Disability and the Academic Job Market

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Acknowledgments

Our project was a wild ride.

It started out as a simple panel at the annual NeMLA convention, but thanks to Vernon Press, our idea was quickly picked up for publication. We want to thank those involved at Vernon Press who worked with us and, most especially, were patient with us.

Throughout the course of our project, we ran into numerous obstacles, most especially the COVID-19 pandemic which hit just as we were one step away from finishing. Throughout the ups and downs of the year or so it took for us to get the first draft together, we had the support of many scholars who submitted ideas or volunteered for peer review. We appreciate all those who took the time to support our project. Because of peer review, we can't acknowledge people by name, but we want to make sure that everyone involved in this project knows how much they saved the day and helped this project come to fruition.

Foreword

As a wheelchair user with cerebral palsy, I have accomplished more than people have expected of me. I earned my Bachelor's in History in 1998, my coursework centering around Islamic and African history as well as Comparative Religion. As part of my bachelor's studies, I took a trip to South Africa in 1995 to study anthropology and the anti-Apartheid movement. After finishing my BA, I did not have the money to do a proper master's degree at my desired program, so instead, I enrolled in a Master's in Liberal Studies with a concentration in History. My graduate education focused on theatre, philosophy, and government, with my master's thesis examining counterinsurgency during the Cold War in Malaysia, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. Despite my disability, I am one of a small portion of people in the United States who has earned a college degree, even more, multiple graduate degrees.

The academic realm was and is a place in which I could feel pride and self-assertion. Growing up prior to the Internet when computers were word processors and games, writing and exploring books became an antidote to shame and a guidebook to the larger society. Because of my disability, I was not able to actively participate in an able-bodied world; academia became my only weapon to prove my worth and my value as a man and a scholar. But the further I dove into academia, the less qualified—and more disabled—I felt, as academia challenged me in ways that my disability never did. When I write "challenged," a challenge is a good thing, right? Or is it just a euphemism for something no one wants to talk about?

I thought with a master's degree, I could get full-time status teaching at a local community college. In the United States, the community college system provides a basic, often vocational, two-year education for students from the local area, allowing students a cheaper and more accessible educational opportunity with students typically entering into the workforce or transferring to a four-year university afterwards. Because community colleges have different service needs, requirements for full-time employment are less stringent. But those colleges were only hiring Math and Foreign Language instructors, which was outside of my field. I not so quickly realized that in order to have any chance of getting a full-time position teaching in higher education, I needed to continue my education and complete a doctoral degree.

In 2004, I started a PhD program, but three years into the program, I ran out of money and was transferred into a Doctor of Letters program, a less expensive History degree. The same financial struggles that affected my master's degree quickly resurfaced. I was told at the time that no teaching assistantship was available. However, I later learned that this was only the case for me specifically. I had been sold a falsehood designed to cover up the administration's ableist attitude towards their perception of my performance and their belief that as a person with a disability that I had access to immense wealth from government funds. Seeking financial aid, I applied to 1,042 grants and only received one $150 prize. My education was entirely funded out of pocket through adjuncting work and social security, with only a one-time fee waiver of $2,000. The federal government forgave a loan of $20,000 after three years. My PhD cost me in total $160,000 in tuition alone.

Tuition, however, was not the only expenditure I needed to endure. For my dissertation, I expanded on my master's thesis, covering the issue of disability inclusion as a powerful factor in the Cold War in Malaysia, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe. My dissertation heavily involved archival research and travel, including trips to the Johnson and Ford Presidential Libraries, the Universities of Nebraska, Texas, and Tennessee, and extensive travel to Australia and South Africa. Such traveling is essential to my research and other post-doctoral trips are still in the works, including archival research in Malaysia, Taiwan, and Zimbabwe, each of which will cost a bare minimum of $4,000, with further trips to South Africa having a price tag as high as $12,000. While traveling across the world is prohibitively expensive for able-bodied scholars, traveling with a disability is even more of an obstacle. In the least, I require an aide for physical accessibility, along with a transcriber for any notetaking because of how my cerebral palsy affects my ability to write and multi-task. Even if both aides were combined into one, my costs effectively double because I cannot travel alone, and this does not even factor in other common disability-related issues like my wheelchair getting lost in baggage (which it always does) or the reluctance of able-bodied persons to provide assistance—few taxis will pick me up in New York City, much less Kuala Lumpur. So if I spend another $40,000 traveling the world, will I then be able to get a full-time job?

I became interested in disability reforms in other countries as a means of imagining and escape, dreaming of new places that treated disability differently where I might be recognized for my lived and formal expertise, rather than ignored. South Africa has a much larger commitment to access, even under Apartheid, due to the personal interest of Prime Minister Verwoerd and Homeland Chief minister Kaizer Matanzima, who initiated a 5% quota in government positions which has continued under the majority rule governing system. Zimbabwe, during the White-dominated Rhodesian government, had followed the South African pattern in accessibility. Tribal chieftains saw people with disabilities as blessed by the gods and entitled to help; these chieftains fought to make cities more accessible and increase education and property ownership to encourage a more educated citizenry among disabled Zimbabweans. In Vietnam, the disabled are viewed as the true proletariat, while Malaysia is slowly developing its efforts to improve accessibility as the only Islamic democracy in Asia. Each place provided a model of how my own culture might be reformed, but sadly, my financial predicaments have prevented me from fully experiencing many of these different models firsthand.

