattening its dimensions and intersplicing planes? When I open my mouth or put words to the page, I often tongue-tie and collapse my own genius, twisting my mouth to accommodate masculine, Western, neurotypical formulas of logic and linearity. Something feels maddening and lost in this meaning-making process. As I'm writing these chapters and subsections, I feel as though I am fishing out mutilated melodies, severed from the multidimensional orchestra. What I feel, what I experience, what I connect, and what I have to say often feels unsayable and ineffable.

As Nick Walker puts it, "You're neuroqueer if you neuroqueer." So how do I walk my talk? If disability is both noun and verb, a "way to move" as Dolmage argues, then we must interrogate what rhetorical motions are invalidated, reprimanded, denied, or neglected movable space. For the rhizome to stretch, it must be given the nurturing space and conditions. For my superpower of synthesis to truly thrive and bear its fruit, *I* must be given validating and empowering space for my ways of moving, circling, leaping, weaving, wandering. I am moved by Yergeau's webtext, "Wandering Rhetoric, Rhetoric Wandering," in which rhetorical wandering is rhizomatic, expressive, purposeful, revealing, and *neuroqueer* in "ways of being, thinking, and moving that have been typified as marginal, deviant, minoritized, and/or different." Like Yergeau, I want to stretch how this container of a document can *talk and walk*, reclaiming my own voice that "*neuroqueers* and *is neuroqueer*," that cannot play nice by the rules, that walks with necessary deviance.

You know, I've always appreciated the ways ADHDers share and empathize with one another's interpersonal and communication behaviors—even the parts that make speaking difficult or "incoherent" (interruptions of engagement or assurance, pauses for thinking, fumbling to deliberate the right words). So how does this embodied neuroqueerness

translate to writing practices? While scrolling through ADHD Tumblr, I came across @quinintheclouds' description of ADHD punctuation culture and realized for the first time that ADHDers also share ADHD-specific writing habits:



[Image description: Tumblr post by @quinintheclouds says, "ADHD culture is overusing ( ) and — and ; and … in everything you write because you have so many side thoughts that just GO there and wouldn't make sense anywhere else // **New tag game:** are you a Too Many (Parenthesis) ADHD, a Too Many — em dashes — ADHD, a Too; Many; Semicolons; ADHD, or a Too…. Many…. Ellipses… ADHD…?" I reblog with the tags "#adhd #I AM ALL OF THEM #AND NOW I LIKE FOOTNOTES TOO."]

I was not alone in feeling stir-crazy and resistant against progressive, linear, goal-oriented, concise, and "coherent" writing. I felt true kinship in this post along with the 18,000+ notes that revealed solidarity in the ADHD Tumblr community. Many users also point to other punctuation and grammatical expressions of ADHD parsing, emphasis, "disruptions," pauses, and asides. In the comments, some common tendencies included "overuses" of commas, punctuation omission, run-on sentences, numerous clauses, paragraph and line breaks, bullet points, footnotes (as I discovered in the thesis writing process), italics, capslock, question marks, exclamations, hyphenated compound words. Excitedly, I realized that despite the writing criticisms we received, ADHDers *do* have expressive method to their madness of writing. We neuroqueer and are neuroqueer.

[CLOSED ROAD.
Due to the neurotypical timelines and genre of compartmentalizing topics, this spin-off into ADHD rhetoric and writing instruction has been relocated to the future.]

As I am deliberating language-bending to fit my neuroqueerness, I recall my creative writing mentor from college, Kevin Stein, who often said that "poetry should restore wonder in language." We were often advised to "funkify" language that fell into passive molds, conventions, and habits that obstructed rather than liberated what we were trying to express. This move to refresh language resonated with me far beyond workshops, since language must fluidly evolve in rendering, navigating, and negotiating our nonstatic,

nonhomogenous realities—this is especially true of language geared towards justice, which must reveal and challenge oppressive paradigms calcified within dominant language practices. For me, weirding language was not a mere artistic endeavor, but a mindful and generative way of knowing, being, and moving. Writing poetry helped me embody and enact neuroqueerness by loosening and refiguring grammatical and linguistic conventions, by chipping away at the unsayable, by moving visually and sonically and rhythmically, by leaning into expressive white space and silence, by teasing out nuance through recursive repetition, by uniting the seemingly dissimilar through metaphor. By instilling mindfulness in the minutia of rhetorical choices, I finally began learning to sing in *my own* voices.

My approach to neuroqueer writing takes root in these practices of poetry that soften, reform, and reclaim language. In this thesis mashing narrative reflections against theory against poetry against research, I want multigenre "disruptions," "compulsions," and "disorganization" that characterize my neuroqueer movements to guide me as they always have—to optimize rather than suppress the ADHD method of madness in recursivity, associative thinking, hyperfixation, and creativity. I want to follow rather than correct the jumbling of dyslexia and executive dysfunction that reveal meaning-making processes and motivations. I want to heed rather than dismiss my affectivity and energy, which swells and shallows, which is at once my ADHD, my chronic depression, my hypersomnia, my femininity, my queerness, my diasporic Asian American upbringing guiding my compassion in intersectional praxis and systemic oppressions. I want to accentuate and legitimize how my identities *verb* my body, my neurology, my meaning-making, my languaging.

To make a long, wandering, ADHD story short(er), I center neuroqueerness in intersectionality, borderlands, and embodied ways of knowing/learning/composing/being. In addition to the ADHD writing moves mapped by ADHD Tumblr, my approach to neuroqueering this thesis writing can be distilled in the following kinds of rhetorical moves that often overlap:

- **Poetic queering and affectivity:** Through creative wordsmithing and interludes of poetry, I queer how language sounds, feels, and means. I play with and challenge conventions of language along with its underlying assumptions. Metaphors create connective tissue. These moves, along with lyricism and rhythmic parallelism, help embody dynamic affectivity, which I value as an insightful and informative guiding force that is not necessarily lesser than or in conflict with "reasoning." Rather than hiding behind emotion-logic binaries, I emphasize how they guide my work hand-in-hand.
- **Multigenre melding and clashing:** I challenge myself by fusing traditional research with personal reflection, storytelling, and poetics. Multiple voices and genres may harmonize in some areas but clash and emphasize dissonance in others—much like the stilted dis/fluency of my neuroqueer logics, of my varying identities that both submit and resist assimilation into homogeneity.
- **Recursive iteration:** As a form of grounding and hyperfixating, recurrent ideas, phrases, questions, tensions, and metaphors itch and pulse throughout this thesis. Each iteration furthers its own nuance, complexity, and transformation. These rhythmic, cyclical motions also disrupts Western and ableist models of linearity.

- **Associative connection-making and ADHD "offshoots":** The continual lines of thought and questioning throughout this work are sticky, growing in mass and density by wandering and adhering to eclectic ideas, experiences, and memories. This amassing or "building" of argument, however, is more cluster-oriented rather than linear and hierarchical. Synthesis across chapters unifies rather than fragments the rhizome, however "cluttered" it may appear. ADHD footnotes and "offshoots" may also be seen as interruptions/outbursts/scenic detours/side quests/star mapping/time traveling. These sudden and seemingly disjointed "jumps" in fact offer moments of connective insights, realizations, stories, and reflections. To borrow from Yergeau's Wandering Rhetorics, my wandering to and from ideas may seem like roundabout pacing, but is necessarily generative.

Yergeau argues and embodies, "The rhizome neuroqueers and is neuroqueers." In this spirit, I am no longer interested in sacrificing my neuroqueerness to perpetuate Western, masculine, ableist models of concise, linear, "coherent," and "objective" scholarship. This neuroqueering moves towards disrupting dominant ideological practices of this genre, elevating rather than inhibiting the insights and strengths of my neuroqueerness and embodied identities, building on models for practicing and teaching neuroqueer composition, and seeking self-discovery and healing among genre-voice-identity tensions.

[Interlude poem]

"I am quietly waiting for the catastrophe of my personality to seem beautiful again"
titled after Frank O'Hara's "Mayakovsky"

[Do you mind taking off your shoes? Can I get you anything?]

tell me
who swallowed my mother tongue?

[What kind of tea would you like? Digestive? Sleepy? Caffeinated?]

whose voice box scratches my throat
ghostwriting me into poem?

[Is your throat soothed? Is your mouth burned?]

whose dental gloves pry my cries
open for ideological cleansing?

[Sorry. I'm all out. No ice. No lemon. No creamer. No honey.]

whose narrative cough syrup
sours & squirms my stomach,

[Are you comfortable? Are you getting tired?]

hacking up this fluency
i don't love anymore?

[Do you have somewhere to be? Do you want to leave? You can stay as long as you like.]

Chapter 2: Interdependent Issues of Rhetorical Agency & Access in (Dis)ability Borderlands

Because the neuroqueer rhizome "is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" this chapter shifts and connects across varying "centers" (Deleuze and Guattari qtd in Rhodes). These centers are questions that sprawl roots, clustering and stretching outward:

How can negotiation of (dis)ability construction and performance be mapped within borderland frameworks? How can my coinciding borderlands experiences, such as Asian-American diaspora, offer generative insights and intersections with my (dis)abilities? How can borderland rhetorics help me puzzle through challenges of neuroqueering this voice and this writing?

Drawing on borderland, POC, decolonial, womxn, queer, and (dis)abled identifying scholar-activists, how access and (dis)ability justice be seen as interdependent with other social justice work? How do discursive mechanisms of ableism, racism, and classism work in tandem to perpetuate inequities of access and legitimacy? What are the consequences of dis/embodiment—the de/centering of identity, epistemology, and voice from the body? How can we work to enable rhetorical agency for academics with (dis)abilities, so they may interpret, write, speak for, and determine discursive tools of power for themselves? How can an intersectional and interdependent understanding of embodied (dis)ability ground moves to reform accessibility institutionally, pedagogically, discursively?

For me, these lines of inquiry are inevitable and inescapable, because I am forced to be hyperaware of my embodied identities. Homogenization works quietly, unconsciously, infectiously, but I have encountered a tipping point: The more academia instills abled cishet whiteness in me, the more my body recognizes and rejects what is alien like breaking into fever. I also follow suit of Kafer who asks, "Where do we, as disability scholars and activists, continue not to look? Where do we find disability and where do we miss it?" (149) My approach to intersectionality and interdisciplinarity is aligned with Kafer, who "look[s] within disability studies for the traces of other movements and while simultaneously looking for disability in places it has gone unmarked [as] one way of moving us towards accessible futures" (150). Here, I find footing for neuroqueering access by drawing on borderland, POC, decolonial, womxn, queer, and (dis)abled identifying scholar-activists who share solidarity in their respective work. The more I unpack what it means to be (dis)abled and neuroatypical, the more I unpack what it means to be womxn, the more I unpack what it means to be second generation Vietnamese Laotian American, the more I unpack what it means to be queer, the more I unpack what it means to be in a capitalist, classist, patriarchal, ableist, heteronormative, racist, colonizing system. Throughout this work, I am compelled to reflect on and renegotiate my own identities, experiences, and positionality in academia with a particular emphasis on in/visible (dis)abilities with first-generation Asian American diaspora.

What I am piecing together across the rhizome is this: construction, performance, "authenticity," and rhetorical agency of my Asian-American and neuroqueer identities. That

said, this chapter with its sprawling centers is planned with guided improvisation. ADHD thinks better on my feet. Pacing, chewing, fidgeting while talking it out. I'm often told to start with a strong and focused research question. But each time I pursue a path, my questions keep adapting in new directions. Then I realize that reorienting is at the center of what I need. This chapter is of borderland oscillation and tensions. This chapter is unearthing my discomforts, assumptions, and experiences, and learning to reassess my environments of ableism. Along the way, I hope to replant and deepen my roots in ways that further my critical understandings and healing.

Reorienting Disorientation: (Dis)ability Apparition & Intersections in Borderlands

I am double-taking in the hallway mirror. What is the generative potential of my "disruptions" when they are aligned with well-established values in the field of rhetoric and composition? Even as I speak, I hear myself *rationalizing* my embodied identities. I hear myself validating (dis)abilities with *productivity* and *intellectualism.* I hear myself rearranging my neuroqueerness with *coherence* and *linearity*. Even as I attempt to challenge traditional practices through neuroqueer languaging, this feeling squirms under my skin: I am *still* speaking on disciplinary, colonizing, classist, ableist, male-centric, Western terms of legitimacy. But how can I not? Even if I were not writing for a thesis committee or academic publication, I've been taught English in a tradition of Western masculinity. I am American-born. English grew in the place of my mother tongue and father tongues before I had the choice. I have been raised in midwestern communities and institutions dominated by whiteness. I have gone through childhood and much of young adulthood undiagnosed, taught to think, feel, and perform the same as my abled counterparts. I look again to Yergeau's "Wandering Rhetoric, Rhetoric Wandering," in which she neuroqueers through affective, recursive style and interactive multimodal interface, disrupting conventions of linearity, "objective" voice, and academic authority. Yet in this embodied rhetorical resistance, Yergeau also openly recognizes her discursive constraints:

> Even this text, with its many intrusions, has a certain coherence to it, one imposed by the institutional forces that demand a certain broad legibility of an academic text: I am making assumptions about you, my readers. How do I make shit matter?

