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**The Essential Functions of the Position: Investigating Collegiality
and Productivity for Faculty with Mental Disabilities**

from

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I'm here today to talk to you about the intersection of mental disability and academic culture. This is a big topic, and it's also an unfamiliar one for most audiences. Unfamiliar; and yet also, all too familiar. When I present about my research into this area, I am almost always approached by people who want to speak with me about their personal experiences with this subject. For example, they have a sibling, or a cousin, who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and they're not sure what to make of it. Or, as a faculty member, they've worked with numerous students who have learning disabilities or other puzzling "documented disabilities" which seem to require equally puzzling accommodations, and they've never known quite how to talk about that—or even whom to talk to. Sometimes, they themselves have experienced some form of mental disability—for example, episodic but serious depression; powerful but carefully hidden anxiety; something diagnosed, something medicated, something dealt with quietly and alone.

[Slide 1: "Mental Disabilities in College"]

Nearly half of college students report that they have experienced some psychiatric disorder. [Data based upon 2008 National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related

Conditions.] The exact number is 46 percent. Of this 46 percent, the largest group is those who reported alcohol use disorders [20 percent]. The next most prevalent categories are personality disorders [18 percent], anxiety disorders [12 percent], and mood disorders [11 percent] (Blanco et al.) Astonishingly, these numbers do not include disorders outside the “Axis I” and “Axis II” designations—that is, they do not capture numbers for students with learning disabilities, AD/HD, or autism spectrum disorders.

The general purpose of my project is to bring these conversations out of the closet, as it were. I am asking: What does it mean to take part in academic culture, a space dedicated to the life of the mind, with an unwell mind? I want to recognize the work that has already been done in a wide range of disciplines—history, psychology, rhetoric, sociology, education—but I also want to push us forward. Much of the work has been carried out in parallel but non-connecting realms. And more worrisome, most of the work has been carried out without direct input from persons with mental disabilities. As I argue in *Mad at School*, although the subject of mental disability is one of some fascination among academic writers, the person with such disabilities is rarely treated as an important voice in the conversation. Instead, this person is more often diagnosed, fetishized, stigmatized, or expelled.

[Slide 2: “The dropout rate”]

The structural evidence of this stigma is easy to find, but rarely discussed. Here’s a little-known fact: According to a recent survey in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, eighty-six percent of students with psychiatric disabilities drop out of college before completing their degrees (Collins & Mowbray). Reliable numbers are not available for faculty, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the attrition rate is at least as high, if not higher. This is a hidden

population, a population whose losses are staggering. And whose absence from academic work means a loss for all of us of knowledge, research, teaching, and insight.

In the introduction to *Mad at School*, I say that I wrote this book because I could not go any longer without writing it. There are hard truths we must acknowledge about the presence of mentally disabled students, faculty and staff in academic discourse. There are also concrete things we can do to re-shape academic culture so that it becomes more accessible. The changes I call for are not a simple retro-fit of academic beliefs and practices which can be added on to our current systems of interaction, assessment, and production. Rather, my suggestions are—I hope—a paradigmatic change to academic life, a life that virtually every member acknowledges is deeply problematic in its current workings. In a sense, I think, mentally disabled persons are the canaries in the coal mine of academic culture. Our presence calls attention to ways that academic life might be re-designed and re-imagined—not in order to “add and stir” yet another finely-drawn identity category, but for the benefit of all.

