Diversity and Disability: Why Disability Services Syllabi Statements Hurt Inclusivity.

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Abstract

This project explores the language of disability services syllabi statements. Using Van Dijk's concept of Critical Discourse Analysis, I analyze the semiotic choices made within the statements of west coast public universities and Jesuit universities. I ask: How do disability services syllabi statements represent the people they are meant to serve? Through a critical discourse analysis of the use of language and semiotic choices, I argue that disability services syllabi statements can function to suppress the power of disabled students, minimizing their agency while promoting ableist ideologies.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, semiotic choices, disability services syllabi statements

Introduction

To help promote ideals of diversity and inclusion, higher education institutions – particularly Jesuit institutions, whose mission includes a commitment to "educating the whole person" – have increasingly developed offices and services committed to students with disabilities. Many universities require that faculty members include statements about disability services and often, reading a syllabi statement is a student's first interaction with disability services, particularly when the student becomes disabled during their postsecondary career. When students receive their syllabi, they will often find a statement similar to the following:

> Special Needs: If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an 'invisible disability' such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disability Services staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100, (206) 296-5740. (Seattle University, 2018)

Although disability services syllabi statements appear to be creating an inclusive environment by including students with disabilities in a movement towards diversity, these statements actually create a sense of Otherness through the language that is used. This language typically reflects corporate language and stems from the ideology that students with disabilities need to be brought up to normalized standards by "leveling the playing field."

In order to better understand this, I ask: How do disability services syllabi statements represent the people they are meant to serve? A critical discourse analysis of the use of language and semiotic choices reveals how disability services syllabi statements suppress the power of disabled students, minimizing their agency while promoting ableism.

Background

19th Century

Though many of the most substantial advancements made in disability rights have occurred recently, the foundation for disability rights in the United States actually began in 1846 with the establishment of the Massachusetts School for Idiotic Children and Youth (Greenberg & Carlos, 2015, para. 2). Lincoln made a similar advancement by signing a bill to allow the Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb to provide education at the college level (Greenberg & Carlos, 2015). Greenberg and Carlos (2015) note that though the names of these institutions reflect stigma against persons with disabilities, they were the first steps taken towards higher education accessibility (para. 2).

20th Century

During the twentieth century, the United States had the most rapid progression of disability rights, particularly in relation to military members and minority groups. After World War I, Congress enacted the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1918, which was meant to "provide educational and work assistance for some veterans with disabilities" (Greenberg & Carlos, 2015). Disability rights for veterans also progressed after World War II with the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, also referred to as the GI Bill of Rights, which provided tuition and subsistence reimbursement for veterans with disabilities (Greenberg & Carlos, 2015). Greenberg and Carlos (2015) note that this legislation had another benefit in that non-veteran students with disabilities "were provided services that could assist their pursuit of a higher education."

The first law that directly supported those with disabilities was the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, which pushed for better building accessibility (Greenberg & Carlos, 2015). The law was furthered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which "prohibited discrimination of individuals with disabilities by federal employers" (Greenberg & Carlos, 2015). The act also "mandated postsecondary institutions to open their doors to students with disabilities and to provide them equal access to an education including support services" (Pena, 2014, p. 30). Greenberg and Carlos (2015) add that the Bill of Rights Act of 1975 in conjunction with Developmental Disabilities Assistance "created state-sponsored councils for planning and advocacy regarding developmental disabilities." Additionally, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was passed, later known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990, which was the first step towards accommodations for disabled children, and specified that accommodations should be "reasonable" (Greenberg & Carlos, 2015).

Finally, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990. This law specifically outlawed discrimination against those with disabilities, however Greenberg and Carlos (2015) explain that the ADA was limited by its lack of clarity to the definition of disabled which led to courts defining "disabled" in various ways: "For example, wide-ranging physical and psychological conditions including epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, cancer and schizophrenia were determined by various courts to not qualify as a true disability."

21st Century

The definition of a disability would not be made more clear until 2008 with the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) (Greenberg & Carlos, 2015, para. 10). The act seeks to broaden the definition of disabilities so that many individuals are covered to the greatest extent possible. The ADAAA defines a disability as:

A. A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;

B. A record of such an impairment; or

C. Being regarded as having such an impairment. (Information About the ADAAA)

Although many strides for disability rights were made in the 20th century, more issues related to disability rights have come to light. Today, unlike in secondary education, higher education institutions are not required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in which "a school district must identify an individual's educational needs and provide any regular or special education and related aids and services necessary to meet those needs as well as it is meeting the needs of students without disabilities" (Students with Disabilities). Public higher education institutions are only required to "to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that it does not discriminate on the basis of disability," even though they are partially funded by the state (Students with Disabilities).