Determined to advance in academia, I have worked continuously as an adjunct since 2004 at both a four-year university and various local community colleges, teaching primarily United States History, American Civilization, World Civilization, and Colonial History. It has been my hope to move beyond adjunct status to employment as a full-time tenured professor. If I am not able to secure this type of employment, my other most immediate option would be to look into some form of government research. However, neither option has proven very fruitful. Since finishing my PhD in 2017, I have been turned down over 250 times for potential employment in research and/or teaching positions. The doctorate seemed to be the coin of the realm to full employment; figuring out it wasn't almost broke me, emotionally and financially.

Forgetting about full-time employment, even adjunct teaching has its challenges because of lack of accommodations. The most common is simple physical access. In spite of the Americans with Disabilities Act, many buildings are still not fully accessible. Elevators don't work. Transportation is difficult to acquire. Even something as simple as asking for audiovisual technology, like a DVD player, often seems like an insurmountable obstacle. As a person with a disability, any accommodations I ask for, even a classroom necessity, feels like fighting an uphill battle against patronizing and scolding ableism that blames every deficit on my disability. If I don't have a DVD player in my classroom, it must be because of my CP.

Even surmounting physical conditions, there is that "super-crip" presumption constantly showing up where people with a disability are believed to have access to vast, supernatural resources that enable them to overcome their impairment. Every person with a disability has infinite finances and a radar sense that compensates for their blindness (even if they aren't blind). How many times have I been told, "It's nice for you to do this but you don't need this like an able-bodied person does"? It's still assumed that employment is a supplement for people with a disability rather than a necessity. Every person with a disability has a blank check from their rich family and/or unlimited financial resources from the state. This is a comfortable ableist myth that is leaving many people with a disability in uncomfortable poverty.

Teaching is not the only responsibility impacted by disability: academia is at its core research-oriented. The realities of my disability make it very difficult to participate in conferences. Arranging transportation, booking accessible hotel rooms, and dressing myself in business attire all prove true obstacles. These seemingly ordinary impediments are not impossible to navigate but require extra time, money, and effort. While publishing is a thrilling experience, I am often rejected by “Special Education circumstances.” My spelling and grammar are atrocious, the result of being placed in a practical Special Ed system that focused on daily living skills rather than literacy. By the time I was mainstreamed, I was expected to know such things as where to place a comma but was never directly taught such academic or literacy skills. I only picked them up gradually and erratically. Any peer reviewer worth their weight in scholarly insecurity would cut me down like wheat for my comma usage alone.

The training process throughout higher education, including graduate school at both levels, so eerily imitated the (lack of) support systems I encountered in my Special Education days. Perhaps it is a side-effect of my cerebral palsy or just a certain way of thinking, but I have always thought in broad strokes, overlooking the little details of step-by-step processes. And graduate school was nothing but fine print, paperwork, and step-by-step processes rather than the academic wonderland of intellectual conversation and the pursuit of knowledge that I imagined it to be. I was little prepared and often relied upon the kindness of colleagues to fill in the details which were not provided by the support systems that I was (not) given. It seemed like I needed to do everything myself.

My negative experiences, however, do not mean that the situation is hopeless. I have seen more and more people with a disability in academia. Dynamic leaders are rising and despite innumerable setbacks, I myself was able to finish the D'Litt degree. Regardless of the frustrations, I have been venting for the past couple of pages, I have found the atmosphere where I have studied and worked more welcoming than one might think. Numerous faculty have risen to the cause to mentor me, in some cases creating a strong emotional bond which sustained my sense of worth in crisis. Students are curious and dynamic, although often needing an adjustment period, at times testing my limits with their morbid curiosity about the details of my daily existence. I patiently answer questions and try to make them welcome to my class, however intimidating they may find me and my disability.

However, there is still plenty of work that needs to be done. Those in power need to understand that a one size fits all approach to accommodations may not be possible. That is much the purpose of this book—to spotlight the variability of disability. Each scholar’s experience is embedded in a discourse that is both overlapping and individual—composed of the unique experiences of each person’s body and mind but also the commonalities that often converge as cultures seek to inscribe a uniform sense of normality. With this forward, I have contributed my verse.

Dr. Sean Dineen,
Kean University

Introduction

I finished my PhD in Rhetoric and Composition in 2016 and went on the market later in the year. My colleagues who entered the market before me literally applied to a hundred jobs to only get half a dozen responses. I didn't seem to have that problem. I received a great amount of interest from hiring committees in my initial applications. My first year, I applied to roughly 20 positions and received some type of response from eight of my applications. While I had several interviews, including two campus visits, none of these interviews lead to me securing a position.

My inability to close can easily be dismissed as problems in marketability. I am highly published with nearly two decades of teaching and service, but my scholarship is primarily within the graphic narrative, which does not fit into the tightly defined needs of many four-year research institutions. This is especially true in the field of Rhetoric and Composition which has slowly changed into Composition and Rhetoric with more of a demand for scholars in assessment and writing program administration than for those who do rhetorical analysis.