To effectively disrupt, assumptions made of the readers—of academic audiences—must be taken into account. Their potential positions of sense-making, of academic indoctrination, of neurotypical performance. There appears to be a tension between agency in establishing value and credibility of neuroqueer rhetoric while critiquing academia that also finds friction in the need to use dominant conventions "when necessary."

Listen to yourself… Is it bold of you to push for neuroqueer rhetorics of recursivity? affectivity? non-linearity? meaning-making processes? That's hot on the menu, right? You know the crowds eat that shit up. Because you are catering this meal to the palate of your

guests. You're too afraid to serve the food of your people—no—you wouldn't even know how to serve it. Not even for yourself.

I am reminded of the pain I felt when encountering DuBois's description of *double-consciousness*. That is, the constant sense of "twoness" experienced by black individuals seeing themselves through judgement of the white gaze, often governing how racial identities are performed. As a Vietnamese-Laotian American, I cannot possibly equate my experiences of "twoness" to that of black experiences, and I expressly want to caution against decontextualizing, diluting, and co-opting its origins of use. But I am helped in seeing how I myself constantly negotiate identity, visibility, and performance between tensions: Asian/American. POC/White. Queer/Heteronormative. Feminine/Masculine. (Dis)abled/Abled. I am constantly bending myself to the dominant gaze that I've internalized, even when no one is watching. I am constantly bending myself to the dominant gaze, perhaps especially in my conscious resistance.

I keep double-taking, doubting, oscillating in-between, searching for some kind of comfort in this liminality. Gloria Anzuldúa testifies to the unstable, uncertain sense of belonging within cultural borderlands (emphasis mine):

> This voluntary (yet forced) alienation makes for psychological conflict, a kind of dual identity—we don't identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and we don't totally identify with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicaness or Angloness. **I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one** (63).

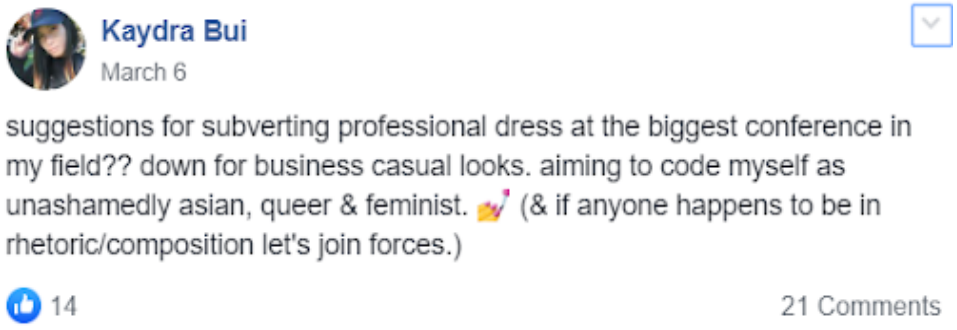
Another tension and duality: alienation/assimilation. The feeling of n/either. Of twoness canceling to zero. How this stings me. When power hierarchies are skewed to privilege the dominant, there can be no neutral melting pot. I feel insoluble, yet eaten alive. Assimilating, yet invaded. Diluted, severed from heritage, too American to ever be Vietnamese or Laotian, too "functional" and "able-presenting" to *really* be disabled, never "valid" enough to belong to anything. I wonder if Bob Hicok said it best in a poem. "Absence makes the heart. That's it: absence makes the heart." How often I am framing and mourning around what I am *not*, what I am apart *from*. The dispersion of diaspora. The *dis-* of disability. The distance from both the centers and the margins. You feel the tug and pull of this process, don't you? Again, I find Price's characterization of queer and disability perceptibility bubbling to the surface: "Like queerness, psychosocial disability is not so much invisible as it is apparitional, and its 'disclosure' has everything to do with the environment in which it dis/appears" (18). Beyond rendering (dis)abilities in/visible to *others*, I would like to extend these apparitional qualities of (dis)abilities within one's own *self-perception* and *self-identification*. This is part of how I've internalized the dis/abled borderland conflict. Writing subversively through neuroqueerness feels as though I am cleaving into my own underbelly of internalized ideologies. Every time I apply pressure to dominant practices and paradigms, I also create tension within myself.

In this experience of dissonance, I am reflecting on apparition, "authenticity," and identity performance. How can I render myself visible? Why do I want to be seen? And by

who? These were questions I came to confront myself with when deliberating what to wear for the Conference of College Communication and Composition 2019.

[Like most of my ADHD detours, I'm often not sure of where my "side story" is really going. I just jump off the path because intuition, you know?][3]

I was not interested in classist, masculine presentations of professionalism. What would it look like to self-present on *my* terms of legitimacy and authority? In many ways, I thought that wanting to present myself as I am (whatever that meant) was less for others than for my own hunger for grounding and self-affirmation. I sought advice from a private Facebook group exclusive to queer-identifying Asians, which I had recently found communal solidarity in:



[Image description: Facebook post by yours truly on March 6, 2019 that reads, "suggestions for subverting professional dress at the biggest conference in my field?? down for business casual looks. aiming to code myself as unashamedly asian, queer & feminist. (& if anyone happens to be in rhetoric/composition let's join forces.)"]

In the comments, one person suggested a qipao (traditional Chinese dress) style top with leather pants and a pussy hat. A similar look *did* cross my mind. During my junior year of college, I bought a qipao top because of its striking similarities to áo dài, the traditional Vietnamese dress. Given my diasporic isolation in the midwest, accessing the foods, communities, clothing, and traditions of my cultures was often a fantasy and craving. I wore the qipao for that upcoming Lunar New Year (which was just a regular day at school), but for years since it has hung in my closet with an uncertain guiltiness. I am not Chinese. I realize, too, how desperate I feel to identify and mark myself with anything that codes me as Asian. I think of how often my younger brother and I are baited by Western fashion industries that stock their shelves with "oriental" trends: silk bomber and kimono jackets, tiger and dragon embroidery, Eastern-style clouds and cherry blossoms, oriental take-out font, neon jackets and anime tees with Japanese characters. Looking closer, in many ways we also emulate wealthy and light-skinned East Asian trends that appeal to Western beauty standards and cultural consumption. White people accessorize, decontextualize, and dilute us into a vague East Asian monolith—and I give them my money for it.

---

[3] Yes, my "main argument" does require me to start telling a story (and a story within that story). I think of ADHD as accepting interconnected side quests before tackling the main quest. Hang on.

[When I write poetry, I only know my starting place. When I'm stuck, I look away from the poem. Then while I'm cooking a meal or learning about botany or listening to someone's story, I end up finding the poem in the world. Through the process of writing and wandering away from it do I discover how I am moved, and where I want to go.]

When my brother began attending my alma mater, a private midwestern university with a majority white student body, he asked me, "Have you noticed that it's easy for white people to think you're 'cool'?" We laughed but realized there was nothing new in the white mainstream exotifying people of color as desirable, "mysterious," and "trendy." The truth is, we felt smug in being admired as unique, interesting, in vogue by our peers. What a pity. Is that how much we value white praise? Do I look like a mockery to my own people? Is this really how starved I am? Only recently have I begun questioning what it means to be a diasporic consumer of orientalizing narratives and imagery.

I am what I eat… is that right?

I admitted in the Facebook comments my hesitance to wear the qipao in fear of appropriating what was not mine. In response, this person felt that they supported this situation within "Pan-Asian solidarity" that exists *because* of how orientalism homogenizes us. Within our conversation, I interpreted this to mean, "Well, we're deprived of our specific cultures and the representation we have available are either limited or bastardized by the orientalist shit that the colonizers sell us. Fuck them, but we'll take what we can and support sharing cultural similarities with fellow Asians." While I choose to refrain from wearing the qipao and frame this exchange as anecdotal, this notion of Pan-Asian solidarity lingered with me and clarified to me why I indulge in oriental materialism, aesthetics, narratives, and trends in mainstream culture. There was a kind of validation here that comforted me and eased my shame.[4] I realized, too a more defiant feeling beneath these choices to code as "Asian": We reject and resist whiteness and colonization. We do not want to look like you, act like you, think like you. We do not want to minimize our differences. We want you to see us. There is also this desire guiding these performances of identity-claiming: We want comfort in affirming we really *are* Asian. This claiming/performing/witnessing of apparitional identities is like straining to see myself in my reflection, photograph, or side view mirror: *objects are closer than they appear.*

[…I walk off-path all the way to the heart of the forest and find the tree with roots that pulse back to where I was before…]

In this moment I am realizing parallels in my uneasy relationship with claiming, performing, and understanding (dis)ability. My diasporic Asian American experiences help me reflect on how have spent most of my life deprived of (dis)ability conversations, relationships, and counterpoints of solidarity. Akin to my consumption of the "Orient" that

[4] To pass on tips and accommodate those who expect an "end" to the "side story," some of my conference looks consisted of red eyeliner, silk blouse with cherry blossom embroidery, neurodiversity tee, bright pink blazer with cherry blossom print, "love thy fellow queer" button, Vietnam Heritage flag pin on rainbow ribbon, dragon necklace, jade accessories, black leather pants, and dramatic steel-toed boots.

Wendy Chun refers to as a literary fiction (9), I have been fed ableist narratives of deficit and erasure that skew how I construct my claiming, performing, and understanding of (dis)ability. Even as I revisit my Facebook post, I notice that I selectively showcase and elide particular identities. My omission of (dis)ability is not so much about foregrounding the primary identities shared within the queer Asian community. After all, I could have reached out to the private group pages for idiopathic hypersomniacs or womxn with ADHD. In my heart, I know I am operating on presumptions that Asian, queer, and feminist can be visibly accentuated and coded on my body while my "invisible" neuroqueerness cannot. Like my shame in being "white-washed" and self-orientalizing, I find myself irredeemably indoctrinated into abled ideologies and discursive practices that mutilate my efforts towards a neuroqueer rhetoric. You feel this tug and pull, right? Don't you? I feel like I'm trying to escape the structure, but it's a labyrinth that shifts with my every move. I dash for the exit and collide into a wall. It is in this pain, this dependence/resistance tension that I feel solidarity with Adam Banks, who advocates for transformative access of technologies steeped in systemic racism:

> Is it possible to make this thing work, or do we resist this entire system with all of its built in exclusions and find other ways to survive? Is it time to leave altogether? Does this entire nation have to be rebuilt, redesigned, reengineered if African Americans and other people are to have any chance at equal participation in it?

Is it possible to make this thing work? My confession is this: I want to be free of heteronormative whiteness. I want to be free of abled-bodymindedness. I want to be free of this subjection to capitalism. I want to be free of my own perspective. My confession is that I *know* I want the impossible. *Is it time to leave altogether?* I know this question is rhetorical. I know I cannot escape my reliance on these structures of power. I know that how I feel is childish. I know these desires may be useless, detrimental even. But neuroqueerness has taught me one thing: how I feel—whether it be grief, dissonance, anger, rejection, or numbness—does not have to make "sense" or be justified within abled reason. Instead, I must sit with and accept how I feel, have it pass through me by engaging it. Neuroqueerness has taught me that feeling is informative.

[Second half of interlude, written two years ago and cut from the final draft. I unearth what I bury to acknowledge, make peace, learn, keep moving.]

[my lips are splitting:
so this is how it feels
to become a bug
a hard shell creature
squeezed by its own frame
i'm itching to cleave
exoskeleton on granite
grind against a new lust
rift my maw bloody
against a new lexicon
slither against rotwood & ooze
out the skin of my old life

shed husk of my old love

so i'm freed to love nothing again

i'm starving to be glitzed by awe
naked & malleable as a newborn
learning to speak—]

In this work of unlearning, reclaiming, and subverting, how do I "prove" myself to dominant frameworks without doing *myself* a disservice? How do I critically (re)negotiate my positionality within dominant cultures and borderland identities? Without equating our struggles, I seek guidance by looking to Native Ojibwe/Dakota rhetorician Scott Richard Lyons, who negotiates similar tensions between indigenous self-determination and assimilation. Although English writing, literacy, and academic indoctrination are tied to histories of colonizing and threatening Native identity and sovereignty, Lyons argues for Native American agency to begin shifting the power script:

> As a Native rhetorician, I want to work against commonplace theories or received notions of writing which posit the technology as essentially assimilative and, hence, anti-sovereign; I want to help formulate what we might call Native American rhetoric, a systematically taught art of persuasion which doesn't convert so much as promote an Indian *ethos*. [...] I contend that we need to untie ourselves from this dominant history: to reread it, rethink its lessons, and rewrite its always unstable conclusions in the name of pursuing our rhetorical sovereignty (23).

At first, my feelings of entrapment and doubt resurface. Can you really untie from dominant history? Can you really rewrite without perpetuating abled whiteness? I am helped in finding clarity and grounding from LuMing Mao, who cautions against using dominant Western frameworks for identifying and validating cultural differences within the borderlands of Asian-American and ethnic rhetorics.