Terminology

[Slide 3: “Terminology”]

First, I want to address some issues of terminology, because I am using “mental disability” as my term of choice, and yet—as you no doubt know—a vast array of other terms is available. Contemporary language includes *psychiatric disability*, *mental illness*, *cognitive disability*, *intellectual disability*, *mental health service user* (or *consumer*), *neurodiversity*, *neuroatypical*, *psychiatric system survivor*, *crazy*, and *mad*. Names for particular conditions thrive in particular historical and geographical contexts (Hacking). A couple of thousand years ago, for instance, if you were experiencing melancholy, it would have been diagnosed as an

excess of black bile, one of the four bodily humors (Price, “Melancholy”). Two hundred years ago, the same symptoms might have been diagnosed as “tristimania” and treated via bloodletting, infliction of pain, doses of laudanum [LAHD-uh-num], or confinement to an asylum (Radden). That would be if you were white, and most likely female. If you happened to be an African American slave displaying evidence of unhappiness, you might have been diagnosed with “drapetomania” [DROP-tuh-mania], the cure for which was harsh punishment and continued enslavement (Jackson). The history of such labeling quickly demonstrates that “no term in the history of madness is neutral” (Reaume 182).

With this historical and cultural significance in mind, my own purpose in laying out an umbrella term—“mental disability”—is not to suggest that it is the best or only term. Rather, I want to use it in a way that recognizes the commonalities between human situations, while also making room for specific and empowering labels such as *neurodiversity* or *psychiatric system survivor*. *Mad at School* contains an extended section examining a variety of contemporary terms and explaining how they are used in international contexts. Part of this discussion is an analysis of terminology from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), which contains such a proliferation of labels that one critic has said it seems to argue that “human life is a form of mental illness” (Lawrence Davis). The DSM is an enormous story, and one I’ll be glad to talk about more in response to questions. But in the interest of time, today I’m simply going to explain how I came to the term *mental disability* and why I believe it is a useful umbrella term.

[Slide 4: “‘Mental Disability’ as an umbrella term”]

I first encountered the term *mental disability* in an article by Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson that appeared in *Rhetoric Review* [in 2003]. Lewiecki-Wilson suggests that *mental disability*

might be helpful if it were used to bring humans together, not on the basis of diagnoses or symptoms, but on the basis of their shared lack of access to rhetorical power. She elaborates:

Despite the varieties of and differences among mental impairments, this collective category focuses attention on the problem of gaining rhetoricity to the mentally disabled: that is, rhetoric's received tradition of emphasis on the individual rhetor who produces speech/writing, which in turn confirms the existence of a fixed, core self, imagined to be located in the mind. (157)

In other words, according to Lewiecki-Wilson, the notion that one's disability is located in one's mind unites this category, *not* because such a thing is inherently true, but because persons with particular kinds of impairments share common experiences of disempowerment as rhetors—a lack of what Lewiecki-Wilson calls "rhetoricity." The key turn in her argument is her point that even within the disability-rights movement, rhetoricity is usually granted only to persons who can "meet the tests of liberal subjectivity"—one of which is the ability to produce "reasonable" speech or writing (159). My own search for adequate terminology follows Lewiecki-Wilson's call for coalition politics, as well as her de-emphasis on medicalized terms such as "illness" or "disorder." Again, I emphasize that my proposal of this umbrella term is not meant to erase specific differences and subject positions. I'm not saying that having Asperger's feels the same as having borderline personality disorder, nor that anyone should feel impelled to identify with their labels, or with the term *disability* itself. Rather, I want to make it easier for us to form connections between disciplines and belief systems currently isolated from each other. We need *both* local specificity *and* broad coalitions for maximum advantage.

Kairotic Space and Key *Topoi*

[Slide 5: “Academic culture”]

So, as used by Lewiecki-Wilson (and me), the term *mental disability* signals not a flaw in the brain, but a lack of rhetoricity. To lack rhetoricity is to lack access to the spaces where humans exchange words, images, ideas, and power. Access is not always a physical matter: a mentally disabled person might be able to walk into a faculty meeting, for example, but her rhetorical access to that space also includes whether or not she is received as a viable human subject there. In academe, it is generally assumed that one’s mind is one’s instrument, and that one gains academic capital through flexing this presumably “agile” mind. I wondered what it would mean when a person who did not possess such an “agile” mind—or rather, who did not possess the approved ways of performing mental agility—were to enter the key spaces of power exchange in academic discourse. The areas I studied include classrooms, conferences, job searches, written academic discourse, and contingent scholarship (sometimes called “independent” scholarship). As I gathered data, I found that many of the most important interactions in academic culture take place in dynamic spaces of a type that I call “kairotic.”