In a report issued in 2018 by the National Council on Disability, researchers found that sexual assault resources, websites, and printed information on college campuses are not accessible, given that many websites and online forms are unable to be read by screen readers and that online training courses are often not captioned (Not on the Radar, 2019). Additionally, when in-person training courses are held, they are often held in buildings that are not accessible and members of the college staff lack training and awareness to be inclusive of students with disabilities. College campuses also lack diligence in informing students about accommodations and often do not provide enough contact information for requesting accommodations (Not on the Radar, 2018, p. 66).

The authors also found that students with disabilities were excluded as a demographic from the data collection of federal-level research studies on sexual assault, which were funded by the Department of Justice's Office of Violence Against Women and the National Institute of Justice, simply because these organizations did not think to include them (Not on the Radar, 2018, p. 65). In 2016, Justice Department's 2016 Campus Climate Survey Validation Study conducted by the Bureau of Statistics also did not include students with disabilities (Not on the Radar, 2018, p. 65). The lack of representation of students with disabilities in these studies is unfortunate, given that the rates of sexual violence towards undergraduate females with disabilities are almost twice as high as the rates for undergraduate females without a disability (Not on the Radar, 2018, p. 17).

Although college campuses may provide some accommodations and disability services, there are still many areas of the higher education system in which disabled students are marginalized and excluded from both important research and campus life. In order to address this lack of research, my analysis of disability services syllabi statements highlights areas to improve the language that higher education institutions utilize when referring to disabilities.

Research into Academic Policies, Accommodations, Accessibility, and Identity

Introduction

As the following scholars show, it is clear that the language around higher education institutions is based largely on ableist assumptions, usually resulting in an "Othering" of people with disabilities. Through research done on disability studies and the use of Universal Design in education, researchers have identified how the rhetoric around disabilities contributes to inequities, in addition to academic policies, accommodations, accessibility, equality, and identity. Although research does not always describe exactly how the rhetoric is functioning, it describes the effects of such language on those with disabilities – therefore providing a need for analysis of the language of disability services syllabi statements.

Academic policies

Studies of academic policies have primarily focused on the language around admissions policies, sexual misconduct, and Title IX in relation to fair disciplinary process, free speech and the racialization of educational policies. Patel (2016) explains that when analyses have been conducted on educational policies, they tend to focus on "the impact of the policies on student achievement and/or the furthering of progressive ideals, regularly theorized through concepts of democracy" (p. 114). Patel (2016) goes on to say that "because all policies are fundamentally texts, they include some things and leave others out and encapsulate specific knowledge traditions" (p. 116). In other words, when looking at the research surrounding academic policies, disability-related issues have been largely ignored, since we have not made disability rights a policy conversation.

In her analysis of sexual misconduct and Title IX, Howarth (2017) focused on concerns with:

> (a) an overly broad definition of sexual assault; (b) failure to deal appropriately with vast variations in attitudes and experiences of sexuality of campus women; and (c) resolution processes that ignore the complex web of relationships involved in many allegations of Title IX violations. (p. 720)

These tenets of Howarth's research provide context to the ways in which students with disabilities are excluded from university policies. In her study of free speech on college campuses, Ross (2017) notes that many college students have pushed for policy change to

censor racist, sexist and homophobic speech; however, there is no mention of censoring hate speech towards disabilities (p. 747). This is also supported by Pena's (2014) findings that even though students with disabilitites represent a significant portion of the student population in higher education, in a ten year span, students with disabilitites only represented 1% of academic articles published. What is glaringly clear from this existing research is not only the absence of those with disabilities when it comes to academic policymaking, but also the complete lack of students with disabilities' voices within literature. These absences are a direct reflection of the need for inclusion in academic conversation.