> ... the effort to strive for rhetorical uniqueness may turn out to be what Rosaldo calls a "revealing distortion" (217)—to the extent that it betrays a nagging anxiety, however distorted, to overvalidate the existence of ethnic rhetorics, and still to cling to the Western ideology of autonomy (46).

I realize now that my notions of autonomy and desire for total independence are misguided, and are in themselves motivated by Western values. By refusing to reinforce that ethnic rhetorics must be defined by rhetorical "uniqueness," a Western term of viability, Mao helps me see how there is space for Lyons' push in claiming and re-tooling the oppressor's language, narratives, and the material world it implicates. I am sobered, too, by the reminder that proving rhetorical "uniqueness" ironically distorts and undercuts the unique experiences at the borderlands of cultures, ideologies, and rhetorics—that is, the unique vantage point to see, reflect on, and challenge otherwise invisible hegemonies. It is within the Native American vantage point that allows Lyons' call for *rewriting* the power script in one's own ethos, voice, narratives, and truths—an endeavor that is only possible through critical engagement with dominant history and technologies.

I think back to a moment in my last undergraduate philosophy course on Heidegger's *Being and Time*. This day, we were reviewing how *Dasein* or oneself is socialized and absorbed within culturally constructed norms and realities of the dominant "they."

> This Being-with-one-another dissolves one's own Dasein completely into a kind of Being of 'the Others', in such a way, indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more. In this inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the 'they' is unfolded. We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as *they* shrink back; we find 'shocking' what *they* find shocking. The 'they', which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness (27: 164).

This critical overview of hegemony came full-circle to my freshman year, in which Western philosophy teachings were instrumental in my early interrogations of dominant ideologies within the capitalist institution of academia. As with most philosophy classes I took, I was one of the few women and people of color in the room. I was the only one who, after a semester of struggling to identify my discontent, finally formulated the question, "But what if you belong to multiple 'theys'?" What do I make of *my* Being in this tension, this tug-and-pull within multiple centers of gravity? My professor paused, then acknowledged that this discussion, which could give room for multicultural and borderland identities, was missing. This was the moment that revealed to me a crucial lesson: I cannot fully understand my ontological, epistemological, bodyminded, borderland experiences through Western lenses and bodymindedness. Yet I cannot untether myself to the teachings I have been steeped in. Instead of seeking to abandon the relationship, I am flipping its dynamics: it is through *my* borderland vantage point in which Western frameworks may be critically understood, and consequently, transformed. You need me more than I need you.

While I may mourn and resist my subsummation into these dominant frameworks, I cannot idealize being untouched by internalized oppression and ideologies of power. Instead, I want to remain mindful of how Lyons claims strengths in dual heritage, and how Mao offers borderland rhetorics as a vantage point of "creative heteroglossia" that allows for relational flexibility, tolerance, and mindfulness of cultural tensions (50). Yes—how can I reframe my burdens as vantage points for relationality? What can be revealed of cultural tensions I experience between Asian/American, disabled/abled, queer/heteronormative performances? What creative, generative, and healing potential could come from this reframing? In the tug-and-pull of alienation/resistance/assimilation, I continue lingering on Mao's framing of creative heteroglossia, invoking Anzuldúa.

> Out of this process comes productive energy that, to quote Anzaldúa, "keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm" in spite of being a "source of intense pain" (qtd in Mao 53).

Taking this to heart, I hope to leverage my positionality from both within and outside the dominant paradigm, although painful, as my approach to transforming it.

Interdependent Rhetorical Agency to Interpret, Name, and Speak for Oneself

How are the available language tools compromised? How does one speak when the terms of meaningfulness are defined by dominant, white, ableist paradigms? How can we reclaim rhetorical agency, and by that, means for narrative agency, epistemic justice, rhetorical resistance, and transformation of material power structures? . . .

[Accommodation for those who prefer explicit overviews and transitions: To set groundwork and exigence for neuroqueer rhetorics, I constellate across the rhizome womxn, POC, queer, and decolonial scholars who center rhetorical agency in challenging power structures. This is the generative potential of borderlands.]

. . . Who do we continue to leave out or see as disparate from our own discursive justice? How can I seek healing, insight, and transformative action by grounding these efforts in intersectional frameworks and collaboration? These are recurring questions that resurface throughout my borderland experiences and in my readings of Gloria Anzaldúa.

> The first time I heard two women, a Puerto Rican and a Cuban, say the word '*nosotras*,' I was shocked. I had not known the word existed. Chicanas use '*nosotros*' whether we're male or female. We are robbed of our female being by the masculine plural. Language is a male discourse (Anzaldúa 54).

Anzaldúa illuminates how the dominant language tools we have deeply reflect and reinforce power hierarchies—its assumptions, practices, and versions of reality. Anzaldúa also tells a story of how a Chicana woman must "sift through the bones" of her Indigenous, Spanish, and Anglo heritage, excavating what has been passed down to her: "She puts history through a sieve, winnows out the lies, looks at the forces that we as a race, as women, have been a part of" (82). Anzaldúa speaks to Chicana relationships within male-dominant language and history, and she also reminds us of how dominant history is a story that must be unearthed, shaken out, and retold in a new frame that may better liberate within present.

As I look to Anzaldúa who fuses epistemic justice with rhetorical and narrative agency, I look again to how Lyons nuances the pursuit of *rhetorical sovereignty* for indigenous people.

> For indigenous people everywhere, sovereignty is an ideal principle, the beacon by which we seek the paths to agency and power and community renewal. Attacks on sovereignty are attacks on what it enables us to pursue; the pursuit of sovereignty is the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse (6).

In a similar vein to Anzaldúa, Lyons challenges how public discourse, which is constructed by and for dominant groups of power, infringes on sovereignty. Lyons underscores how sovereignty extends far beyond legislative rights—it necessarily implicates *rhetorical sovereignty* as well, or the communal agency to renegotiate the terms and means of discourse in ways that reflect, legitimize, and serve *themselves*. Postcolonial frameworks of the "subaltern" resitutated by Alexander Galloway, which support Lyons call by drawing direct relationships across the colonized person's disenfranchisement, restricted rhetorical power to protest or represent oneself, and, additionally, subjection to capital gain:

> Spivak's "subaltern" refers not simply to the historically disenfranchised. Subaltern is not simply the subordinant position within any given structural relationship, such as that of Woman, Proletarian, or Gay. There is another level of remove. The subaltern is that quasi-subject structured as Other through a relationship of difference vis-a-vis imperial power. The subaltern is precisely the one who does not have a seat at the table. The one who cannot petition the powers-that-be. The one who is not—or is not yet—a wage slave for capital (Galloway 116).

Galloway resituates subaltern discussions of the 1980s and clarifies that the current problem lies in "*where* and *how* the subaltern speaks, or indeed is *forced* to speak. It is not so much a question of can but does. [...] Not so much a politics of exclusion, as a politics of subsumption" (116). In agreement with Lyons, there is less concern for making discursive tools of power *available,* and more concern for challenging how such tools are built for imperial and capitalist power that *depends* on sleighting the discursive power and autonomy of colonized, oppressed, and exploited peoples. Paradigms of "quasi-subject structured as Other" are calcified within dominant discursive tools, within historic narrative, within self-perception and internalized oppression that Anzaldúa excavates, "winnows out" as lies told through patriarchal tongue. We come full circle to how sovereign power is rhetorical power is narrative power is ideological power.

These approaches to challenging power are further nuanced by Audre Lorde, who advocates for the conjoined work of resistance and reforming oppressive tools in "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." As a Black lesbian feminist, Lorde critiques how the social justice work of the NYUI conference and academia at large are ineffectual by failing to intersectionally include and reflect marginalized identities such as her own. "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable" (94). To example how reliance on tools of a racist patriarchy hinder "progressive" change, Lorde critiques a conference paper on womxn's relationships that adheres to patriarchal either/or models of nurture. "The master's tools" latent in academic discourse and paradigms dismiss and underrepresent Lorde's embodied presence, voice, knowledge and experiences of interdependency as a Black lesbian. Mia Mingus also testifies to underrepresentation as a queer woman of color within (dis)ability justice, highlighting the problem of disparate movements and conversations within activist work:

> I tried to look to the disability rights movement, but I saw very few leaders who reflected me, and I found that, for the most part, disability was being talked about as an isolated single issue. Having been involved with racial justice, queer liberation,

> reproductive justice and feminist movements most of my life, I have rarely encountered spaces that addressed disability or connected it with other issues.

Both Mingus and Lorde reveal exigence to renegotiate the spaces and tools of power, which is also to say the spaces and tools of language, thought, and material and epistemic change.

To achieve these changes through justice work, Lorde and Mingus advocate for *interdependency* that they each nuance in complementary ways. "With disability justice," Mingus writes, "we want to move away from the 'myth of independence,' that everyone can and should be able to do everything on their own." This myth of independence applies not only to bodyminds with and without (dis)abilities, but also to social justice movements whose goals cannot be disparate. Lorde similarly ties issues of race, gender, sexuality, class, and age by urging an approach of "interdepence of mutual (nondominant) differences," which also supports how (dis)ability justice challenges deficit models of (dis)ability. Interdependence not only opposes negative and competitive frameworks of difference, but leverages differences as strengths for collaboration and solidarity.

> Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of difference strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters (Lorde).

The creative dialectic and insights generated through one another's differences reinvokes and interlaces with what Mao calls *creative heteroglossia*. There is common ground in embracing difference within one's *own* borderlands and embracing difference *beyond* one's identities and experiences through interdependence. Like Mao, Lorde urges that difference may be leveraged to transform shared relationships, knowledge, and discursive tools in ways that critically include one another. This inclusivity may be nuanced by Mao's cautions against mischaracterizing new discursive styles nurtured from "reflective encounters" of cultural differences, which are "more than the sum total of the two" (53). Inclusivity is not additive but fundamentally transformative. For instance, the interdependence of (dis)ability justice and anti-racist work would not simply "add" their frameworks, terminology, and experiences together. Instead, each would have to reform fundamental understandings of their respective and shared contexts. As Mao argues within creative heteroglossia, "this kind of style commands its own context, and it breeds and nurtures a new identity, one that is not afraid of differences, and one that is more interested in localized significance and efficacy" (53). Mao's discussion is situated in promoting a third way or new context for borderland identities and rhetoricians that I find healing and insightful. While interdependence does not lead to collaborative parties claiming or asserting new identities per say, their self-understandings of identity *must* be transformed by resituating their experiences as intertwined with others.

There is a confluence across the distinctive social justice work of Anzaldúa, Galloway, Lorde, Mingus, and Mao who each highlight and nuance issues of rhetorical agency that may be weaved into DS dialogue. These activist-scholars help instruct me of

how dominant discursive practices are crucial, integrated mechanisms of colonialism, racism, and patriarchy throughout history, sovereign rights, capitalism, academia, and structures of power. In pursuing equity, these homogenizing discursive practices *must* be interrogated, rescripted, and repurposed in the pursuit of "paths to agency and power and community renewal" (Lyons 6). This undertaking also applies to my allied advocacy for neuroqueer ways of being, moving, learning, rhetoricizing, and self-asserting terms of legitimacy. In connecting (dis)ability to other issues of discursive power, I invoke Cedillo once more to help ground these intersections and solidarity work within embodied rhetorics.

> Students learn to compose with default notions of communication and reception aimed at the whitestream, that version of reality 'principally structured on the basis of white, middle-class experience' (Grande 330). To this habituated impression, I would add ablebodiedness, since notions about what it means to be fully human merge race and disability as categories of deficiency.

To build on Cedillo's connections, Mingus emphasizes how "ableism is connected to all of our struggles because it undergirds notions of whose bodies are considered valuable, desirable and disposable." I recognize the work of challenging ableism in the "default notions of communication and reception" must also be the work of challenging compounding mechanisms of racism, colonialism, classism, sexism, and heteronormativity. The mutuality I seek in these areas of social justice may be best described by rhizomatic interdependence that Mingus and Lorde advocate for. In the "interdependence of (nondominant) difference" that Lorde calls for, may we heed Mingus in our goals to "move away from the 'myth of independence,' that everyone can and should be able to do everything on their own." This myth of independence applies not only to bodyminds with and without (dis)abilities, but also to social justice movements whose goals are interconnected, who face varying forms delegitimization in which "we speak from positions assumed to be subhuman, even nonhuman; and therefore, when we speak, our words go unheeded" (Price 26).

With these understandings of interdependence in mind, I reconsider the "sharp rhetorical divide" identified by Margaret Price in *Mad at School*, a divide in which academics with (dis)abilities are harmed and excluded.

> Academics [...] with mental disabilities are largely excluded from academic discourse. The instruments of exclusion are not visible or dramatic—men in white coats dragging people away—but quiet, insidious: We flunk out and dropout. We fail to get tenure. We take jobs as adjuncts rather than tenure track faculty. We transfer schools; we find a way to get a job or a degree elsewhere. Or not. [...] in the institutional terms of academic discourse, a sharp rhetorical divide exists between those who are allowed in and those who are not (6).