Kairotic spaces are the less formal, often unnoticed, areas of academe where knowledge is produced and power is exchanged. A classroom discussion is a kairotic space, as is an individual conference with one’s advisor. Conferences are rife with kairotic spaces, including the Q-and-A sessions after panels, impromptu “elevator meetings,” and gatherings at restaurants and bars on the periphery of formal conference events. Other examples from students’ experiences might include peer-response workshops, study groups, or departmental parties or gatherings to which they are invited.

[Slide 6: “Kairos”]

Kairos is a concept from classical rhetoric usually translated as “the opportune or appropriate time”; however, *kairos* really goes further than this. Cynthia Miecznikowski Sheard suggests that it incorporates multiple elements of context, including not only time but other factors including physical space and attitudes (306). As this implies, *kairos* carries ethical and contextual as well as temporal implications.

[Slide 7: “Infrastructure”]

A useful way to think about *kairos* is through Jeffrey Grabill’s discussion of design and infrastructure. Grabill’s work emphasizes the centrality of *access*, which many writings on *kairos* do not. [Drawing on work by Susan Leigh Star and Karen Ruhleder,] Grabill defines infrastructure as follows:

[I]nfrastructure means something more than a static, installed base. For Star and Ruhleder (1996), “infrastructure is something that emerges for people in practice, connected to activities and structures” (p. 112). In other words, just as a tool is not an artifact with “pre-given attributes frozen in time” (p. 112) but rather given meaning as a tool by specific users working on particular problems in specific situations, so too does the meaning and value of an infrastructure emerge. To ignore infrastructure, then, is to miss key moments when its meaning and value become stabilized (if even for a moment), and therefore to miss moments when possibilities and identities are established. (464)

Following this definition, then, a classroom’s infrastructure comprises not only its tables and chairs, its technologies, and its participants, but also the beliefs, discourses, and unspoken norms that prevail there.

[Slide 8: “Kairotic space”]

I define a *kairotic space* as one characterized by all or most of these criteria:

1. Real-time unfolding of events
2. Impromptu communication required or encouraged
3. In-person contact
4. Strong social element
5. High stakes

I specify “all or most of these criteria” to indicate that the boundaries of such spaces are neither rigid nor objectively determined. So, for instance, an online discussion, a professor-student conference taking place via instant message, or a job interview held by telephone, could all qualify as kairotic spaces despite the lack of in-person contact. But an informal study session between two students who have been friends for years and who experience minimal risk in studying together might not. The key element is the *pairing of spontaneity with high levels of professional/academic impact*. Attention to relations of power is of great importance in understanding kairotic space, as is recognition that different participants in kairotic spaces will perceive those relations differently.

[Slide 9: “Characteristic kairotic spaces in academe”]

In their study of academic conferences, Joe McCarthy and colleagues (2004) have observed the inequities of interchanges in such spaces:

[O]pportunities for ‘give and take’ tend to be unevenly distributed among the conference attendees, depending on one’s status in the community, level of participation in the formal conference program, and more subtle issues such as one’s native language and level of extroversion. (39)

Of course, we can and should add “and disability status” to the list of issues that McCarthy and colleagues have identified, since—as is common knowledge among persons with disabilities—

our attempts to access kairotic spaces are often fraught. This fraughtness has much to do with time and how it is perceived by different persons.

“Crip time,” a term from disability culture, refers to a flexible approach to normative time frames (Gill; Zola). At a conference, adhering to crip time might mean leaving more than fifteen minutes between sessions; it might mean recognizing that people will arrive at various intervals, and designing sessions accordingly; and it might also mean recognizing that a person is processing language at a certain rate and adjusting the pace of a conversation. It is this notion of *flexibility* (not just “extra” time) that unites *kairos* and crip time. Even more than academic conferences, classrooms tend to be run under strict time constraints. Students are expected to arrive on time, absorb information at a particular speed, and perform spontaneously in restricted time frames (as in discussions or peer-response groups).