Having gone on several interviews and seeing my application status end at the interview stage, I became suspicious that my disability was having an impact on my success. What was it that made me suspicious? It's something I like to call "the Whiff." Have you ever been just standing around and suddenly a bad smell will fill your nostrils? The reaction is almost visceral, impossible not to respond to. The Whiff for me is that moment when I can see that someone has become aware at some level of my disability, often not consciously knowing but aware that something was off about me. In many cases, their facial expression suddenly changes—just drops. There may be a change in their body language and speech, as if they were trying to walk away from something with which they were uncomfortable. In many cases, they do literally walk away once the conversation is over, in a way that broadcasts something is wrong. I was picking up on these Whiffs after many interviews.

At the time, I was still in the closet about declaring my disability, so no one during the application stage was aware that I had any type of impairment. I decided in my second year of applications to declare my disability in my cover letter and in the demographic survey at the end of most online applications. I applied once again to 20 positions, declaring my disability in all of them. I received only one response. One. Included in my applications was a university looking for a graphic narrative specialist. When I became suspicious that the cause of this decreased response may have had something to do with my declaration of disability, I stopped declaring it. I sent out four or five more applications and received three responses. In speaking with other people with a disability, they reported similar responses: one woman sent out 20 applications, declaring her disability in 18 of the applications. Guess how many responses she got? Two.

All things being unequal in applications, it is still evident that my declaration of having a disability affected my opportunities for employment. This is a sad betrayal, given 1) that most colleges and universities directly state that they are seeking applicants from marginalized populations; and 2) that all applications directly state that they follow Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines. What is stated, however, is obligatory by law. Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines need to be stated but whether such policies are followed is another matter.

My problem comes with the interview, more specifically, that I have a transparent disability. An invisible disability is one which is not physically apparent. A transparent disability is one that is not immediately apparent but noticeable under casual conditions (and by trained interviewers). For me, I have a neuromuscular condition combined with autism. My voice has been affected, and I have a palsy, so my muscles constantly contract and release in odd and painful ways, giving me physical mannerisms that range from robotic to drunken. Autism also has various pragmatic issues in behavior, socialization, and communication that interfere with interview performance. The common and broad term used for such atypical ways in thinking and behavior is “neurodivergent,” compared to the “neurotypical” norm.

I am not alone. Within the past decade, research has come out that has continually spotlighted problems that people on the spectrum experience in job interview situations. A 2013 study by the *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* found only 20% of people on the spectrum have achieved full-time employment.[1] Similarly, a study from the University of Alberta found that only 30% of people on the spectrum would be called in for a second interview, compared to a neurotypical average of 75%.[2]

This unemployment is not a testimony to the lack of skill of neurodivergent individuals but rather stems from unconscious ableist conventions becoming more popular in job interviews, including those in higher education. New approaches to the interview process reinforce what is known as the social model of disability, in which disability is defined and measured in terms of its comparison to “normality.” (The medical model, meanwhile, views disability entirely as a medical condition and ignores the social impact that having a disability can bring).[3] Academic job interviews focus more on how an applicant fits into the community of the college or university rather than résumé criteria.

Autism, for example, manifests in various behaviors that are red flags to potential employees, often resulting in exclusion for persons with a disability who are perceived as strange or asocial by hiring committees unaware of that disability. For example, eye contact is difficult for me as it is for many autistic people. In addition to problems with verbal communication, many people on the spectrum struggle with voice modulation that reflects deeper issues of emotional intelligence. The autistic voice lacks intonation with a reduction in emotional expression and often a deep-voiced monotone. This deep monotone and reduced affect frequently can further translate into a softer and unintelligible muttering, or when over-compensated, a more manic or projected loudness that can backfire as obviously irregular or scripted.

With many people on the spectrum, "normality" occurs with a learning curve in which the autistic must decipher the social codes and performances of an environment. With micro-environmental communities like those of a college or university, the person is entering into a new environment to which he or she needs to adjust. Part of autism, however, is difficulty in this adjustment caused by various symptoms, including obsessive-compulsive style inflexibility, adherence to routines, and resistance to change, along with extreme sensitivity to sensory information. Within the classroom, the environment is constructed under the cooperation between instructor and students with the instructor as director, while the interview setting is one that is new and unstable and subject to all sorts of complications under the external control of the interview committee and Human Resources. What is a source of frustration to someone who is neurotypical is a more difficult obstacle to someone on the spectrum. The greatest difficulty, however, is that the person on the spectrum only has one chance to accommodate to what is a life-changing and highly stressful pattern break.

The interview, then, is an exercise in adapting to the normality of a new environment. Because of stigma against people with a disability, people on the spectrum frequently assume neurotypical personas or masks in which symptoms of their autism are compensated for through a type of pretend. In other words, they learn to act "normal." The act, however, has its drawbacks. "Normal" can feel formal and rehearsed and make improvisation more difficult. When someone on the spectrum is asked a question to which they are unprepared, they fall back into disordered monologuing. Just say something, anything.