Accommodations

When it comes to the discourse around accommodations, scholars primarily focus on the process of obtaining accommodations and the effects that this has on those requesting accommodations. Dolmage (2017) describes the ways in which requiring proof of need for an accommodation essentially forces those with disabilities to pass a "gatekeeper," and creates barriers to inclusion. Dolmage (2017) goes on to explain that not validating disabilities until they are legally proven shows "indifference to the individual," and emphasizes that since "reasonable" accommodations are given, students are still required to "accommodate him or herself to the dominant logic of classroom pedagogy" (p. 80). The rhetoric around accommodations and disabilities is also diminished when those with disabilities are presented as being successful by overcoming their disabilities, leading to society viewing those who need accommodations as making unnecessary demands and being weak in character (Wilson, p. 196).

This perspective reinforces the notion that students with disabilities simply need to work harder, and in many professors' opinions, take advantage of the system of services. A study in 2015 of faculty perceptions around accommodations found that students "yearned to be accepted as contributing members of the class or in team projects but, more often than not, they felt singled out by their own teachers and by peers once they revealed they have a disability," due to the fact that teachers often bring up performance and attendance in response to receiving an accommodation letter (Hong, 2015, p. 223).

The buried issue when it comes to accommodation is our very understanding of the term itself and its implications. Brueggemann (2001) notes in relation to learning disabilities that in order to have reasonable accommodations, we must be "questioning our definitions of intelligence and questioning how integral certain teaching and testing methods truly are to higher education" (p. 372). In their push for a better alternative to accommodations in their writing center, researchers Kimber Barber-Fendley and Chris Hamel (2004) explain that the flaws of the current accommodations system are not flaws of the accommodations being used, but rather that there is a "metaphoric assumption that that accommodations create a

'level playing field'" (p. 505). Accommodations are a means of making some academic spaces accessible to students with disabilities, but accommodations are only a steppingstone in achieving disability justice – especially considering that as many students with disabilities move through the various levels of the education system, they actually lose accommodations due to a shift in focus towards professional standards. Additionally, the rigor of academic programs can make students feel as though they are risking their academic standing by coming out as having a disability. In a study focused on accommodation denial done by Nichelle C. Carpenter and Ramona L. Paetzold (2013), they discovered that the reasons for denying accommodations were not legally based and the discrimination was influenced by a number of factors including perception of the disability, cause of the disability, and appropriateness or fairness of a request. In other words, the students are not concerned about whether or not they are legally protected – rather, they are concerned about the perceptions of their disability and the judgements by faculty and staff of whether their accommodations requests are necessary.

Accessibility and Equality

Many advances in accessibility have evolved from thinking of those with disabilities first, to designing accessible technology for all that benefits those with disabilities. Dolmage (2017) refers to this as a "digital curb cut." He explains that dips in the sidewalks were originally created with wheelchair users in mind but are now recognized as beneficial by everyone because of their use of strollers, carts and even skateboards (Dolmage, 2017). So, technologies like these become marketed as beneficial to all, and the smaller market of those with disabilities is marginalized and "advances in mainstream design are expected to find their way into specialist products for people with disabilities" (Pullin, 2009). Knight (2018) furthers this argument by explaining that access is typically associated with equitable opportunity when it comes to accessing things like Internet and health care, but when it comes to disabilities, "access is often seen as the bare minimum to cross physical or mental barriers" (p. 23).

Inaccessibility often occurs even when persons with disabilities have not been excluded, but there is "an unexamined assumption that they will not participate" (Schur, Kruse, & Blanck, 2013, p. 87). For example, many polling locations or adaptive devices at polling places are not accessible and are not made accessible due to the feeling that making such accommodations risks the integrity of the voting system. Colker (2009) highlights the ideology that accessibility and integrity are separate when she argues that absentee voting is not a solution to the inaccessibility of polling places. She explains that polling places should be accessible, and that there should not be added steps to the participation of those with disabilities in "the name of promoting integrity. Integrity need not be sacrificed for

accessibility; those are false dichotomies" (Knight, 2009, p. 220). This is where the broadness of the language of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as explained by Price (2011), negatively impacts disabilities rights as it "has made way for ongoing discrimination in judicial decisions," because its protections can be debated when it is perceived that integrity is at stake (p. 120).