In these quiet, insidious forms of exclusion within academic discourse, I would also emphasize that discursive exclusion is material violence. As Erevelles points out, "To recognize disability requires the recognition of the material violence waged against disabled bodies—a recognition that would destroy traditional tropes of disability as the 'natural' rather than the 'political' (read materialist) embodiment of destitution" (32). I apply these

recognitions to what Price identifies as "commonplaces" or discursive conventions of academic credibility. Such commonplaces pose problems for academics with (dis)abilities so that (dis)ability then "becomes a problem" (5). To this, I also explore how race simultaneously "becomes a problem" in these conventions of academic ethos, bringing into the fold Cedillo's approach to embodied rhetorics at the intersections of race *and* (dis)ability. In particular, I consider how ableist and racist notions of ethos take place in these commonplaces (Price 4):

- Criticality
- Presence
- Participation
- Resistance
- Productivity
- Collegiality
- Security
- Coherence
- Truth
- Independence

Within "the discursive machinery that hides the flow of difference" (qtd. in Price 73), how does race and (dis)ability merge in this environment of subordination? How is class *participation* gauged for a student with anxieties or aversions in speaking or socializing, which may also stem from experiences of ridiculed *coherence* in speaking as a person of color or speaking English as a second language? How is *rationality* measured for an academic speaking from "heightened" emotionality or trauma, especially when those affective responses relate to their subjection of racial inequities? For that matter, how is the "civility" of *collegiality* made to delegitimize or restrain criticism, questioning, or self-advocacy against these inequalities? While many of my first-year composition students have described negative experiences with English classes compromising their self-esteem or relationships with writing, only my students of color contextualize these harms within overt racism, or more specifically, anti-blackness. Their testified upbringings—in which white peers, English teachers, and authority figures ridiculed their language as "incorrect," "not making sense," or even in need of special education—linger with me in my critical pedagogy, recursive allyship, and interrogations of the whitestream ableism latent in academic discourse.

For academics of color, how may (dis)ability disclosure or accommodations be compromised, endangering, or neglected, especially when the delegitimizing of race and neuroqueerness intersect? Gillborn et al.'s research supports not only the "merging" of race and (dis)ability as sociopolitically constructed deficiencies, but they also examine how institutional ableism serves as a conduit for racism, in which policing learning (dis)abilities upholds white bodyminds at the expense of discrediting Black bodyminds (53):

> Sleeter (1987) proposed that learning disabilities emerged as a category 'created by white middle class parents in an effort to differentiate their children from low-achieving low income and minority children' (p. 210). Similarly, our data suggest that learning disabilities (such as dyslexia and autism) are policed by schools in ways that position Black parents' claims as illegitimate, regardless of their class status [...]

> Particular labels were used to deflect accusations of White racism and to segregate Black students from the mainstream. Meanwhile, attempts to access additional resources for Black children on the basis of particular LD claims were resisted by schools at virtually every stage."

Gillborn et al. nuances how ostracizing and isolating students on the basis of (dis)ability is institutionalized as an acceptable practice, and therefore works to mask more implicit motives of concurrent racism. It behooves the dominant structure to adhere to the Cartesian separation of mind and body, in which "intellectual" academic work is not equated with white nor abled bodies, but is considered neutral and independent of politicized bodies (Carter et al 99). "Learning disabilities" that are cleanly tied to academic contexts are congruently and conveniently characterized as "invisibly" neurological, and thus unaffiliated with racism, which is conveniently characterized as discrimination of visible body markers. Cedillo argues, "the 'invisibility' of privileged bodies lends credence to the discourses advanced through those bodies, equating their speech with objectivity as though said discourses were not products of specific standpoints." However, by calling on how Black bodyminds are delegitimized, pathologized, and segregated, the Black parents simultaneously expose how white bodyminds model notions of abled competence and academic ethos. When defending on behalf of their children, the Black parents' claims of *resistance*—a commonplace identified by Price—are rendered illegitimate by asserting this link between discriminatory treatment of both learning (dis)abilities and race. Given the lack of LD resources, it is clear that the institution seeks this segregation to preserve the whitestream rather than support Black children with LDs. Gillborn et al. underscores that even in structures purposed to "serve" this population, such as in special education, "students of color often find themselves segregated and handed a third-class education on the basis of the pseudo-medicalized labels, masquerading as scientific, well-intentioned, and sophisticated" (54). (Dis)ability markers may act as two-fold in segregating on the basis of neuroqueerness and, less explicitly, race.

As I reflect on experiences within my Southeast Asian-American family, I am beginning to see not only how "race and disability as categories of deficiency" (Cedillo) compound in academic performances, I am also recognizing how discursive subordination and homogenization manifests in critical generational differences . . .

"I'm always scared that people at work will know my secret," my mother tells me. "They will see that my English isn't good." In her profession of engineering, a command of English indicates one's intelligence, capability, and authority. How my mother's English is used and judged has everything to do with her overt positionality as a Southeast Asian woman and immigrant whose second language is English. It has everything to do with her "invisible" and undisclosed dyslexia, anxiety, and ADHD. She often characterizes her recollections of English classes with intimidation, ostracization, the shame of feeling "stupid." My mother often tells me with pride, "I could only dream of having your talents in speaking and writing." I am grateful, but her praise of my academic speaking and writing also pains me. I have learned that how we judge and value "articulation" and literacy reflects how we judge and value particular identities, bodies, and minds.

As refugees displaced by the Vietnam War, my parents would not have abandoned their homelands of Laos and Vietnam if imminent death were not the alternative. Without money or possessions, all they had when arriving in the United States was devoted care for their families and the priority of survival. Survival within American capitalism, especially in the face of discrimination against Asian immigrants during the Vietnam War, meant making the necessary sacrifices for material, financial security through academic and vocational competitiveness. My parents had no choice but to "prove" themselves within white American terms of credibility and power by learning not just English, but *their* English of *collegiality* and *coherence,* of commonplaces mapped by Price. Foucault highlights the illusion of agency in liberalism, in which people accept inequitable societal contracts "because they are forced to by some threat or by need. They therefore do so in order to protect their lives. It is in order to live that they constitute a sovereign" (241). Forty years later, my parents with careers in engineering might appear to others as the middle-class "model minority," the so-called *good* kind of immigrant whose "contributes to society" because their security still depends on whiteness, on protection from threats to their families and survival.

My middle-class privileges in "native" Standard English and American education were only made possible because of the sacrifices of my parents, and I wield this privilege as a double-edged sword. In many ways, I have inherited immigrant anxieties that have been instrumental in driving my competitive performance throughout my education, even at the expense of my deteriorating health and exacerbated depression, anxiety, ADHD, executive dysfunction, and sleep disorder. For most of my life, I concealed these struggles from my parents based on assumptions of our cultural differences. In my experiences and conversations with Asian American peers, I have noticed a consistent trend in Asian American adults normalizing anxieties in ways that reinforce rather than alleviate them. I assumed that my parents lacked "informed"—that is, *Western*—understandings of mental illness to properly identify it as a problem, let alone know how to approach treating it. After all, my family modeled a general mistrust of capitalist services that would exploit us for profit. In college, I remember being at odds with my mother who warned me against "over-visiting" doctors for health concerns. I mistook this as disregard for my well-being, rather than considering her lifetime of negative experiences within American health care, in which her chronic health concerns were often treated within expensive, cursory, unsatisfactory appointments. Yet even if my (dis)ability-related needs *were* acknowledged and validated, I assumed I would only further burden my parents who had enough stress in their lives. It wasn't until graduate school that I realized we could talk through our differences to care for one another as well as unpack experiences of solidarity.

As first-generation, I realize that the model minority myth is imposed on me in a generationally unique way: Unlike my parents who were overtly estranged or aggressed as foreigners, I was fortunate that I did not need to "prove" myself against race-based assumptions of inadequate literacies, communication, cultural competence, and professional ethos. Rather than being treated as a threat, however, as a quiet Asian girl I was treated as the opposite: compliant, agreeable, well-behaved. Rather than being categorized as "deficit" based upon my race in academia, I was consistently held to the overachieving standards of the "model minority," that reinforced habitual overexhaustion of my bodymind and dismissal of my (dis)abilities. From a young age, my sense of self-worth was tied to my

productive output and performance. As I grew older, this also became a source of unbearably profound shame.

Again? What do you mean you forgot? How can you forget when you're supposed to do this every day? How can you forget when I reminded you several times? How can you forget when the teacher made you write it in your planner? Why aren't you thinking?

"I forgot" was a phrase that always got me in trouble as a child. Forgetting doesn't make sense, unless you *make* sense of it by attributing carelessness or even willful neglect. Forgetting makes sense if you make it my fault. My increasingly visible struggles within ableist environments were often taken as "surprising," anomalies, or even disappointments that both I and educators mistook for personal failures. Then the older I became, the more unacceptable it was to forget things like deadlines, lectures, meetings, work schedules, exams. Because "I forgot" was not a viable reason, it became unsayable. In undergrad, I learned that "my anxiety manifests in extreme suppression and aversion" was also neither acceptable nor sayable. In fact, I learned that "I was too depressed" or "I was unable to wake up" or "I couldn't do it and I don't know why" were all translated to the same thing: You didn't do it because it was not important to you. You didn't do it and it's your fault. Even when I later understood myself to be depressed, anxious, sleep disordered, and ADHD, I was made to believe that these reasons for "failure" always reflected on the integrity of my character. I learned that explaining myself often meant surrendering my ethos and confessing to a punishable crime. So I learned it was better to either say nothing or say what they wanted to hear. Always covering, always trying to save face, always guilty, always struggling alone, always promising what I cannot do.

For me, this is how first-generation Asian American experiences, cultural and institutionalized pressures of the model minority myth, feminine obedience, and in/visible (dis)abilities intersect and manifest within academia: Praised when presenting as "abled" within academic excellence. Guilted and shamed when presenting as otherwise. Reinforced in going beyond my bodymind's limits to the point of irreparable damage. Gaslighted and silenced when voicing my version of reality that was not subordinate or "sensical" to their normative one.

Anzaldúa speaks to my wounds in testifying, "I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one" (63). There is a healing in the speaking of these wounds, of recognizing and being recognized. Again at the unique vantage point of my overlapping, rhizomatic borderlands, I understand these apparitional qualities of in/visible "learning" (dis)abilities has a direct relationship with Asian-American borderland identity. There is a direct relationship in proving my worth through white and abled performances of ethos. I notice, too, similarities in how I am subordinated through the ways whiteness and ableism *name* my nationality and (dis)abilities. "Asian-American" as a hyphenated identity cannot generously be seen as a balanced summation of the two. Instead, I have often crudely imagined myself within the framework of "Asian-" modifying the primary, homogenous "American" identity. Other times, I feel cheated out of claiming anything: "Asian-" seems to cheapen to an additive that also nullifies my ability to claim the default "American" that has always been short for "white American." When it comes to the ways ADHD is conceptualized, I realize that my

neuroqueerness is delegitimized not only because of how credibility is performed and disclosed through language—the very *naming* of my (dis)ability delegitimizes and obstructs how I am I able to know myself.

I am labeled with ADHD—Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. But *deficit* measured against whose standards? *Hyperactive* exceeding whose levels of activity? *Disordered* by whose sense of order? And of all the learning, decision-making, affective, interpersonal, and temporal realities that characterize my ADHD, why highlight *attention*? For whom is *attention* valuable and profitable so that *attention deficit* is "becomes a problem" (Price)? I don't get to describe my epistemology, because it is already named and framed for me as ADHD. Friction burns between agency to know myself and the diagnostics that know me first. Yergeau also recognizes the troubling dilemma of how words define autistic and OCD ways of knowing and being (emphasis mine):

> An autistic friend once remarked to me that good obsessions are describable through autism, whereas bad obsessions are describable through OCD. [...] I am also stuck on **how knowing**, **in this instance, unfurls as an entity that is contingent on description.** In other words, OCD is transformed into something at once epistemological and ontological, as a being-known-state that is preconditioned on one's ability to form and fashion it via wordstuff.

Not only are (dis)abled bodyminds named in the ableist tongue, but our embodied "wordstuff" are also judged by the ableist ear to pathologize us accordingly. Like the "I Spy" game, tell me to spy for *inattention,* and all I can see is *inattention inattention inattention* when my word-thought patterns look in the mirror. But if I could imagine my word-thought patterns like this: a billowing cloud, a magnetic gathering of droplets, of leaping electric bridges, never in stasis, always transforming and traversing with the earth's motions. If I could cloud-watch and name what shapes and motions I see for myself. The naming of (dis)ability reflects not so much the nature of (dis)ability, but the abled structures that do the naming, the demarcing of "other" and "deficient."

In the DSM-5 jurisdiction below (Reynolds and Kamphaus), I map how my being and knowing is neatly delineated into traits centered on a language of *deficiencies* (underlined and highlighted in blue) within contexts pertaining to *productivity and practicality* (italicized and highlighted in yellow). Implicated in these work-related deficiencies are *social, communicative, and cognitive skills* (bolded).