Furthermore, because of its scarcity and nuanced expectations, immersion in the interview stage is more difficult than the presentation of the self in everyday life, as Irving Goffman calls it.[4] Ironically, the presentation of the self in the job interview is a special type of presentation that is atypical compared to other settings. It is the use of abnormality to reinforce normality that strips away the “normality” or developed identity presentation mechanisms of the neurodivergent applicant at a time in which they are needed most. The presentation of the self in everyday life of a person with a disability provides a portfolio of skills that can be denounced or un-preferred in the job interview scenario. The neurodivergent employee, then, is not showing off his or her skills or strengths but instead asked to relegate these strengths to the preferences of interview normality. Training for the job interview is essentially training to not be autistic—to not be one’s self.

Returning to my search for an academic position, I was eventually successful. The important question is why? As a first step, I did not immediately disclose my disability and I will never do that again. I did, however, indicate my involvement with people with disabilities because I consider this an important part of my professional identity. My thought was that any hiring committee would see working with people with a disability as different from having a disability. When the time came for my interview, I made the decision to reveal my disability to the hiring committee chair. At first, I had thought about what type of accommodations I would need. Perhaps a few seconds to gather my thoughts after being asked a question. Maybe the license to ask for some clarification on certain questions. Perhaps a follow-up from an interviewer if I do not answer a question fully or on target. In the end, I did not ask for any of these accommodations and instead simply told the hiring committee chair that I had a neuromuscular condition—that I have found in interview situations, people will often subconsciously pick up on my condition and become uncomfortable. If the committee were aware that I had a disability and this was “what was going on,” then the subconscious discomfort might be reduced.

I have found that despite my refusal to disclose my disability in cover letters, in personal situations, disclosure was an important first step. As mentioned, people quickly get the Whiff and become avoidant or hostile. When I pre-emptively disclose, it is like a different switch is activated because the person then has to confront his or her own prejudiced reactions. As an example, as mentioned, my voice is affected by my disability. In my student evaluations at the beginning of my career, I received a lot of comments about my voice. One college even had a section in their evaluations asking if the instructor had any annoying mannerisms. Apparently, my disability was considered an annoying mannerism. One student suggested voice lessons. Hallelujah! I’m cured! Eventually, I pre-emptively addressed the issue and told my students that my voice was the result of a disability and that making comments about it in my evaluations would be rather inhumane. I said to them, “If I were in a wheelchair, would I be a better professor if I could walk?” In the years since making this disclosure, I’ve had maybe one student who criticized my voice and even then, acknowledged that I had a disability and that they shouldn't be complaining.

Back to the interview. My decision to disclose my disability came from an honest assessment of the situation. While the university I was interviewing at had a good reputation and ranking, the position that they were offering me was not very appealing. If I didn't get the position, I would not be devastated. I was hesitant to try to fake my way through the interview so instead I used the interview as an opportunity to test the waters in pre-emptively declaring my disability.

Because the university did not receive any government funding, it was not bound by the same regulations and uniform normality that I had experienced during other interviews where various anti-discrimination mandates tightly controlled what an interviewer could and could not ask about a disability during an interview. The interview was more freeform, and I was able to openly discuss my disability with the hiring board who saw my experiences as an asset to the university's own students who might have been struggling with disclosure themselves. My final interview was a success less because I did anything differently and more because of the attitude the university took towards my disability.

The root of the problem which our chapter collection tackles is that people with a disability are simply not well-represented throughout various levels of academia. The National Science Foundation reports that a miniscule 1.5% of doctoral degree recipients each year have a disability and only some pursue a career in the academy.[5] Given ableism in the hiring process and during tenure and promotion decisions, it should be of little surprise that the disabled population is nearly absent in the professoriate. The University of California, Berkeley likewise indicates that 1.5% of their faculty have disabilities.[6] This low number does not equitably represent the demographics presented in Catherine Okoro et al.'s report which show that 26% of adults in the United States are disabled.[7] With such a small proportion of disabled academics interviewing for academic jobs and represented in existing instructor populations, it is unsurprising that search committees, administrators, and faculty/staff disability support services have little experience and know-how to fairly assess and support disabled candidates. These conditions create a cycle of disparity in the representation of disabled professionals in the academy.

At the heart of our project is the main goal to see more diverse disabled faculty serving in tenure track positions at institutions that support their needs and work. Publications on disability and academia primarily focus on the conditions of those scholars who are already employed, not taking into consideration the struggle that people with a disability have in merely getting in the door. There is a paucity of resources that support scholars with a disability and our collection hopefully provides an essential step in facilitating the increased presence and success of scholars with a disability in higher education and their ability to navigate the often byzantine ableist structures that prohibit disability in higher education.

In an effort to reduce oppression in the academy, our collection fleshes out concrete examples of how ableism is enacted throughout the hiring and promotion process. Many of the issues our authors have faced are sadly common but significant. Familiarization with the obstacles that people with a disability endure can hopefully result in a better understanding of how administrative policies and committees can better accommodate the needs of its disabled faculty for better inclusion. We want to raise urgent awareness about the otherwise unspoken aspects of academic hiring that well-meaning administrators who are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion still often miss. We would like to start difficult conversations about ableism and begin to think about practical solutions beyond rhetoric.