Despite their importance, kairotic spaces tend to be under-studied. One reason for this is that it’s difficult to collect data in them (Ventola et al. 361). Another, more compelling reason is that their impact tends to be underestimated by those who move through them with relative ease. The importance of kairotic space will be more obvious to a person who—for example—can hear only scraps of a conversation held among a group sitting at a table, or who needs more than a few seconds to process a question asked of her in a classroom discussion.

I began studying kairotic spaces rather casually. A long time ago, I noticed that it seemed to be more difficult for me than for other people to navigate the spontaneous situations I encountered as an academic. I had great difficulty navigating situations like conferences and job searches. I realize many of us think of these events as more stressful than pleasurable, but I noticed that few of my peers seemed to experience the level of confusion, dread, exhaustion, and extensive recovery time that I did. Even more strongly, I noticed that we were apparently not

supposed to discuss our confusion, stress, or exhaustion, except in casual remarks that didn’t actually do anything to address the inaccessibility of the structures themselves. In other words, kairotic spaces are fast-moving and overwhelming, and you’d better swim with the current or find another line of work.

Eventually, I conducted a study on conference spaces through which I learned that some conferences are actually designed with the assumption that participants might be operating with a variety of mental abilities (Price, “Access Imagined”). These conferences represent an idiosyncratic mix of disciplines, including public health, human-computer interaction, and disability studies itself. However, in most professional societies, including those affiliated with my “home” discipline of rhetoric, the assumption prevails that kairotic spaces must involve sensory overload, a fast pace, jam-packed schedules, mnemonic gymnastics, and, apparently universally, fluorescent lighting.

I continued to study kairotic spaces, broadening my investigation so that it came to include not only conferences, but also job searches, classrooms, independent scholarship, written texts, and—as a kind of limit case—representations of mental disability as a violent threat to academic life. Through this study, which uses critical discourse analysis as its primary methodology, I identified eleven common *topoi* which are called into question when mental disability meets academic culture.

[Slide 10: “Common topoi”]

Common *topoi* are, basically, commonplace beliefs. A *topos* is an issue or theme with which a rhetor must contend when she attempts to display evidence of credibility or good character, which is a loose translation of *ethos*. Because common *topoi* are generally shared between a rhetor and her audience, they are often unremarked; they tend to operate as free-

floating signifiers, and are more often referred to briefly than carefully examined. In Sharon Crowley’s succinct statement, common *topoi* are “part of the discursive machinery that hides the flow of difference” (73). Thus, a rhetor who can easily demonstrate her adherence to common *topoi* strengthens her appeal to ethos; a rhetor who cannot is often considered less credible or reliable. The *topoi* my study uncovered are ones that carry strong value in academic culture but which may prove problematic for persons with mental disabilities. They are:

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

The Topoi of Collegiality and Productivity

[Slide 11: “The essential functions”]

These topoi impact all members of academic communities in various ways, but two that have particular significance for faculty members are *productivity* and *collegiality*. The Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990 and revised in 2008, says that a “qualified individual with a disability” is one who “with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the employment position that such individual holds or desires.” Cases brought under the ADA often turn upon this definition, especially the phrase “essential functions of the employment position.” For some jobs, those essential functions are easily defined. But what constitutes an essential function for a faculty member is much more contested. Most people agree on the conventional triad teaching-scholarship-service, but some would add a

fourth requirement—collegiality—and others do not agree on what constitute appropriate forms or quantities of teaching, scholarship, or service.

To place this quandary in rhetorical terms, two important stasis questions arise when we think about the “essential functions” of employment as a faculty member. The first question is *What is the nature of the thing?* In other words, what in fact *are* the essential functions of work as a faculty member? Must they always include teaching, service, and scholarship, or can a faculty position consist of a different mix of activities? And is collegiality an aspect of teaching, service, and scholarship, or is it a fourth criterion that should be assessed separately? The second question is *What is the quality of the thing?* In other words, how good is the faculty member’s performance of teaching, scholarship, service (and perhaps collegiality)? How shall that goodness be determined?