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder [Inattentive type] (ADHD)
[...] Six (or more) of the following symptoms have persisted for at least 6 months to a degree that is *inconsistent* with **developmental level** and that negatively impacts directly on **social** and *academic/occupational* activities:

Note: The symptoms are not solely a manifestation of ***oppositional behavior, defiance, hostility,*** or failure ***to understand*** *tasks or instructions*. For older adolescents and adults (age 17 and older), at least five symptoms are required.

a. Often fails ***to give close attention to details*** or makes careless mistakes in

schoolwork, at work, or during other activities (e.g., overlooks or misses *details*, *work* is inaccurate).

b. Often has difficulty ***sustaining attention*** *in tasks or* ***play activities*** (e.g., has difficulty ***remaining focused*** *during lectures,* ***conversations****, or lengthy reading*).

c. Often does not seem to ***listen when spoken to directly*** (e.g., **mind seems elsewhere**, even in the absence of any obvious ***distraction***).

d. Often does not *follow through on instructions* and fails *to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace* (e.g., *starts tasks* but quickly loses ***focus*** and is easily **sidetracked**).

e. Often has difficulty *organizing tasks and activities* (e.g., difficulty *managing sequential tasks;* difficulty *keeping materials and belongings in order; messy,* disorganized *work; has* poor *time management;* fails *to meet deadlines).*

f. Often **avoids**, **dislikes**, or is **reluctant** to engage in *tasks that require* ***sustained mental effort*** *(e.g., schoolwork or homework*; for older adolescents and adults, *preparing reports, completing forms, reviewing lengthy papers).*

g. Often loses *things necessary for tasks or activities (e.g., school materials, pencils, books, tools, wallets, keys, paperwork, eyeglasses, mobile telephones).*

h. Is often easily **distracted by extraneous stimuli** (for older adolescents and adults, may include **unrelated thoughts**).

i. Is often **forgetful** in *daily activities (e.g., doing chores, running errands; for older adolescents and adults, returning calls, paying bills, keeping appointments).*

This deficit-centered characterization of ADHD highlights and reflects traits of interest to treat, correct, minimize within productivity contexts. I come to realize that foregrounding the issue of *attention* is not as valuable for me so much as it is valuable for a capitalist system that centers my productivity in way that subsumes neuroqueerness. Carter et al. writes, "Under capitalism, it's a twisted kind of privilege to be considered worthy of exploitale labor; I never would have known that to be true until I became disabled" (107). The irony of desiring "usefulness" in order to be valued. To be deemed human enough and merit benefits in exchange for my exploited labor. Many (dis)abilities, such as my depression, are regarded to have secondary but serious impairments on productivity. But for those with "learning" (dis)abilities like ADHD, they are exclusively imagined and treated within the narrow contexts of capitalist labor and productivity.

[SELECT ROUTE:

> TO STAY ON INTERSTATE, CONTINUE STRAIGHT.

> IF YOU ARE FATIGUED, REST AND STRETCH YOUR LIMBS. HAVE YOU EATEN YET?

> FOR RENAMING OF ADHD, TAKE EXIT TO EPILOGUE (PAGE __).
DRIVE UNTIL RADIO SIGNAL IS LOST.]

Ironically, common ADHD in academic contexts have strict parameters when prescribing stimulants like adderall, which are classified as controlled substances due to

stigmas of addiction, black market notoriety, and recreational use by non-ADHDers especially within higher education. At Miami, ADHD students are required to pay fees for an ADHD workbook along with two workshops prior to their first medication consultation with Health Services, even if they had been previously diagnosed and medicated. These "ADHD management and study habits" materials and workshops were, to me, mere performances for liability. In the workshops I attended, most students were just freshmen seeking help to make it through their courses, yet it felt like we were there to be threatened. We were spoken to with accusational assumptions that we would abuse and sell our medication if given the opportunity. We were told that we would become "addicted" (not *reliant*) if we didn't take weekly medication breaks, and that we "would do anything for more." We were told that if we lost scripts, we would not receive a refill given the risk of us lying to obtain and sell excess medication. When I pointed out that forgetfulness and misplacement of items are symptoms of ADHD, and that pharmacies track adderall distribution to each patient, the facilitating psychiatrist offered dismissed my comments without sympathy. It is not uncommon for ADHD students to encounter disbelief, fear-mongering, hyper surveillance, and guilting of incrimination from poorly informed health professionals—the ones who we need on our side, but instead we have to "prove" ourselves to.

Each month, I consult with Miami's general doctor to refill my ADHD medication. It is always an emotionally taxing visit of keeping my temper in check. The doctor is not an ADHD specialist, despite ADHD being the most frequently registered (dis)ability at Miami. I learned that these monthly consultations, each charging $200+ prior to billing insurance, is not required for any other medication on campus. She asks how many times per week I take my medication. In my head, there are only two days a week I skip my meds. There are five work days a week. Five minus two equals three. "Only three?" Her voice is sickly sweet. "Wow! That's great you don't take much. It's *such* an addictive medicine," she laments with a pitiful frown. I really do not have the spoons to educate my own doctor today, and it takes all my willpower not to challenge her. A few moments later, I suddenly realize a mistake of my processing disorder. Goddammit, there are *seven* days in a week! *Seven* minus two equals *five* pills per week. I am afraid that correcting *three* to *five* will make me suspect to questioning, casting me as the "drug-seeking addict" she had just praised me for *not* being. Despite myself, I bite my tongue into silence. Across the desk, she meticulously calculates the exact number of pills I would need to get through finals and the month of January.

"You don't need medication over break, do you?"

These words still reverberate in my skull. My blood feels hot. I am visibly and audibly tense. ADHD mood dysregulation makes it difficult to hide how I feel, but that does not negate the justification of my anger. Unless you are taking coursework, many university health services do not supply ADHD medication when semesters are not in session. But I don't want support on the basis of my thesis work. I want support on the basis of sustaining a healthy and sustainable quality of life. I could translate her question more directly: *Your ADHD matters only when you are a worker. Otherwise, what is there to treat?* I want to ask her why not insist on suspending my antidepressants over break, too? Doesn't depression only need to be kicked aside when I need to write papers? Why isolate only ADHD to my student performance? And I realize that when ADHD is named for me,

the translation of my epistemology is twisted into the abled's narrative. When ADHD is named for me, my being is corrected, butchered, and served for capitalist exploitation and consumption. I am always choosing between resistance and forced assimilation, between risking and covering. Not just with my doctor, but my professors, my employers, my students, my colleagues, my friends. It's not that I want to bite back my tongue. It's that the abled tongue wants to swallow mine, cannibalizing to assert its dominant narrative.

In teaching practicums, I have often heard my fellow peers share issues about their "problem" students who resemble myself. What is the difference between me and student who doesn't care, doesn't take things seriously, doesn't show integrity, doesn't give evidence for effort? What is the meaningful difference between ADHD, executive dysfunction, depression, anxiety, idiopathic hypersomnia and the "problem" student? How much do we overlap? How much is worthy of excusing or helping? I am your student who promises to meet the deadline then misses it. I am your student who does not always explain missing work or absences. I am your student who ghosts you with radio silence for weeks at a time. I am your student who is granted just enough ethos because "they're smart and seem like they care," yet cannot pull through even with your consistent efforts to help. Some peer instructors speak from concern, some from frustration, some from resignation. These discussions would evoke varying responses from me. Compassion that lends constructive insight and advice. Pain and anger that burns my tongue from speaking. Guilt that makes me question if I can belong here in academia. Doubt that makes me feel as though I cannot belong without masking who I am.

[Me: I can't do it.
Them: You can do it! Just stop being lazy/apathetic/hard on yourself.
Them: *activates brain's reward center to prioritize and execute decisions*
Me: Thanks for the completely useless advice from your boring and unrelatable brain.]

If I were to unmask, I would admit this: No, I did not finish the readings. No, I did not show up to seminar. No, I did not meet the deadline or the extension or the extension's extension. No, I did not implement the coping mechanisms and work ethic "tips" I was advised with. No, I did not register with Student Disability Services. No, this time I did not try. No, this time I did not communicate. Disclosure of my "failures," even when contextualized with my (dis)abilities, is a risk of my character being mis-contextualized nonetheless. None of this translates to collegiality. To some, none of this translates to respect of faculty. None of this translates to make sense. For the longest time, none of it made sense even to me. Why can't I wake up when I snooze the alarm for seminar? Why can't I wake up when I ask friends, peers, and family to call me? Why is it that when a deadline is in front of me, I cross it empty-handed, without fear of death? Why do I find no use in my mentors' advice to set timers, routines, and scaffolding for work? Why can I not internalize time, responsibilities, wakeful life, or consequences as *real*? Why can I not will them into reality?

[I feel like a videogame character. No actions feel permanent to my save file. It's impossible for me to die. I'll just regenerate at the portal again and again.]

Later on, with more research that rationalized my neuroqueer behaviors, the methods of disclosure with faculty, peers, friends, and family changed. None of this translates into sense even with the words "executive dysfunction," "ADHD," and "sleep disorder." Do you want me to divulge the details of my bodymind so it can make sense? Do I have to break it down logically with scientific evidence? Do I have to explain that dopamine deficiency means I literally do not have the chemicals for willpower? Do I have to explain how your brain has neurotransmitters that mine can only conjure substantially through stimulants such as medication, unpredictable hyperfixations, natural personal interest, and absolute terror? Do I have to explain that an idiopathic hypersomnia study was recently published on the impairment of my decision-making lobes when struggling to wake? Why do I have to cite scholars, health professionals, and scientific studies to make this explanation valid? Why do I have to spend so much energy in proving myself?

And here's the rub. My ADHD is pathologized in ways that popularly conceptualize and treat in narrow productivity-based contexts. Furthermore, my disclosure and sense-making of my (dis)abilities in capitalist contexts are often best legitimized through bio-psychological rationale and academic citation. No matter how I spin it, whether with faculty, health professionals, colleagues, friends, or family, my framing of (dis)abilities are compromised by drawing on Western models of "support" rather than my own lived experiences at face-value.

Undue Burdens of Institutional Inaccessibility

Reiteration is about movement. Just as I return to my roots by uprooting then grounding, by disorienting then reorienting my embodied positionalities, I find it critical to also reiterate and renegotiate what I mean by "accessibility" in advocating for the academic neuroqueer bodymind, especially with regards to rhetorical agency.

Accessibility has often been modeled to me by instructors who posit themselves as responsive to student needs as they arise. Thus, they advise timely communication and transparency about any problems primarily in *my* work or circumstances, rather than problems in *their* course facilitation, instruction, curricula, or materials. These well-meaning gestures of "support" have often seemed less of an inviting open door policy and more of an imperative on the student to seek help when needed. What is not acknowledged is the vulnerability I risk in seeking support. After all, disclosure is only obligated by the environment that treats (dis)ability in a manner where it "becomes a problem" (Price 4). Either I say something, or I struggle in silence without assistance. Either I explain my frequent absences, or I have no chance of making them up. Either I explain my absences with a "viable excuse" or I disclose my sleeping disorder. Either I disclose vulnerability now or when I am later questioned and guilted for my radio silence. Either my silence is reprimanded or my disclosure is reprimanded, as though it is not within *my* prerogative to disclose (dis)ability-related issues. There is a presumption if not expectation that students can and should disclose, neglecting how the agency, risk, and articulation of (dis)ability disclosure "has everything to do with the environment in which it dis/appears" (Price 18).

The more rigorous my academic work has become, the more I have had no choice but to bite the bullet. Yet whenever I open up to faculty about my (dis)abilities—whether to seek advising, explain why I've missed class or fallen behind, seek extensions, or share anticipation of future challenges—I am always advised to register with Student Disability Services (SDS). It has taken me a long time to understand why I always felt "handed off" to be processed through designated offices, as if I was an uncertain case without SDS as a liaison, as if we couldn't accomplish what was needed through working relationships and communication. I feel back on my own, and as Beratan highlights, "the onus is on disabled students who, given the necessary 'supplementary aids and services,' must find a way to fit into 'the regular educational environment.'" While there may be good intent, simply pointing to SDS grossly overlooks the exhaustive labor of registration let alone the labor of (dis)ability disclosure. They further overlook structural issues of gatekeeping that prevent many students from registering. In passing off the isolated *work* of accessibility to the appropriate office of jurisdiction, there is a removed, unconcerned assumption that (dis)ability-related needs will be effectively met.

What a fantasy. "Accessibility" in academia has been long presented to me as services like SDS. Yet taking a step closer, troubling issues of access become immediately apparent. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 that universities and SDS must comply with, "a person is considered to be disabled if he or she has the disability, has a record of the disability, or is regarded as having a disability." There is questionable tautology in defining (dis)abled persons as "having a disability," and most interpretations like that of SDS default to *diagnosed* disability. ADA then defines a qualified person for accommodations as someone who "with or without reasonable accommodation, can meet the essential academic and technical eligibility requirements and standards of behavior and performance required of all students." So to be qualified for accommodations, I must first prove "eligible" academic performance *without* accommodations? At first, I read these murky qualifications as contradictory. Then I realize that students who demand "too much" structural investment in (dis)ability accommodation are deliberately filtered out in favor of those who can better assimilate with minimal change of the established environment. If universities are mandated to provide "equal" opportunity and accessibility within its environment and services, this effort is compromised by the gatekeeping "standards of behavior and performance required of all students" that have been designed with a normatively abled student population in mind.