The methodology of our chapter collection is primarily informed and influenced by autoethnographic practices which are at the core of Disability Studies. Autoethnography places the lived experiences of marginalized populations at the center of cultural discourse. Knowledge and expertise are built out from the personal experiences of people with a disability and other minority populations, commenting on oppressive frameworks created by the hegemony of larger dominant systems. Group membership as a type of insider knowledge is important to truly understand interactions between cultural, political, and social groups. Autoethnography provides nuanced and emotionally raw testimony compared to the colder and more generalized quantitative data that permeates academic discourse. Each chapter in our collection presents a unique perspective in the diversity of autoethnographic experience of people with disabilities, ranging from tutors and PhD students to adjunct faculty to tenured professors who reveal the difficulties of their rise in academia.

Although our main focus is on the autoethnography of disabled scholars, our last few chapters break this methodology to include the perspectives of non-disabled allies. The benefit of this expanded perspective is to fill in the gaps of autoethnography. Non-autoethnographic experiences can give voice to those people with a disability that are unable to speak, metaphorically, as well as bring forth other components within the social discourse of disability, for example, caretakers and those proponents who have advocated for increased service for the disabled in academia. While autoethnography reveals the invisible hidden from the perception of non-disabled people, through the voice of non-disabled allies, other systems are revealed that we never thought existed.

While autoethnography is based on individual experience, it gains much of its power from the individual's relationship with larger systems. As such, our collection is arranged to speak to two major audiences: our colleagues who are struggling with finding a job while having a disability and administrative authorities within the larger academic infrastructure in which our colleagues are struggling. While we advocate for change, this change can only occur in partnership with those systems which must change. To reflect this dual audience, each section of our collection moves from advice to our fellow colleagues to criticism and challenges aimed at administrators to bring about change in disability accommodation, services, and inclusion. The rank and file of administrative positions is as varied as the intersectional identities of our contributors. Some positions include hiring committees, department heads and writing center directors, diversity, equity, and inclusion members, deans, and the general powers that be that decide and control university policy. As our collection shifts away from autoethnography in its later chapters focused on non-disabled allies, we find our audience likewise shifts more towards placing responsibility and initiative on administrators. Autoethnography focuses more on fellowship while allyship centers more on systemic audiences and issues.

Within the overlap of our chapters, certain themes tying together disability and the academic job market repeat into a guiding framework of concern. Disclosure of a disability troubles the minds of many of our authors—should a disability be revealed to potential employers? How do possible benefits balance possible consequences? There is no clear answer, although the consensus among our contributors is that disclosure is usually not the best route. Each author provides his or her own perspective and advice on this important decision.

In keeping silent, our authors agree, secondary issues arise, for example, the emotional, physical, and economic labor of having a disability within academia can complicate the job application and promotion process. In economic models, disability is defined in terms of the productive value of an individual; academia has proven itself as a competitive environment based on privilege and elitism, an environment that is less than ideal for stable and congenial working conditions for both disabled and able-bodied scholars. For scholars with a disability, there is the continual concern that their disability will undermine their authority as an academic and as an instructor—if one cannot perform at superhuman workaholic levels, what value does one have?

Beyond disclosure, even when a scholar with a disability is included into academia, there is still the constant struggle for accommodation. The most commonly granted accommodation is *crip time*, which allows for more time on tests or projects or deadlines or any activity which may be difficult to accomplish within a given time period because of disability issues. Crip time, however, is but one of many accommodations which might need to be on the table. However, what accommodations are possible is rarely made clear—the accommodation process is rather over-complicated, unclear, and difficult to navigate, frequently involving legal battles which cost more than any accommodation itself. Rather than accommodations being automatically made by the university, they must be forced and fought for by the disabled scholar, many of whom are afraid to ask for accommodations because they might be looked upon as being weak. Whether we succeed or fail, the struggle rarely receives more than an apology in response—as our contributors will testify, the apology is an able-bodied genre unto itself, refined through decades, if not centuries, of practice.

The first section of our collection focuses on the experiences of PhD students at various levels in their academic career, beginning with a chapter that establishes our methodology in autoethnography. As mentioned, in recent years, there has been growing academic interest in lived expertise. Mad studies, as an example, is an academic discipline concerned with the lived experience of people who have experienced mental illness or psychiatric intervention. Emphasis on lived experience in this discipline has meant that mad people have become recognised as experts with an important perspective. Nonetheless, mad academics must navigate stigma and prejudice in how they present themselves in order to manage the impact of that stigma on their career prospects. In their chapter "An Autoethnographic Dialogue on Being Mad in the Academy," Dr. Ben Habib and Tessa-May Zirnsak discuss their experiences of madness and its relationship with their careers. Habib is a Senior Lecturer in International Relations, and Zirnsak a PhD candidate in Gender, Sexuality and Diversity Studies. At the time of this publication, both authors identify as mad, seeing "madness" as a construction that resists pathologization and highlights environmental factors that manufacture madness, while also acknowledging that madness can be a strength. The differing professional positioning of the authors in the academy creates both a mentoring relationship and productive tensions which explore what it means to be mad in the academy and how to best navigate the academic world as a mad person. This chapter is presented in the format of emails replicating Habib and Zirnsak's initial conversations. These emails have been curated and adapted to form a scholarly contribution to the mad studies literature. As Habib and Zirnsak's relationship developed, it becomes clear that their mentoring relationship helped them to challenge the conceptualisation of madness as a deficit to their academic work.