[Slide 12: “‘Reasonable’ accommodations”]

In addition to attempting to define who qualifies as disabled, the ADA also attempts to define reasonable accommodation. According to this definition, “reasonable accommodation” may include

- (A) making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities; and
- (B) job restructuring, part-time or modified work schedules, reassignment to a vacant position, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, appropriate adjustment or modifications of examinations, training materials or policies, the provision of qualified readers or interpreters, and other similar accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

In this definition, as the text lays out just what *reasonable accommodation* means, we can perceive the clash between its directives and the "essential functions" of work as a faculty member. For example, if a "modified work schedule" is provided for a faculty member, what precisely will that mean? Lighter teaching loads are infused with academic structures of power and prestige: a 2/2 load as opposed to 4/4 is not merely a numerical, but also a value-laden difference, often reflecting positions with vastly different prestige, security, and pay. Or what if a "modified work schedule" means a longer tenure clock? Again, such a measure is not simply a quantitative difference in time, but a qualitative shift of the competitive structure of tenure clocks, in which junior faculty are expected to produce "x" amount of scholarship in "y" amount of time. This atmosphere has given rise to the academic truism "publish or perish." Although in some cases tenure clocks can be adjusted, the usual expectation is that a faculty member will be productive not only in particular quantities but at a particular speed.

If we return to the concept of "crip time," we can perceive yet more pressures that the ADA's examples of "reasonable" accommodation place upon measures of productivity. For example, what if a professor who has agoraphobia or panic disorder must miss classes on an unpredictable basis? Does the burden lie upon him to find a substitute, no matter how short the notice or distressing the situation that gave rise to the absence in the first place? If he does find a substitute, is that an adequate replacement for the work expected of him? What if he cannot be physically present, but periodically holds classes online? Can we still say that his teaching is good? Good enough? That it can be called *teaching* at all? Shifting focus from the classroom to the conference, what about a professor who cannot function in crowds? Or when speaking in front of groups? Could one of her accommodations be non-participation in academic conferences—or participation in ways that omit "speaking" roles? And if she did use this

accommodation, would that mean her performance as a scholar would be merely *different* or actually *worse* than that of her peers?

[Slide 13: “Is it possible ... ?”]

This brings me to a question that has been troubling me for years, as long as I have been seriously thinking about access, the ADA, and faculty with mental disabilities. Is it possible that fluency in kairotic space *is* an essential function of an academic job? Is it true that a faculty member who is unable—perhaps occasionally, perhaps often—to make predictable, material appearances in kairotic space, or who is unable to operate smoothly in such spaces, is unqualified? Are we ready to say that people with severe anxiety, or schizophrenia, or agoraphobia, cannot be professors? I want to say no; I want to imagine an academic workplace where accommodations for mental disability *are* feasible, where we can bring our differences to work in ways that enrich our students, our colleagues, and ourselves. But I know that this imagined world will require enormous, paradigm-shifting changes to some of academe’s most dearly held tenets—including not only productivity, but collegiality as well.

[Slide 14: “Collegiality”]

In 1999, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) published a policy statement titled “On Collegiality as a Criterion for Faculty Evaluation.” This statement speaks strongly against the use of collegiality as a discrete category in faculty evaluations, and argues that collegiality should instead be defined as the “successful execution” of one’s tasks in teaching, research and service. The point of this statement, it goes on to say, is to distinguish it from expectations that faculty members display traits including “enthusiasm” or “excessive deference” (39). The statement also notes that requirements for collegiality can be used to mask discrimination on the basis of factors such as race, gender, or class. This is a concern reiterated

by many writers on collegiality, including Heather Dubrow, who noted in *Profession* 2006 the danger that collegiality can become "an excuse, code, for prejudices of various sorts"

("Collegiality: A Roundtable" 111).