Reading further into SDS eligibility, students are granted access to services if they provide professional diagnostic documentation of (dis)ability within the past five years. According to the Miami University Student Handbook 4.3.F.6 adhering to ADA policies, the SDS office does not provide psychoeducational testing services for students without previous diagnoses, which is not uncommon for many higher education institutions. The prerequisite of documented diagnoses while lacking diagnostic services raises a host of problems.

1. **Prerequisites of privilege:** The university exclusively values students who have had access to medical professionals and diagnostic services, disregarding obstacles in financial accessibility, socioeconomic class, and social stigmas internalized by

students or their families that prevent formal identification of (dis)ability in many students.

2. **Unsupported (dis)abilities:** Eligibility posits that all conditions meriting accommodations are already identified and diagnosable by medical communities as a "disability" or "disorder," disregarding that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM–5) has received wide criticisms that erase or inadequately classify "disorders" and is constantly subject to revision. Therefore, (dis)abilities that are under-researched, unidentified, invalidated, or erased by discriminatory institutions only continue to go unsupported.

3. **"Reasonable" often means "minimal":** For students with the privileges or opportunity to meet SDS eligibility, ADA defines a reasonable accommodation as "one that will allow a student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, a service, program or activity of the University without an undue administrative or financial burden to the University." Available accommodations, then, are limited to what the university arbitrates as a "reasonable" investment of funds, time, labor, and material resources. Lacking investment in university diagnostic services is reflective of the lack of investment in (dis)ability inclusion and accessibility.

This lack of commitment to equity and access is not unique to Miami, however. Accessibility services for academics with (dis)abilities are actually inaccessible to many, leaving academics with (dis)abilities who are also LGBTQ, working-class, and/or people of color even further behind. Faculty who assume feasible registration with SDS neglect to assess its inequity within their pedagogy and student-teacher relationships. What is further undermined is the emotional labor and copious time it requires to pursue SDS registration, in which self-advocating or being "proactive" further drains our energies within the ableist structure. And so, I am also a student without SDS registration, one among many who only have themselves to do the heavy lifting of their silence and of their self-advocacy.

I want to linger on this issue of "reasonable" accommodations determined within a capitalist institution. One of the most common "reasonable" accommodations that are offered by (dis)ability services is extended time on exams or negotiated deadlines. This need for time flexibility is best described by Tara Wood in "Cripping Time in the College Composition Classroom."

> [...] flex time not just expanded but exploded; it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of 'how long things take' are based on very particular minds and bodies… Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds (268).

I am *chronically* lagging behind abled timelines of "how long things should take," not just episodically within class sessions, exam periods, or particular assignments. Building on Wood, I would like to expand and explode practices of crip time *beyond* the classroom as well, since time deficit pervades the daily lives of many of us who live with (dis)abilities . . .

[⏮The only way to proceed is by skipping backwards in time. Please be patient.⏮]

**Content warning: discussion of dietary issues may relate to experiences with eating disorders.*

During Tết, or Vietnamese Lunar New Year, a good friend and I stayed up all night by the stovetop, stirring periodically. Skimming the scum. Tasting, judging, waiting. The oxtail and massive beef bones steadily boiled umami sweetness into the broth. Infused with lemongrass, chilli peppers, garlic, and fish sauce, its aroma blanketed my apartment with familiar comfort. This was our first time taking up the daunting endeavor of cooking Bún bò Huế, one of my favorite traditional Vietnamese dishes. We are two disasporic queer Viet womxn sharing Tết, which is an abbreviation of "The First Feast of the First Morning" and the most important celebration of Vietnamese culture. Since Tết is always during the school year, I've never shared this feast with relatives, let alone a Viet community. But this year I resolved to honor a new beginning. "This is a true labor of love," my friend said and I knew I wouldn't be able to do this, physically or spiritually, without her. One batch of Viet soup can take multiple days to prepare and care for. Thinking of the womxn in my family who would stay on their feet all day in the kitchen, I continued simmering the bones after my friend went home. The following day, I finally had to call it quits. I was fatigued, hungry, and had already sacrificed much of the time I typically dedicated to lesson planning and writing. In the end, my insecurities were affirmed. The essence of the broth was there, colored by the vivid red-orange of the chili oil. But something was missing, falling short of "authentic" taste. Southern Ohio is also not the place to scavenge the ingredients for our complex cultural dishes, but we worked with what we could. I knew something this special would require more trial-and-error. Though the New Year culinary ambitions were five months ago, this was one of the last times I dedicated myself to involved cooking—partly because of my discouragement, but mostly because of the time I never seemed to have to cook proper meals, let alone meals as time-consuming as my cultural dishes. My spiritual cravings, as always, would have to be set on the backburner.

They say you are what you eat. It behooves me to be mindful of my consumption and the factors that influence and restrict it. My gut is sensitive to imbalanced intakes of fatty foods, dairy, fructose, caffeine, acids, fibers, and, well. . . pretty much everything can pose a risk in the wrong circumstances, save for plain rice. Having Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) makes me highly aware of the relationships among food, my bodymind, my (dis)abilities, and academia's day-to-day and semesterly timelines. The first time my IBS was successfully treated with prozac, a serotonin-reuptake inhibitor (SSRI), my digestion significantly improved along with my depression and anxiety. As it turns out, the brain is strongly tied to the gut, which is where 90% of the body's serotonin is. I have long noticed and recorded strong correlations between my gut health and sustained anxiety and bouts of depression. It isn't uncommon for the acute stress of finals week to provoke my body's fight-or-flight response. On low-battery energy conservation mode, my appetite would shut down to the extremes of finding the sight of food nauseating and repulsive, even when I was hurting from emptiness. I would desperately force down plain meals in tears. This always scared me, and the combination of anxiety and malnourishment would worsen my depression, hypersomnia, and ADHD symptoms. During the worst times of the school year,

this usually lasted for about two weeks. On the flip side, high stress induced from deadlines, teaching, and other life circumstances may also manifest in hours of painful IBS flare ups with every meal. In grad school, I recall entire nights of "productive time" wiped out because I would be lying in stomach pain. Those nights often caused me to reflect on my peers and other scholars who suffer from chronic pain behind closed doors, in ways that do not present as "visible" within the classroom or their workload schedules. How do you have time for pain when you barely have time for work? How do you have time for meal prepping when you barely have time for sleep? How do you have time for a sleep disorder, for brain fog, for executive dysfunction, for aversive anxiety, for debilitating depression? How do you have the mental acrobatics for teaching, seminars, and research when you are bodily fatigued, malnourished, and depressed? My gut is healthiest with consistent and "clean" home cooked meals, yet in the last three expensive yet malnourished months of wrapping up the semester and thesis writing, I've mostly lived off of frozen meals, take-out, fast food, Uber Eats deliveries, and obscene amounts of coffee so that the hours in which I am not fatigued can be spent on working.

When I ask myself how I can possibly manage these strains of time and energy, I understand that I sacrifice needs that the white, abled, cishet bodymind has no concern for. I neglect seeking out the right ADHD and sleep specialists, saving the exhaustive journey of trial-and-error treatments for "after grad school." I decide that a Master's program isn't long enough to settle in and seek out the right therapist of color who I could trust with my neuroqueer, queer, and first generation Asian-American experiences. I am unable to dedicate involvement to even my pocketed communities in academia, such as Students with Disabilities, Asian American Association, Vietnamese Student Association, Graduate Students of Color Association, or Graduate Student Pride Association. I am unable to dedicate involvement to the small pockets of queer artists, Asian feminists, intersectional activists, and community volunteers in Cincinnati. I signed up for the first meeting of Ohio Progressive Asian Women Leadership, but was so fatigued from the school day that I couldn't show up. I made the painful decision of working during the stressful month of April instead of celebrating Lao New Year among diasporic queer Laotians. I sat out of a local discussion on decolonial work among friends, activists, and academics of color during the lead-up to finals week. I sat out of Cincinnati pride events during my thesis writing. Hell, I've never even been to pride. Each year, I spend the pride month of June alone in my room, struggling with the endless and depressive marathon of "catching up" on coursework, Incompletes, independent studies, and research. When I look at what my forced decisions with time and energy reflect, my needs as (dis)abled, queer, womxn, and Asian are often treated as secondary. Additive identities placed on the backburner.

In academia, I rarely feel as though my time truly belongs to me. I am tired of being dictated not just by ableist notions of "how long things should take," but of white ableist cishet notions of what things are relevant to the use of my time. Yet when I claim time for cooking, resting, community involvement, or being with loved ones, I often sacrifice responsibilities. Choose your poison. Get through the rat race. Is this who I want to be? Usually, lack of control over procrastinating, forgetting, or using time "poorly" has a lot to do with my executive dysfunction exacerbated by fatigue and drowsiness. The thing about ADHD executive dysfunction is that my dopamine deficit bodymind itches to do what feels naturally exigent. I am itching restless impulsive starving for what is inherently rewarding,

meaningful, pleasurable, exciting, urgent, puzzling, intriguing. Abled capitalist structures hate that the pressure of exigence can be desensitized from productivity demands and deadlines. That's why they diagnosed me as an antagonist. I'm either noncommittal or overcommitted to the task at hand. I'm either unmotivated or hyperfocused for days at a time, not always on the right priority. I'm either stagnated or catalyzed by the kairotic situation. There are moments where executive dysfunction can point to where my heart wants to be hard at work and where it needs an unscheduled break. I look back on moments where I gave into sleep, "wasted" my time on hyperfixations, or stayed up late talking to friends instead of getting rest for the next day's grind. And I look back on why I sacrificed the finite resources of time and energy to allow Tết a sliver of space in my life. Why I spent days prior to seeking out ingredients from multiple grocery stores. Why I spent all day cleaning a home often neglected among graduate priorities. Why I invited the good company and good luck of my Vietnamese friend into my home, setting aside long hours for cooking, chatting, storytelling, laughing, and being together. Why I let go of my usual weekend work grind, even though I am always sweating to "catch up." Why I chose the anxiety of sacrificing my academic time in exchange for the potential healing of devoting time for my own life.

Almost every day when I'm at home *home, my dad checks in on me and asks, "Ăn cơm chưa?" It's the Viet kitchen talk that I can comprehend. I know the food has already been prepared for me. I know that in Asian households, "Did you eat yet?" means "I love you."*

And how much do I love myself? I am always craving a truly full and happy belly. I am always craving my own freedom. So no, I did not finish the readings. No, I did not show up to seminar. No, this time it wasn't so much ADHD or executive dysfunction calling the shots for me. This time I *chose what is more important to me and my well-being. This time I chose myself.*

[⏭We're late. You'll be chronically late if you're with me. It's time to go.⏭]

. . . In my experiences, extensions are often ineffective: Typically, we are not given "more time"—we work within the *same* amount of time with adjusted distribution of fixed tasks. A select deadline in one course is transposed on future deadlines managed across all courses, in which "more time" simply pressurizes the semester's remaining abled timeframe. The *overall* semester, school year, or traditional four-year plan cannot be extended without expending further resources that falls on the institution, faculty, or the student. When a professor offered me an Incomplete for their course, I was guilted by their reminder that I was imposing on *their* dedicated summer research time and that their labor would be uncompensated beyond the regular semester. "Accessibility" felt more like a costly, unethical favor. It again became clear that my needs were regarded as an "undue burden" when an advisor reprimanded my desire for an additional semester to complete my Master's program because an extension of my stipend would, in their words, "take funding away from other students." When consulting with SDS about registering my (dis)abilities, I inquired about extensions for thesis and other graduate work, which struck them as an unprecedented request. Rather than vouch to seek and structure accommodations compatible with graduate programs, I was more or less given the shrug of, "We're not sure

how that would work. Your faculty determine what is reasonable." I struggled for years to bring myself to reach out to SDS, yet when the moment finally came, their bureaucratic indifference discouraged me from coming back. As Kerschbaum critiques, university accessibility services are narrowly envisioned for undergraduates and neglect graduate students and faculty. I learn that my (dis)ability-related needs—which are not regarded as *systemic problems*—are often framed as selfish, "unreasonable," and an "undue burden." I think of conversations that I've shared among peers with (dis)abilities, acknowledging that we would work best with fewer hours while still receiving the benefits as a full-time student. After a year of expressing this need to faculty, I finally discovered through my own research that Miami offers a "special status" in which students with (dis)abilities can apply for full-time benefits while taking fewer credit hours. However, there is no criteria available for approval, which enables the ableist system to determine who is valuable and worthy of investing resources in.