Identity: Passing and Negotiative Roles

In order to change the language around disabilities, people with disabilities must be the negotiators of their disabilities – not the institution they are facing. When the institutions are the negotiators, people with disabilities are forced to ask themselves, "What am I willing to give up and what am I willing to fight for?" Dolmage (2017) explains that when it comes to the conversations around disabilities, "disability must be seen as socially negotiated; people with disabilities must be seen as the moderators, the agents of this negotiation" (p. 85). Deborah Metzel and Pamela Walker (2001) also emphasize the need for negotiative roles, as they believe negotiation would expand "social-spacial lives of people with disabilities and promote increased control and spatial choice." They also note that studies have shown "children are not merely the passive recipients of definitions from others; they negotiate their environments to maintain their self-esteem [...] and engage in self-preservation" (Darling, 2013, p. 124). However, though being a negotiator can be an effective way to obtain accommodations, Mitchell (2013) explains that tools like negotiation and mediation can cause crises within one's identity, and that scholars and researchers often "assume that the development of a person's identities also illustrates her identification with them" (p. 7).

Rather than take on a negotiative role, some choose to utilize passing in order to avoid conflicts with institutions in regards to accommodating their disability: "Disability passing, crossing the boundaries between able-bodied/disabled, normal/abnormal, and visible/invisible disabilities is a complex act that challenges rigid dichotomies that attempt to fix an otherwise fluid identity" (Kerschbaum, Eisenman, & Jones, 2017, p. 31). In the academic world, this is a common approach students take to their disabilities because they fear the reaction they will receive to accommodations that they need. In one anecdote, Shahd Alshammari explains, "Though many academics might protest and deny [passing], academia relies heavily on presenting an intellectual, coherent, and productive identity that emerges as distinctive and distinguished" (Kerschbaum, Eisenman, & Jones, 2017, p. 31). Jeffrey A. Brune and Daniel J. Wilson (2013) explain how those with disabilities often have to make the choice to conceal (pass) or acknowledge their disabilities:

Going to the root of disability identity, their decisions weigh issues of stigma, pride, prejudice, discrimination, and privilege but rarely put the matter to rest. Even those who choose not to pass still must decide what to do when others fail to recognize or intentionally overlook their disability. (p. 1)

Wilson (2003) argues that passing prevents those with disabilities from joining conversation due to the fact that passing often results from "being pushed towards the argument, 'we just want to be treated like everyone else,' thereby diluting the transformative potential of their participation in the public forum" (p. 159). Whether students choose to utilize passing or their disabilities are overlooked, they are being marginzalized in academic institutions because they are not being treated as the moderators or negotiators of the conversations surrounding their disabilities.

Summary

Research completed on the topics of academic policies, accommodations, accessibility, and equality, along with identities created through passing and negotiative roles, has focused on the effects of the rhetoric and ideologies at play. Scholars are identifying false dichotomies when it comes to disability rights, analyzing how accessibility has become a market for the mainstream, and observing the roles that passing and negotiation or mediation have on the identity of disabled persons. What is lacking, however, is an explanation of how the rhetoric is shaping these policies. Therefore, a critical discourse analysis of syllabi statements exposes the hidden powers and ideologies at play in higher education institutions when it comes to interacting with and supporting those with disabilities.

Methods of Analysis

For my analysis, I decided to focus on the disability services syllabi statements of five west coast Jesuit universities: Seattle University, Santa Clara University, Gonzaga University, University of San Francisco, and Loyola Marymount University, and five leading public west coast universities: Western Washington University, Central Washington University, California State University Monterey Bay, Cal Poly, and San Jose State University. I chose to analyze Jesuit schools, given that Jesuit universities have a mission to promote inclusivity and diversity on campus in order to advance towards social justice. Additionally, I chose to compare these west coast Jesuit schools to some of the leading public schools on the west coast, as defined by U.S. News & World Report (Best Regional Universities, 2019). I collected my data by going to the faculty section of the various disability services websites of the universities and finding

the options faculty had for syllabi statements. I then analyzed these statements and centered my analysis around the depiction of identities and agency through semiotic choices such as word connotations and overlexicalization, as well as impersonalization or collectivization, and nominalization.

The first area of analysis that I decided to focus on is word connotations, given that "language is an available set of options, certain choices have been made by the author for their own motivated reasons" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 32). I also found that most word connotations tend to stem from corporate rhetoric as capitalism has deeply influenced society, since education institutions operate much like corporations (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002). Similarly, I also looked at overlexicalization, which is an overuse of synonymous terms. Teo (2002) describes this as repetitious weaving to give a sense of "over-completeness" (p. 20). Overlexicalization helps institutions further their ideologies and reinforces the idea that they are committed to diversity and inclusivity, even if their words do not line up with their practices.