However, when viewed in terms of mental disability, the problematic nature of collegiality runs deeper than straightforward discrimination against "the misfit and the eccentric" ("Collegiality: A Roundtable" 230). The notion of *collegiality* itself is regularly *defined against* mental disability. For example, Lynn Z. Bloom's essay "Collegiality, the Game" notes that satirical novels about academic culture abound with characters who fail at being collegial, "whether from stupidity, ineptitude, bureaucratic entanglements, paranoia or neurosis" (210). While Bloom probably did not mean to insult persons with paranoia or neuroses, her list of uncollegial traits suggests that the latter two qualities are as likely to hamper one's collegial efforts as "stupidity" and "ineptitude."

[Slide 15: "'Difficult' faculty members"]

The term *paranoid* also appears in Susan Wells's "Notes on Handling Difficult Faculty Members"; her list of "difficult" traits is "isolated, unfriendly, uncooperative, inactive in research, explosive, paranoid, or the subject of many student complaints" (32). Unlike Bloom, Wells does discuss mental disability directly, but the impulse is similarly to separate faculty members with these disabilities from the "normal" crowd. Wells's essay begins with a section titled "Assumptions," which reads:

We aren't therapists (or saints) and cannot solve serious personal troubles. And we need skilled professional help if our colleagues' problems include addiction, mental illness, or violent behavior. But we are entrusted with the public life of our departments; we can and should enforce collegial norms there. Mentoring, supporting productive teachers or

researchers, and troubleshooting for faculty members in crisis are all more important than managing difficult faculty members. (32)

Mostly, I concur with the points made in this essay, and I appreciate Wells’s emphasis on mentoring and support. But the rhetorical move that troubles me here is the familiar educational refrain of “we aren’t therapists,” as well as the clustering of “addiction, mental illness, or violent behavior.” The assumption appears to be that a faculty member who has the “problem” of mental illness is not part of the collegial group Wells means to address in the rest of her essay. Those faculty members require “skilled professional help.” What Wells means to say, I expect, is that a faculty member’s addiction or mental illness may require support outside that which can be provided by a department chair or administrator—and this is quite true. What her statement achieves, however, is a division between those who should receive support within academe and those who should be sent to outside, medicalized forms of support. Implicit in this statement is an either/or distinction: the addicted, the mentally ill, and the violent over here; the merely “difficult” and reachable through mentoring and academic support over there.

[Slide 16: “Collegiality is social and hence kairotic”]

No matter how we slice it, collegiality is a *social* phenomenon, manifesting through interpersonal relationships. Many writers who attempt to give advice on fostering collegiality name social events as a means to do so. Dubrow suggests that colleagues should “eat together” (58); Wells recommends “social events” (33) generally; Susan B. Taylor mentions potlucks (“Collegiality: Statements” 96); Jamie Dessart notes that department meetings should include “some social time” (“Collegiality: Statements” 97); and Timothy Dow Adams reports that his department “sponsored a prom” (“Collegiality: Statements” 98). This implicit social, and hence

kairotic, requirement, may be especially difficult for persons with mental disabilities in the high-stakes arena of the job interview and campus visit.

[Slide 17: “Interviews and campus visits”]

Interviews and campus visits are high-stakes events which involve being “under the microscope” for a period of hours or days while also needing to appear both “charming” and “calm” (Rose). Sarah Rose, writing for *Disability Studies Quarterly*, points out the ways that these pressures can combine with the challenges faces by disabled job candidates, such as lack of sign interpreters or accessible spaces. She does not mention mental disability specifically, but if we consider the particular impairments and barriers that may attend a mental disability, the “challenging” situation she describes may become an insuperable barrier. For example, appearing “charming” and “calm” is quite a trick if one is short of breath, unable to make eye contact, stimming, struggling to process aural/oral information, and/or unable to attach faces to names.