In our second chapter, "Disability in the Tutor's Seat," Janelle Chu Capwell discusses the writing center as a connective tissue between various levels of academic experience and authority. As both student and staff, the Writing tutor occupies an in-between position between learner and instructor, a liminal state also occupied by many disabled scholars whose authority is undermined by their disability. The tutor thus becomes a model of authority, accommodation, and access needs. Although writing centers, as an example, are home to invaluable work, most of the conversation in trainings and pedagogy are focused on disabled students in the tutorial and not the tutors themselves. Capwell explores policies that must be changed and implemented to welcome disabled individuals to seek out employment and feel comfortable negotiating disclosure in tutoring spaces. For example, normalizing accessibility in job posting materials and implementing disability into tutor trainings is an important starting point to encourage diversity in academic workplaces. Furthermore, as technology is implemented into writing centers, online access is also an integral part of accessibility but can also serve as another barrier for disabled scholars. Websites, supplemental materials, and all other methods of online work need to be integrated with a beyond-compliance approach to design and implementation. In a place where collaboration and diversity are typically encouraged, the writing center still proves to be a space where disabled students may feel more welcomed as tutees rather than tutors.

Dr. Travis Chi Wing Lau's chapter on "'Undisciplined Cognators': Invisible Disability and Neurodiversity on the Academic Job Market" reflects on Lau's personal experience witnessing the academic hiring process during graduate school and later in navigating the academic job market as a scholar with scoliosis-related disability. Drawing upon Mel Y. Chen's concept of "disciplined cognators,"[8] a term used to describe the academy's preference for scholars who are capable of thinking and writing quickly, Lau argues how the academic job market selects able-minded and able-bodied candidates through hiring practices like the videoconference interview and the job talk. His chapter examines how a candidate's success often depends on the performance of sharpness or reactive thinking that can force candidates to disavow, suppress, or conceal the needs of their body and mind. "Undisciplined cognition" is disciplined out of the profession through a hiring process that implicitly favors those who can better pass as "cognitive imposters."

In our second section, we explore the intersectionality of disability with other cultural identities such as race, gender, and sexuality. Sadly, though, such intersectionality only seems to reaffirm the marginalization of disabled scholars into contingent positions. Dr. Kenya Mitchell's "Uncovering Red Flags: Determining School Fit for Prospective Faculty with a Disability through Qualitative Analysis" explores the specific intersections of race and disability while identifying red flags that an applicant with a disability (as well as applicants from other marginalized populations) should look for when applying for a university-level position. This reflective piece draws from the personal experience of a freshly minted African American PhD who thought she found the perfect position in academia, but in actuality, found herself working on a campus with an ableist culture. In the current, competitive academic job market, determining whether a school would be a good fit for an applicant goes well beyond determining if the applicant's research agenda would fit well in a particular department, or if the applicant would work well with potential colleagues. Understanding the underlying campus culture is of critical importance. The pervasive culture on a campus can determine which courses are assigned to a professor, who gets university funding for projects, and even the longevity of a professor's tenure. Evaluating institutional fit before taking a position is especially important for academics with a disability, making sure institutions will support and accommodate them. However, identifying signs that indicate campus inclusiveness can be a challenge as institutions and their leaders may profess inclusiveness but institute ableist practices consciously or unconsciously. Mitchell's chapter traces through the development of the corporate workaholic culture of academia and its connection with racist and ableist exploitations, providing a comprehensive battery of questions and approaches to consider when applying for a faculty position in higher education.

Dr. Cara Jones' chapter "'What Got You Interested in Researching That?': Accommodations are Not Enough for Applicants with Dynamic Disabilities on the Academic Job Market" explores issues of embodiment in terms of gender and dynamic disability and how this intersectionality too often relegates the disabled scholar to a contingent position in academia. Her chapter asks, "Is there a place for people with chronic illnesses in academia?" As academics, we are both implicitly and explicitly trained to ignore our embodiment in the pursuit of the "life of the mind," and this unstated imperative is only intensifying in response to neoliberal demands of ever-increasing productivity. Achieving the elusive work-life balance is challenging for all academics and next to impossible for those with dynamic disabilities whose health is precarious and whose ability to work is often contingent upon adequate rest, care, nutrition, and medical interventions. The result is what philosopher Susan Wendell calls "impossible positions," in which people with dynamic disabilities "must push themselves beyond endurance to appear to be capable of working full-time or dishonestly declare themselves unable to work at all, often when they want very much to continue working."[9] While those with dynamic disabilities can avoid the daily microaggressions familiar to those with more visible, stigmatized disabilities, the toll of ableist demands can be devastating. As Barbara J. Campbell comments in the edited collection *Illness in the Academy*: "All of my mental and physical energy is not invested in concealing my illness, but rather in forcing my body and mind to perform its daily requirements—to discipline it enough to do its job."[10] In her chapter, Jones examines how people with dynamic disabilities navigate academia.

What does it mean to have to force your body and mind to do its job? How do dynamic disabilities complicate institutional requirements such as disclosure, collegiality, productivity, and “reasonable” accommodations? How do dynamic disabilities exacerbate the contingent academic experience?