When it came to analyzing impersonalization and collectivization, I looked for words or phrases that give weight to certain statements more than others, conceal certain issues, remove empathy, and dehumanize or humanize certain entities (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 79-80). Finally, I analyzed uses of nominalization to find areas in which responsibility for certain actions has been removed in order to eliminate agency or shift agency onto another entity (Machin & Mayr, 2013, p. 140). This is done through utilizing nouns instead of verbs to make the action appear as its own entity, rather than placing the responsibility on the institution (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 143).

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Disability Services Syllabi Statements

Identities of Students with Disabilities

Each of the Jesuit west coast universities I studied includes a statement about "educating the whole person" or the "integral development of each and all persons," in addition to a statement about their commitment to diversity. Given their stated commitment to these values, one would assume said values would be reflected in syllabi statements about disability services. The language choices of these institutions, however, reflect associated identities of those with disabilities as being hindered or inferior in comparison to their peers.

In the case of Seattle University, the institution offers five different syllabi statements to choose from, some of which reflect attempts at inclusivity, while others take a more clinical or straightforward approach. Furthermore, Seattle University uses the following descriptors of disabilities throughout just two of its statements:

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- "Invisible disability"

- Learning disability

- Chronic health problem

- Mental health condition

- Temporary health condition

- Permanent disability

- Attention-related

- Vision & hearing

- Physical

- Health impacts

- Medical impairment

- Physical impairment

This overlexicalization persuades readers in a repetitive way that Seattle University is inclusive and values a diverse student body. What this specification does, however, is associate the university with being accepting of disabilities that fall under the umbrella listed, while excluding others such as cognitive disabilities like Down Syndrome.

In one statement, Seattle University (2018) refers to those with disabilities as "learners," which has a problematic connotation in that it implies that a disability has a direct correlation to learning style, and therefore students with disabilities are different from their peers. Additionally, Seattle University utilizes the term "interferes" to describe a disability when referring to student performance. The utilization of this term evokes the institution's belief that disabilities are a hindrance to students and that it is integral that those with disabilities be brought up to the classroom standards – rather than re-evaluating the standards themselves.

Santa Clara University, University of San Francisco, and Seattle University also reinforce their ideologies of inclusion and diversity by the utilizing the term "equal" when referring to accessibility; however, this is directly contrasted by designating disabilities as having to be "verif[ied]," "eligible," "identified," and "documented" (Santa Clara University; University of San Francisco Student Disability Services; Seattle University, 2018). These designations underline the institutions' beliefs that a disabled person's identity must be confirmed by proving it to the institution in order to get 'equal' treatment in the classroom.

When it comes to actually accommodating students, Seattle University, Loyola Marymount, and Gonzaga all clarify that accommodations must be "reasonable," but give no clarification as to what reasonable means, which can make students with disabilities feel like the accommodations they may need could be too much to ask for. This is also furthered

by these institutions referring to accommodations as being "special" (Seattle University, 2018; Disability Support Services, 2019; Gonzaga University Center for Student Academic Success). Although this term is often used in secondary education, it reflects ableist arguments that those with disabilities are receiving "special" treatment, and not simply accessibility. These kinds of terms were found throughout my analysis of both west coast Jesuit schools and west coast public schools, in which I noticed similar trends in the use of terms like "equal" and "special," which reflect ableist notions that accommodations are utilized to bring students with disability up to normalized standards.

In my analysis of public universities, I found that Western Washington references "equal opportunity" in its statement, while Cal Poly states a commitment to provide accommodations on a "flexible and individualized basis" (Western Washington University, 2019; Disability Resource Center). San Jose State University referred to its accommodations as "special arrangements" and Western Washington referred to its accommodations as having to be "reasonable" (Office of Undergraduate Information, 2019; Western Washington University, 2019). Additionally, the criterion that disabilities must be verified was reinforced through Western Washington's use of the term "documented" (Western Washington University, 2019). Cal Poly emphasized this notion through the overlexicalization of documentation. Not only does the statement say a disability must be documented; it also states that accommodations require "prior authorization" and "compliance with approved procedures" (Disability Resource Center). The use of this language does not serve to represent inclusivity, but rather is more like an employee handbook in that it demands compliance and enforces a bureaucratic procedure to the process of being accommodated. Finally, California State University Monterey Bay refers to disabilities as having an "impact on your performance," and Cal Poly cites a student's "ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements" (Student Disability Resources; Disability Resource Center). Again, unlike the ideas behind Universal Design, these language choices reinforce the idea that students must be adapted to the dominant abilities of the rest of the students in a classroom.