[Slide 18: “A meeting can be a disaster”]

A study by Charles Avinger and colleagues describes a faculty member with Asperger’s, Clarice, who in an interview emphasized the difference between her experience in kairotic settings from that of “normal” faculty members. In Clarice’s experience, the authors argue, “‘Be yourself’ doesn’t mean ‘Be yourself.’ It means, rather, to respond within a more or less codified and limited range of experiences” (208-209). A direct quotation from Clarice places it in starker terms: “A meeting can be a disaster for someone on the spectrum” (211).

Larger-scale studies from various disciplines confirm the anecdotal evidence that fluency in kairotic space is a key factor in job candidates’ success.

[Slide 19: “Studies of job candidates’ performance”]

A survey of 98 search committee chairs in psychology found that a candidate’s performance during interviews and colloquia, as well as her “personality,” were among the most important factors considered in the later stages of job searches (Sheehan et al. 10). Once a candidate had gotten to the interview stage, “performance at interview with search committee” was rated as the most important factor, with “performance” in other kairotic spaces such as colloquia and teaching demonstrations rated second and fifth, respectively (9-10). “Candidate’s ability to get along with other faculty” was rated sixth, and “Candidate’s personality” ninth (10). To offer some context for these ratings, criteria that were rated as less important than “get[ing] along” and “personality” during the interview—that is, outside the top ten—included book authorship, graduate GPA and transcripts, awards for research, service experience, and grantwriting (9-10). Thus, the real-time performance of a candidate in kairotic space was found to be more important than activities that might more easily be carried out in “crip time,” including writing, service, and obtaining grants.

Sheehan et al. also inquired about “errors” made by candidates (10); the top two responses in this category both involve performance in kairotic space. The most commonly cited error was conducting a poor colloquium; the second most common was a failure in “interpersonal interactions” (10).

In 2000, Walter Broughton and William Conlogue conducted a study of 368 English departments which offers more texture to the judgments about interpersonal skills as they are evaluated by search committees. Two of their research questions have particular significance for candidates with mental disabilities: “How significant are interpersonal skills?” and “What

egregious errors kill a candidacy?" (40). As in the study by Sheehan et al., Broughton and Conlogue found that "interpersonal skills" were a major factor: this criterion was deemed decisive by 28 percent of respondents, and in response to a question about what factors "negatively affected" candidates' chances, "poor interpersonal skills" was rated third, just behind poor teaching and poor research (48).

My aim here is not to suggest that collegiality is unimportant; in other words, I've sat on search committees before, and I'm as likely as anyone to be put off by a candidate who seems to be a poor fit. However, I do want to inject some provocative questions into the tradition of conducting some of the highest-stakes transactions of academic culture in kairotic space. Isn't it the case that persons with Asperger's, or anxiety, or schizophrenia, may unintentionally come across as dismissive, even insulting—that is, uncollegial? Isn't it possible that short-term memory impairments might impede a candidate's ability to extend thanks, display knowledge of unfamiliar schools, and pay attention in approved ways? Are we comfortable treating these difficulties as deal-breakers in candidates' search for academic employment? And are we comfortable with the fact that, at least according to these data, it seems that we—those of us already established as faculty members—seem to treat collegiality as the primary indicator of productivity. That is, the candidate who can demonstrate fluency in kairotic space seems also to be the candidate whose productivity we predict to be strongest.

[Slide 20: "What indeed are the essential functions ...?"]

I want to close with a question that brings us back to the provocative language of the Americans with Disabilities Act. What indeed are the "essential functions" of the position of faculty member—not to mention student, staff member, administrator? Are we pleased with our current systems for measuring these functions? And if not, in what ways might we begin to

create change? My larger argument in this book is that persons with mental disabilities are not simply charitable cases for whom we ought to make room at the table. Rather, I am arguing that all members of academe ought to think seriously about what it means to engage in the life of the mind. An academic world that is accessible for persons with mental disabilities would have to be a dramatically re-imagined place—but it would also be, I argue, a place where revised notions of productivity and collegiality (as well as other topoi such as presence, independence, and security) would benefit us all.

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