Writing as a disabled woman and contingent faculty member, Dr. Jennifer Gagnon’s chapter on “Disability, Gender, and Contingent Faculty” strives to make visible the forces of ableism, labor exploitation, stigma, and sexism that force individuals to the margins of academia. To be simultaneously woman, disabled, and contingent faculty is to exist in the margins, to be seen and yet invisible. The emergence of the new academic precariat along with the disappearance of the tenure track job market has made the ivory tower less, not more, accessible for people with disabilities. Universities, by implementing cost saving policies, are less likely to welcome accommodations, and the precarious employment of contingent faculty encourages people with disabilities to “pass” as normal rather than ask for needed accommodations. Passing, often associated with disguising one’s race or sexuality, thus also applies to disability and employment. Fearful that requesting accommodations might be perceived as an inability to do one’s job, contingent and junior faculty may avoid asking for necessary accommodations. This increases the marginalization and stigma faced by people with disabilities, in exactly the place—the university—that sees itself as creating progressive and inclusive spaces for all. Furthermore, contingent faculty on campus often “pass” in the eyes of students as full-time professors, rendering invisible the unstable working conditions of their labor. In Canada, where Gagnon teaches, women are disproportionately represented among junior and non-permanent positions. Complicating this is the reality that there is very little research examining the experiences of contract faculty with disabilities, suggesting that the underlying assumption is that people with disabilities do not work as professors. Universities present themselves as building progressive and inclusive spaces, but their increasing reliance on the adjunct system increases the discrimination and marginalization faced by people with disabilities.

Our third section moves deeper into the stages of academic promotion to explore the concerns of scholars who have been hired but are struggling with the ableist conditions of the tenure track position. As a professional scholar with multiple disabilities (Deaf, learning disability, and mental illness), Dr. Steven Singer relates his own negotiations with numerous ableist structures embedded in the academy. Singer’s chapter, titled ’s chapter “An ‘Island in the [Professorial] Mainstream,’” begins by categorizing ableist structures as overt, covert, aversive, and laissez-faire—in all cases, these structures can compromise the maintenance of the academic career of people with a disability. In Singer’s narratives, normative or ableist concepts call into question his competence because his behaviors deviate from standard expectations which undermine his reputation as a contributor to his academic discipline. Singer provides examples from his experiences with each type of ableism in the academy to demonstrate how ableism is pervasive across every step of academic professional development. He begins by focusing on the interview process and how lack of accommodations can affect employment, followed by demonstrations on how interaction with colleagues can create obstacles to integration into an academic community. He continues by discussing normative writing and its impact on publishing and curriculum vita development, and lastly examines dialogues between students and professors that hint at the under-discussed impact of student-professor relationships on professional academic development.

While college officials and university administrators have research that helps them identify, understand, and legally protect persons with disabilities, there is less awareness when it comes to employees who are not themselves disabled but who share the experience of disability. Dr. Chad Chisholm is a caregiver for his daughter Lucy, who is low-verbal autistic. In his chapter "The Caregiver Professor: Sharing the Experience of Disability," Chisholm draws upon his personal experience as a special needs parent to illustrate the need for a networked approach to disability so that its effects are distributed across multiple venues: career, family, psychological experience, and interpersonal relationships. Chisholm argues that distributed outcomes and residual effects paint a fuller picture of the problem of disability, one that can change our current understanding of the experience. Because the tendency is to locate the disability in the affected party alone, the gulf between the disabled and the non-disabled might seem immense, but caregivers provide the link between experiences. Chisholm implies that the caregiver experience is crucial to creating lasting gains and better experiences for persons who have disabilities.

Our final section focuses on non-disabled allies. In their chapter "People with Visual Disabilities in Academic jobs: An Iran Case Study," Mohsen Aghabozorgi Nafchi and Zahra Alidousti Shahraki surveyed attitudes towards people with visual impairment who teach and research in Iranian universities. The results of these surveys and subsequent interviews showed numerous factors interfering with proper employment accessibility and accommodations, including inadequate facilities, lack of community acceptance, and ableist cultural attitudes. Follow-up interviews of university officials demonstrated a desire to improve the representation of disabled scholars in Iranian higher education but that there is an overwhelming resistance from Iranian culture which refuses to accept people with disabilities in any job market, much less the Iranian academy.

In Ghana, disability is seen as a spiritual condition. Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh's "The Spiritual Model of Disability and the Reorientation of Academic Employment Infrastructure for Persons Living with Disabilities in Ghana" explores how perceptions about physical disabilities in the religio-cultural context of Ghana have impacted employment in academia for people with disability. In Ghana, disabled people are considered cursed by evil spirits. This phenomenon has excluded people with a disability from holding professional positions, including in the university. Aryeh's chapter argues that the traditional spiritual model concerning disabled persons in Ghana must be reviewed to reorient basic infrastructures inhibiting academic employment for disabled populations. Such infrastructure starts with the establishment of Disability Studies departments in Ghanaian universities which especially discuss spiritual models that may be left out in EuroAmerican Disability Studies. Furthermore, regulating authorities must also re-evaluate economic conditions which disproportionately affect people with a disability in Ghana, excluding them from basic qualifications of employment. As a final step, renovation of physical conditions of access is another necessity—simple access to employment locations in Ghana—is extremely difficult for people with a disability despite government mandates that require such accommodations.