I am caught in this game of tag that passes off *who* should be primarily accountable for accessibility in my education: When my coursework is not accessible, I am often pressured to disclose my (dis)abilities to faculty, who then codify my accessibility needs as pertaining to the realm of SDS. Yet when structural procedures for accessibility are inadequate or unavailable, faculty are left to their own devices and systems of value in which they "handle" me, for better or for worse. When accommodations determined *for* me fail to work, it is always made to be my fault. As Womack argues in dialogue with Yergeau and Kerschbuam,

> 'Reasonable' accommodation is institutionally designed to change the least possible amount. Faculty working with disabled students receive little to no institutional support, sending the message that pedagogical changes should affect only individual students instead of professors, institutions, and even other students (496).

While I believe instructors have a responsibility to (dis)ability justice, inclusion, and accessibility regardless of how the institution at large neglects these commitments, it becomes clear that the isolated efforts of instructors or departmental programs cannot truly compensate for systemic inequities of accessibility. I see this issue arise in teaching practicums, where my fellow peers have shared issues about their "problem" students who resemble myself. I often hear the questions posed to our mentors, "Where do I draw the line? When am I going too out of the way to help students?" Who carries the due or undue burdens of accessibility? These questions pain me, and I wonder how they could be solved if the support systems for student health, (dis)abilities, and education worked interdependently rather than with separate functions. The responsibility of access cannot be isolated to any one figure or program, but must be an ongoing, collaborated effort across all areas of the institution in a critical top-down approach to fostering equity, shared through Lorde's call for "interdependence of (nondominant) difference."

To boil things down once more, accommodations are inherently inaccessible in the following issues, which I see as the mere tip of the iceberg.

1. Not everyone has the ability to recognize or identify their (dis)abilities in order to seek diagnosis or accommodations.

2. Not everyone has the financial, socioeconomic, and cultural support or access to diagnoses.
3. SDS does not take an intersectional approach to accessibility, continuing to disproportionately underserve the needs of POC, womxn, and LGBTQ+ individuals with (dis)abilities.
4. Not everyone has the mental, emotional, physical, and temporal capacity to self-advocate, seek formal support through SDS, and potential disclose (dis)abilities in situations of vulnerability and risk.
5. Not everyone's needs for access are acknowledged, validated, and reflexively responded to from support systems such as family, faculty, health professionals, and accessibility consultants.
6. Not all academics are envisioned with accessibility models and services, such as graduate students, faculty, and staff with (dis)abilities.
7. "Reasonable accommodations" are narrowly (and sometimes ineffectually) determined by white, ableist, capitalist paradigms.
8. Those whose needs are "unreasonable" and an "undue burden" are forced to either take on the undue burdens of institutional inaccessibility or be excluded from higher education all-together.

Moves for Transformative Access

[The curtain will be closing. I'm running out of time again.]

What I am stewing in this thesis is the access to time. Access to energy and capacity for labor. Access to *additional* time and labor spent on self-advocacy and jumping through the hoops of "accessibility" services with no guarantee of support. Access to essential resources to sustain material well-being, whether that be food, money, medication, a safe environment, a support system. Access to "balancing" or setting work aside to nourish oneself in emotional, spiritual, and bodily ways. Access to discursive tools to legitimately articulate one's needs and ways of being. The meat of the problem is that academia is structured and characterized as largely an "intellectual pursuit" (Carter et al.) divorced from care of the body. So who is privileged to care for their body to have a sustainable place within academia's capitalist labor culture? Whose bodies are exploitable and valuable? Whose intellectual labor demands an "undue burden" of care for the body? The meat of the problem is that my neuroqueer bodymind is seen as ineffective, unacademic, an "undue burden" on the institution. The meat of the problem is that my epistemic and rhetorical agency is compromised by capitalist narratives pervading integrated sites of power, including the DSM-5, health care, and academia. You are what you eat. So how are these structures nourishing me? How are they mass producing to make me consumable for their capital, their narrative, their discursive and ideological comfort? The meat of the problem is that I am haunted by these questions as a composition instructor who must teach the survival skills of academic discourse. The meat of the problem is that academics with (dis)abilities are often forced to compensate for systemic inaccessibilities by paying for additional resources, pushing one's limits, relying on obligations to "self-care" rather than

systemic care of the bodymind. What would it look like for someone like me to continue in academia? Is it even possible? And if it's possible, at what cost to my well-being? Is it even worth it?

(Dis)ability has taught me this: my body is not an isolated system. My body, mind, time, and environment are in an ecology. My ways of being and moving are in reflexive ecology with material institutions, power structures, histories, dominant norms and ideologies. If I were to reimagine accessibility in academia with *my* embodied and rhizomatic knowledge, what would it look like?

To envision neuroqueer models of access, I take a step back and turn to Adam Banks, who argues for how African American rhetorics can contribute to our understandings of *transformative access* that may "develop and articulate models of the specific kinds of practices that can provide excluded members of society access to systems of power and grounds on which those systems can be challenged and ultimately changed in meaningful ways." (2) Within a four-part model of access, Banks complicates and expands what it means to create and use accessible technologies, which is integral to access of power and rhetorical production. I offer a brief overview of Bank's *taxonomy of meaningful* before discussing with more nuance and applying these lenses to my own research.

> **Material access** pertains to access of tangible tools, which may first require access to particular spaces or services.
>
> **Functional access** involves the skills and literacies pertaining to the tool's use along with "networks of information, economic, and power relations that enable that tool's use" (Banks 40).
>
> **Experiential access** is the ability to determine meaningful relevance of the tool in one's life, in which "people must have some involvement in the spaces where technologies are created, designed, planned and where policies and regulations are written" (Banks 42).
>
> **Critical access** considers how communities are able to "develop understandings of the benefits and problems of any technology well enough to be able to critique, resist, and avoid them when necessary" (Banks 42).

Banks focuses primarily on technologies related to the Digital Divide, a metonym for larger racial inequities in America. In my own work, the sites and technologies of rhetorical production that I begin to challenge are in (dis)ability disclosure, American Disability Act (ADA), Student Disability Services, and academic ethos that relies on ableist performances and discursive practices. Of course, challenging ableist discourse is interdependent with challenging colonizing, racist, classist, heteronormative, and patriarchial discourse.

Within the four components of Banks' taxonomy of meaningful access, he warns against limiting our concerns to mere *material access* of technologies, or the "material conditions that drive technology use or nonuse" (41). The Digital Divide is often conceptualized and cheapened as a problem of unequal access to the Internet, computers, and digital devices. However, accessing library PC or owning one's own technology does not solve the racial and technological issues of accessibility. Similarly, academics with

(dis)abilities attending university, enrolling in coursework, being "present" in academic discourse, "accessing space" as an employee, or even obtaining registration with Student Disability Services does *not* necessarily equate to neuroqueer accessibility within these spaces. Ironically, establishing offices like SDS as a quick fix of institutionalized "accessibility" often fails in offering baseline material access to its resources. Registration is often contingent on documentation of (dis)ability diagnosis, which is to say precursors of financial, socioeconomic, medical, and cultural access.

Alongside material access, Banks builds on the work of James Porter to highlight the dual necessity of *functional access.* That is, the skills and literacies pertaining to how "technologies also include the systems of knowledge we must acquire to use any particular tool and the networks of information, economic, and power relations that enable that tool's use" (40) After all, Price critiques how academics with material access to the institution are obligated to display literacies in commonplaces such as *collegiality, participation,* and *presence*. Ethos is judged by one's skills and "competence" to navigate academic technologies, discourses, and spaces. Since higher class attendance rates are correlated with higher grades, classroom "presence" is often conflated with "experiencing" the class. Price interrogates how accessing the material classroom may not render meaningful participation or functional access for those affected by anxiety, mental fog, fatigue, drowsiness or other factors.

The solution is not adhering students to abled literacies and models of participation within the classroom, discourse, and academic ethos—rather, the solution lies somewhere in altering the terms of participation in these areas of power. Banks points to how oppressive systems, technologies, and literacies are perpetuated even when Black people acquire technologies and their literacies.

> Not only are Black people forced to catch up to technological tools and systems and educational systems to which they have been denied access, but they are required to do so in a nation (or system) in which the struggle they endure to gain any such success to any new technology, any acquisition of any new literacies, is rewarded by a change in the dominant technological systems and the literacies used to facilitate access to them, and thus the same struggle over and over again (xxi).

Put another way, perpetuating dependency on the technology relies on disenfranchising users from the ongoing processes of production and regulation. When Black people are forced to acclimate as mere *users,* they struggle for power in *developing* the literacies, tools, or contexts of reliance themselves. This recurring struggle relies on gatekeeping sites of power, limiting who has access to technological production and who has access to new technological benefits and literacies. Dolmage points to a similar problem in multimodal composition pedagogies that privilege technologically savvy students who are quick to take up proficiency in multimodal and digital literacies. These multimodal practices of "accessibility" may actually be counterproductive by perpetuating struggle for others. To truly get to the heart of accessing economic, social, and political power through technological access, gaining material and functional access is still insufficient.

Within my own borderlands, I realize I am right to fear perpetual struggle, this attempt to gain power through means that reinforce abled assimilation. Carter et al. note

the limits of (dis)ability inclusivity efforts when implemented as an afterthought rather than at the inception of foundational design and rhetorical production:

> Tina: [...] I cannot belong to any one discipline, because they were all formed and created without the inclusion of disabled bodyminds. Some try harder than others to add and stir us in, but I can't be stirred into a structure that is predicated on a body I do not have (101).

And there's the rub. Even with well-meaning and critical accessibility pedagogies, even with positioning my scholarship as neuroqueer self-advocacy, even with flexible and trusting relationships with faculty, I realize that even I cannot truly "stir" myself into a structure that is fundamentally sustained by and for a body, a way of moving, a way of being, and a way of knowing that I could never truly embody. By Banks' model of meaningful access, "accessibility" and "reasonable accommodations" in academia primarily pertain to material and functional access, in which the goal is to acquire and master tools and knowledge of power.

Knowing how technologies are networked in contexts of power is one thing—leveraging that knowledge to *transform* technological use and those contexts of power is another. To address this distinction, Banks "quilts" in Tyrone Talborn's call for agency to shape technologies and their relevant environments. *Experiential access* is the ability to determine meaningful relevance of the tool in one's life, in which "people must have some involvement in the spaces where technologies are created, designed, planned and where policies and regulations are written" (42). For instance, what would discursive and technological accessibility look like in academia if self-determined by those who have been historically disenfranchised from institutional access, rather than allowing privileged figures and paradigms to determine dominant discourse and technologies? What would an institution look like when designed with the embodied knowledge of those who are neuroqueer, queer, womxn, nonbinary, working-class, POC, first-generation, multilingual, borderland? How would academic discourse and performance then move toward interdependent, embodied practices? What would administrative, program, and curricula design look like when created by those whose day-to-day concerns crip time? In the sites of SDS and accessible pedagogies, what would accessibility look like if designed and regulated by academics informed by their *own* lived experiences with (dis)abilities? How would the terms of "reasonable accommodations" without "undue burdens" be transformed by paradigms that invest in, value, and care for the neuroqueer bodymind, in which the profitability of one's labor have no bearing? How would ineffective accommodations such as "extended time" be reimagined in ways that are actually relevant and useful to neuroqueer experiences? What would it look like for SDS to work interdependently with other special interest groups and disenfranchised communities? What would it look like if we invited, compensated, and reflexively collaborated with the input from undergraduate students, graduate students, tenured and untenured faculty, adjuncts, and staff with (dis)abilities? Experiential access is key in prioritizing marginalized representation and agency on both developer and user ends.

While my desires for accessible reform have often consisted of radicalizing material, functional, and experiential access, the final component of Banks' model of transformative

and meaningful access leaves me with new considerations. Banks calls for *critical access* and builds on the work Charles Moran and of Richard and Cynthia Selfe. Connected to the knowledge of power contexts within functional access and the self-determined relevance within experiential access, critical access concerns how the "community must also develop understandings of the benefits and problems of any technology well enough to be able to critique, resist, and avoid them when necessary" (42). When should we withdraw or challenge participation in harmful academic discursive practices? When is disclosing (dis)abilities or working with SDS a risk to avoid? When is it important to critically resist classroom policies? When is higher education a pursuit to avoid? To me, critical access means we are not bound by dependence on a technology and its contexts of power. Critical access allows the capacity to protest, the capacity to constructively critique, the capacity to negotiate change, and the capacity to leave without threat to our security or well-being. To me, critical access must allow participants the kind of autonomy, prerogative, and interdependent power in which their resistance can be welcomed, valuable, generative, and reflexive towards communal interest, goals, and understanding.