In contrast to the above data, unlike the other universities I looked at, Western Washington reinforced its ideologies of inclusion and diversity by noting its commitment to "non-discrimination" (Western Washington University, 2019). I find this particularly interesting, given that no other syllabi statement referred to the fact that students with disabilities often experience discrimination.

Even more interesting are the language choices made by Central Washington University. Rather than referring to students as having disabilities, the university states that it is "committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body" (Disability Services, 2019). Additionally, it doesn't list any types of disabilities and refers to disabilities as "any barriers to learning" (Disability Services, 2019). Since the use of the

term "disability" itself has been contested, Central Washington uses an alternative approach through utilizing suppression, in which terms we would expect to find in a text are absent. Instead, Central Washington does not simply refer to accommodations, but states it has a "range of options to removing barriers, including accommodations," and does not qualify the accommodations as having to be "reasonable" (Disability Services, 2019). Essentially, Central Washington University has enforced their ideologies of diversity and inclusion, without conforming to the bureaucratic language utilized by other universities.

Though many of these terms are commonly used in the discourse around disabilities, it is important that we take note of the ways in which this language can reinforce ideologies while also Othering those with disabilities through forced or associated identities. Furthermore, we must distinguish where such language choices are stemming from – often corporate business language – and we must note that there are ways it can be avoided, as proven by the statement of Central Washington University, which is a public university. Finally, it is important to note that though Jesuit schools promote a commitment to inclusivity as being key to the Jesuit ideal of educating the "whole person," the language of disability services syllabi statements does not heavily differ from that of public schools.

Agency of Students with Disabilities

In my study of agency through Jesuit schools' disability services syllabi statements, I found most of the statements to be quite impersonal and to collectivize students with disabilities. For example, each of the institutions utilized "students" in their statements, rather than using "you" (Disability Support Services, 2019; Gonzaga University Center for Student Academic Success; Santa Clara University; Seattle University, 2018; University of San Francisco Student Disability Services). In phrases such as "students with disabilities should" or "students who have needs" the language gives off a tone that someone is being read their rights. By collectivizing and impersonalizing students instead of referring to them directly, it reveals that a group is being dehumanized and treated as an Other – rather than evoking empathy by talking to "you," the reader.

We can also return to Seattle University's use of the word "learners" as an example of this (Seattle University, 2018). Although it may be common in an academic setting to refer to students as a group of learners, in this case, Seattle University is utilizing the term in reference to students with disabilities. Though in the same statement Seattle University claims "each student is afforded an equal opportunity," the use of "learners" earlier in the statement serves to distance Seattle University from this group of students and remove empathy from the statement, even though the statement itself was meant to promote inclusivity (Seattle University, 2018). Furthermore, we can find this distancing from the subject in the statements of University of San Francisco and Seattle University, which both utilize statements like "The University of San Francisco is committed" and "Seattle University values" (University of San

Francisco Student Disability Services; Seattle University, 2018). By utilizing "the university" instead of faculty, students, etc., the statement is given extra weight by attempting to reflect the values of the university as a whole, which again helps an institution's façade of being committed inclusivity and diversity, but actually serves as a way for the institution to avoid giving agency to those responsible for accommodating students with disabilities.

In two other statements, however, Seattle University chooses to refer to the student as "you" and "your," and even offers a different statement written from the faculty perspective that emphasizes cooperation between the student and faculty through language such as "communicate with me" and "I am committed" (Seattle University, 2018). These language choices individualize the student and give the student agency, while also reflecting upon the agency of the faculty member to work with the student. University of San Francisco and Santa Clara University also utilized similar language when referring to students with disabilities in their statements, with Santa Clara even going as far to say the faculty member would be "happy to assist you" and the Disabilities Resources center would be "grateful for advance notice" (University of San Francisco Student Disability Services; Santa Clara Univeristy). Again, these phrases serve to create empathy and humanize the process of acquiring accommodations by making both the faculty and Disability Resources seem approachable. Additionally, the statements place agency on Disability Resources and the faculty member to be involved in the process of accommodating the student.