Our final chapter sets forth a call to action to initiate programs that can increase the inclusion of people with a disability within the academy. As Susan Magasi, Davyd W. Chung, and Ricardo D. Ramirez explain in their chapter "Creating Pipeline Programs to Support Career Development of Students with Disabilities in Cancer Research," students with disabilities are underrepresented in higher education, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Lack of appropriate accommodations, low expectations, lack of role models, and a paucity of mentored enrichment opportunities have been identified as among the root causes for these disparities. Pipeline and mentoring programs have been successful at creating opportunities for students from other underrepresented groups. However, to date, only a handful of programs exist to specifically support students with disabilities, and these are primarily in the humanities, creative arts, and law. No programs specifically address the needs of high potential students with disabilities in medical, health, and cancer research. To address this gap, Magasi and Chung created the CanResearch Fellowship for undergraduate students with disabilities. Using a knowledge translation framework, they developed a six-week research fellowship around immersive cancer research experiences, role models and mentorship, leadership and career development, and field experiences with industry and community partners.

As this Introduction comes to its conclusion, if we were to put together another volume about disability and the academic job market, there would be additional topics that we would want to add. We had a potential chapter that would have discussed the difficulties of the campus visit for people with a disability. We had more chapters on disability, academic employment, and the international scene, particularly one on disability in India. Maybe we could have a chapter on online teaching and disability or some suggestions on what to do if a disabled scholar wants to get out of academia. One potential contributor commented on the value of anonymity in voicing concerns—each scholar contributing to this collection does so at a possible risk to his or her career from potential retribution because they defamed the academy. This scholar and I joked that a chapter on anonymity would need to be written anonymously.

I've always struggled with conclusions, but I hope the conversation started by this collection continues. Everyone that I spoke with expressed the need for this collection and ironically, publishing a second volume would show this need is still apparent. This collection gives voice to the lived experiences of a dozen scholars, including myself, and I hope for more voices to contribute to our conversation.

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Dr. Jennifer M. Gagnon (she/her/hers) (PhD, Political Science, University of Minnesota, BA, University of British Columbia) is a Lecturer in the School of Journalism, Writing, and Media at the University of British Columbia (UBC). She has taught in a wide range of programs, including Political Science, Classics, Academic Writing, International Education and more. Her research is interdisciplinary and embraces topics in political theory, classics, critical disability studies, qualitative methods, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), feminism, and gender. Her main area of research is in the intersections between ancient political thought and disability studies, especially as concerns gender, inclusion and exclusion, violence, and visible and invisible disabilities. As an advocate, she is involved in efforts and workshop facilitation on Disability Justice, accessibility, a culture of consent, and LGBTQ2SIA+ inclusion both on and off-campus. She is the creator and chair of UBC's Disability Affinity Group for disabled faculty and staff which works towards the goals of community care and Disability Justice. She is a recipient of the 2021 Killam Teaching Prize at UBC which recognizes excellence in teaching innovation. Dr. Gagnon identifies as a bisexual settler and disabled woman and strives to bring her whole self to her teaching and research.

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Dr. Travis Chi Wing Lau received his PhD in English from the University of Pennsylvania in 2018 and is currently Assistant Professor of English at Kenyon College. His research and teaching focus on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature and culture, health humanities, and Disability Studies. Lau has published in *Digital Defoe*, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, *Disability Studies Quarterly,* and in a number of edited collections, including *The Routledge Companion to Health Humanities* (2020), *Disability and the University: A Disabled Student's Manifesto* (Peter Lang, 2019), and *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Disability: Looking Towards the Future: Vol. 2* (Routledge, 2019). Alongside his scholarship, Lau frequently writes for venues of public scholarship like *Synapsis: A Journal of Health Humanities*, *Public Books*, and *The Los Angeles Review of Books*. His poetry has appeared in *Barren Magazine*, *Wordgathering*, *Glass Poetry*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Foglifter,* and *The New Engagement,* as well as in two chapbooks, *The Bone Setter* (Damaged Goods Press, 2019) and *Paring* (Finishing Line Press, forthcoming).

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Since becoming a writer at age 10, **Dr. Kenya Mitchell** has worked to push the boundaries of genre, defy the conventions of storytelling, and to redefine what it means to be an African American female author in a nation that is going through rapid cultural evolution. Mitchell holds a Master's degree in Language and Literacy from Harvard School of Education and a PhD in Writing, Rhetoric, and Composition from UC Davis' School of Education. To read more of her work please go to www.kenyamitchell.com.

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Tessa-May Zirnsak is a psychiatric survivor and PhD candidate in Gender, Sexuality, and Diversity Studies at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. Zirnsak's PhD investigates the experiences of violence against people with cognitive disability and mental illness, with the intention of putting forth a new model based in philosophical accounts for cultural and structural violence. Zirnsak is a founding member of the Melbourne Mad Studies reading group. She has worked both as a disability support worker and in advocacy as the Disability Officer at La Trobe Student Union in 2015.

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