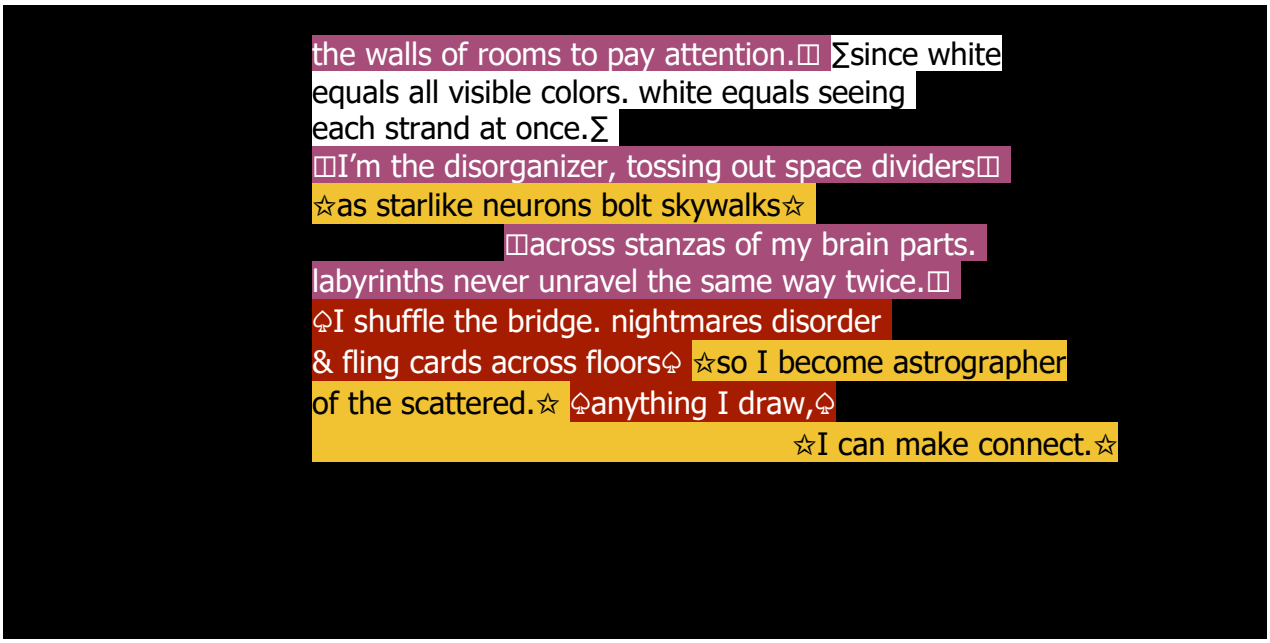
Most of the questions of transformative access posed here are only gestural to pertinent problems and future possibilities. With these closing gestures, I hope to seed generative ideas for personal, communal, and future conversations and catalyze critical action. To me, experiential and critical access is where true transformation of rhetorical production, communication technologies, power, and access may occur. If I and other academics aim to advocate for and pursue neuroqueer accessibility within academic discursive sites, I want to heed how Banks underscores the "relationship between communication technologies and rhetorical production" (23). It is clear that language is a powerful technology and tool of rhetorical agency within issues of (dis)ability justice: The ambiguity of ADA policies that enable institutions to interpret and exercise "reasonable accommodations" within ableist paradigms; the DSM-5 deficit and productivity-centered characterization of (dis)abilities such as ADHD; the discursive policing, threatening, negotiating, and silencing of (dis)abilities such as ADHD; the "commonplace" conventions of academic discourse that self-assert ableist terms of authority that invalidate and disempower academics with (dis)abilities (Price 5). I urge that future work in these areas of discursive, epistemic, and (dis)ability justice lean further into the intersectionality and interdependence that Lorde and Mingus call for. Ableism works in tandem with racism, colonialism, classism, and heteropatriarchy. Systemic mechanisms and paradigms of oppression, within and beyond academia, are powerful in working together. The only way to transformatively challenge these power structures is if our activism and scholarship work with "interdependence of mutual (nondominant) difference" (Lorde). While this thesis begins to find footing for the interdependence of (dis)abilities, race, and borderland identities, more robust work must be done in these rhizomatic areas, as well as in including intersectional and interdependent issues of gender, sexuality, and class.

Epilogue: "Interdisciplinary Studies for Time Deficit Attention Travelers"

∑radio static blurs∑ 🔀the morning commute, my foot
asleep on the gas. I forget again I am driving.🔀
on howstuffworks, I read that ∑if you combined
all imaginable frequencies a human can hear
you get white noise. this empty hum of my head,
background noise of fans hushing me to sleep.∑
🔀I dial through frequencies of watery voices
until my professor's words rotate into focus:🔀
if you are distracted you are starving yourself.
I'm in ancient philosophy class, 🔀checking time
& daydreaming about the fourth dimension,🔀
∑color theory,∑ perfect vacuums, or, usually,
nothing. 🔀I dial in/out of stations & now🔀
I'm running late again to neuropsychology.
♤hobson theorizes we dream to make sense
of random sensory data.♤ ☆I'm a star cartographer
scribbling stories between disparate points
of light. I like how metaphor unifies the disparate.☆
I like the disordered reinterpreted into order.
when testing for attention deficit disorder
the psychiatrist ☆asks my interpretation
for how random pairs connect:☆
music & tides.
🔀*time, tempo, beating.*🔀
three & seven.
prime, divisible by one & itself.
♤*enemy & friend.*
intimacy.♤
what do you mean?
🔎after solving timed puzzles🔎 & reciting numbers
out-of-order, my results: inattentive type.
scattered working memory. disordered.
for five hundred bucks a professional could attest

🔀yes, you have trouble processing the present.
I learned fourth-dimensional beings traverse time
freely. I might be a glitched time traveler, headlights
blinking in/out the present, driving into middle-
of-nowhere🔀 ∑white noise where radio signal & people
& hours don't exist.∑ if I were alone
I'd at least have me. instead
I'm distracted & starved of myself. ♤it's like *onirim*,
the card game where you're a dreamwalker♤
◫shuffling through yellow blue red coded rooms
of a labyrinth. game objective: traverse all rooms◫
♤without nightmare creatures killing you.♤ ☆in the blue
observatory I watch greek myths duel among stars.☆
the scene rubix-cube-shifts to red library
where I'm reading heidegger who says
being human means *being-in-the-world*
♤then something like a bad dream snatches
out lamplights & the words are gone.♤
◫the words
are always swiped from me as I walk from one room
of a poem to another in this house of collapsed floors.
midterms penned me as *fragmented. hard to follow.*
this poem, this labyrinth brain.◫ if you want me
to revise for *clarity*, my final project's focus
is paying attention. so I listen & collect notes:
◫cognitive psychologist radvansky calls it
the doorway effect—when you walk into rooms &
forget why you're here. as if rooms are episode dividers
for memories with shelf lives expiring at the door.◫
∑I wonder if this labyrinth could unravel like a prime number:
an unclosed & indivisible wall of white.∑ I wonder
how strangers see me in astronomy class,
🔀head tilted to lost signal, glitching in/out my desk,
leaving where I am & forgetting my context.
so I practice dialing back into scene.🔀 I glitch back
& the concert isn't miles away because
I feel pulses of canopy club floors & chills
glissading from andrew bird's violin. I glitch
& ☆I'm color-coding research, searching for narrative
to constellate sense of the data.☆ I glitch
& I'm poeming again. call the diagnosis *inattention*
🔀or *sporadic absence* or *glitched time/space traveling.*🔀
I'm cooking up a methodology to recoup the deficit.

in existentialism class dr. greene says that 🔎questions
are goggles for seeing the world.
you want to pay attention? you want good answers?
ask good questions. so I steal from grand inquisitor
holmes
torn from p 167: *to a great mind nothing is little.*
aren't astronomers just space detectives,🔎☆digging up
the dark to magnify puny dustings of starlight?
some say the hubble telescope shovels up the murk
to uncloak the suddenly mammoth & blinding
universe,☆ 🔎but really it's the good questions.🔎
sometimes 🔀I'm driving route zero🔀 or attending
bio lectures on epigenetics, ♤then something ghoulish
snatches out the sun & my focus dims out.
in nightmares, I can't outrun the monsters so
I negotiate a win-win scenario. you possess me
& I possess you. neither of us dies.
a pact of symbiosis. hard to pin you enemy or friend♤
🔎when we're partnered in solving mysteries, fitting
the puzzle together. like a monster undercovers
you're my private eye allowing me to see.
I switch on the light with a good question:🔎
bio class muses gene-editing to kill cancer.
it dominos to eugenics & couture babies
who are beautiful & don't suffer from tumors or
sleep disorders or ♤nightmare♤ 🔀attention traveling—🔀
& if I could revise
🔀would I choose to be without the glitching,
the nonlinearity,🔀☆the metaphors competing
to unite the disparate?☆ ∑mind fog
bleaches my windshield. for miles all I see
is this colorless color. I deconstruct the light,
prying each frequency apart. white minus
blue minus yellow minus red equals—
nothing.∑ can you picture nothing? ☆a black hole
was photographed for the first time. rather,
the radiation spinning around the intense
all-absorbing nothing.☆ ∑the traffic, the fan, the rain
is the nightly sound of nothing blanketing me
for muted rest.∑ ◫the italian root of *stanza* means
r*oom, station,*
stopping place. here's my loophole,
my hack to the doorway effect: I unmake-believe


the walls of rooms to pay attention.◫ ∑since white
equals all visible colors. white equals seeing
each strand at once.∑
◫I'm the disorganizer, tossing out space dividers◫
☆as starlike neurons bolt skywalks☆
◫across stanzas of my brain parts.
labyrinths never unravel the same way twice.◫
♤I shuffle the bridge. nightmares disorder
& fling cards across floors♤ ☆so I become astrographer
of the scattered.☆ ♤anything I draw,♤
☆I can make connect.☆

Works Cited

@quinintheclouds *Help! I'm stuck in my head!* Tumblr, https://quinintheclouds.tumblr.com/post/178053493454/adhd-culture-is-overusing-and-and-and

Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. Pub. L. 101-336. 1990. 104 Stat. 328.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Carter, et al. "Bodyminds Like Ours: An Autoethnographic Analysis of Graduate School, Disability, and the Politics of Disclosure." *Negotiating Disability: Disclosure and Higher Education*, edited by Kershbaum, Stephanie L., et al. University of Michigan Press, 2017, pp. 95-113.

Cedillo, Christina V. "What Does It Mean to Move?: Race, Disability, and Critical Embodiment Pedagogy." Composition Forum 39, Summer 2018.

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. "Orienting Orientalism, or How to Map Cyberspace." *AsianAmerica.Net: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Cyberspace* edited by Lee, Rachel C. and Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong. Routledge, 2003, pp. 1-36.

Dolmage, Jay T. *Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education*. University of Michigan, 2017.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover Publications, 1903.

Foucault, Michel. *Society Must Be Defended*. Penguin, 2003.

Galloway, Alexander R. "Does the Whatever Speak?" *Race After the Internet* edited by Nakamura, Lisa and Peter A. Chow-White. Routledge, 2012, pp. 111-127

Greenfieldboyce, Nell. "Scientists Restore Some Function In The Brains Of Dead Pigs." *NPR*. National Public Radio, https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/04/17/714289322/scientists-restore-some-function-in-the-brains-of-dead-pigs Accessed April 19, 2019.

Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip.* Indiana University Press, 2013.

Kershbaum, Stephanie L., et al. *Negotiating Disability: Disclosure and Higher Education.* University of Michigan Press, 2017.

Linton, Simi. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. New York University Press, 1998.

Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Moraga, Cherrie and Gloria Anzaldúa. Kitchen Table Press, 1983, pp. 94-101.

Lyons, Scott R. *Rhetorical Sovereignty: American Indian Writing as Self-Determination.* 2000. Miami University, PhD Dissertation.

Mao, LuMing. "Uniqueness of Borderlands?: The Making of Asian-American Rhetorics." *Rhetoric and Ethnicity,* edited by Gilyard, Keith and Vorris Nunley. Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 2004, pp. 51-55.

Mingus, Mia. "Changing the Framework: Disability Justice." *Leaving Evidence.* Wordpress, https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/02/12/changing-the-framework-disability-justice/ Accessed July 5, 2019.

Prendergast, Catherine. "On the Rhetorics of Mental Disability." *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture.* Southern Illinois University Press, 2001, pp. 45-60.

Price, Margaret. *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*. University of Michigan Press, 2011.

Reynolds, Cecil R. and Kamphaus, Randy W. "Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)." Pearson. https://images.pearsonclinical.com/images/assets/basc-3/basc3resources/DSM5_DiagnosticCriteria_ADHD.pdf

Rhodes, Jacqueline and Jonathan Alexander. *Techne: Queer Meditations on Writing the Self*. 2015. https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/techne/toc.html

Walker, Nick. "Neuroqueer: An Introduction." *Neurocosmopolitanism: Nick Walker's Notes on Neurodiversity, Autism, and Cognitive Liberty.* Nick Walker. http://neurocosmopolitanism.com/neuroqueer-an-introduction/ Accessed June 2019.

Womack, Annie-Marie. "Teaching is Accommodation." *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 63, no. 8, 2017.

Yergeau, Melanie. "Wandering Rhetoric, Rhetoric Wandering." *Making Future Matters*, edited by Wysocki, Rick and Mary P. Sheridan, 2018. http://ccdigitalpress.org/book/makingfuturematters/yergeau-intro.html