The outlier of the disability services syllabi statements when it came to individualization and agency was Gonzaga. Although the other schools seemed to promote inclusiveness, Gonzaga keeps their statement matter of fact and rights-focused. The statement cites the Americans with Disabilities Act and even utilizes phrases such as "anti-discrimination statute" and "comprehensive civil rights protection" (Gonzaga University Center for Student Academic Success). Although this phrase is informative of a students' rights, the language is not very accessible given that what falls under "comprehensive" is unspecified and forces a student to research the act itself. It also seems to shift agency onto the Americans with Disabilities Act while deflecting that the university itself and the Disability Access office are responsible for helping the student be accommodated.

Finally, it is important to note that each of the schools' statements utilizes the term "accommodations" and/or "adjustments" (Disability Support Services, 2019; Gonzaga University Center for Student Academic Success; Santa Clara University; Seattle University, 2018; University of San Francisco Student Disability Services). Though the term is normalized, and students do receive accommodations, the term is being nominalized in order to remove action from the statement. It leaves out the responsibility of who is supposed to accommodate the student: is it the university, the faculty, or disability services? Additionally, by using accommodations in a noun form, the term falls into common usage and is referred to as its

own entity. In other words, it is not clarified as to what exactly it means to be accommodating and makes it appear as if accommodations simply occur and are not handled by someone. Nominalization can also be found in Loyola Marymount's statement: "All discussions will remain confidential" (Disability Support Services, 2019). The statement simply refers to discussions. It does not allude as to who is participating in the discussions, and therefore does not allude to any agency.

In my analysis of the public-school statements, I found similar uses of language. Four out of the five public schools that I looked at used language such as "you" and "me" in order to evoke empathy and give agency to certain parties within the statement (Disability Resource Center; Disability Services, 2019; Office of Undergraduate Information, 2019; Student Disability Resources). Cal Poly's statement, however, tells the students to "contact the instructor" (Disability Resource Center). Given that this statement is within said instructor's syllabus, the instructor could have chosen to say contact "me." By utilizing the term "the instructor," the statement is further distancing the student from their instructor and removing any empathy. It dehumanizes the instructor and makes them appear as some sort of barrier that a student with disabilities has to pass, rather than someone who is there to support the student's learning.

Western Washington University also dehumanizes its students through avoiding referring to the students as students, but rather calling them "persons with disabilities" (Western Washington University, 2019). As these statements are appearing in student syllabi, referring to the reader as a "person" rather than recognizing that a person with a disability is a student furthers a sense of Otherness when interacting with students with disabilities, and impersonalizes the statement. One could interpret this as the university saying that persons with disabilities are not students.

Additionally, San Jose State University has a similar issue to Gonzaga in that it makes a reference to Presidential Directive 97-03, which "requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations…must establish a record of their disability" (Office of Undergraduate Information, 2019). Given that the Americans with Disabilities Act requires disability documentation in order to receive accommodations at higher education institutions, it is unclear as to why Presidential Directive 97-03 is being referenced, why it is needed, and what exactly it entails. The statement also includes a link to Academic Senate Policy F06-2 and refers to the school's Accessible Education Center solely by its acronym AEC. By directing agency to two different policies and an unexplained acronym, there is no agency or responsibility placed on the institution itself, instructors, or the disabilities service office; therefore, the very text that is supposed to promote accessibility becomes inaccessible.

Although there were many similarities between the texts of Jesuit and public institutions, there were some stark differences when it came to personalization and agency.

More often than not, these texts served to remove agency from all parties that should be involved and to dehumanize individuals with disabilities.

Conclusion

Through this analysis, I was able to establish the language choices that reflect associated identities of those with disabilities along with the ways higher education institutions remove agency or place the agency on a different entity. Although existing scholarship has contributed much in the means of accommodations and accessibility, this analysis shows the problems that disability services syllabi statements still pose. When the language of a statement serves to remove responsibility from the institution and place the responsibility on the student, students are discouraged in pursuing accommodations. Additionally, the emphasis on the types of disabilities supported can make students interpret that they will not be supported by disability services, or the student may still be struggling to identify as having a disability. When a syllabi statement is often the first interaction a student may have with disability services, it is crucial that the language of these statements is accessible to those who need it.

When creating a syllabus statement, the agency and responsibility are clear. Empathy should be shown for the student and their needs, and it should be clear who will be accommodating the student. It is also crucial that the language be accessible and that any words that connote a sense of exclusivity or Otherness should be eliminated. I would also suggest implementing the use of Central Washington's phrasing of "barriers to learning," as words such as impairment or disability are highly contested, and often students with disabilities do not necessarily see themselves as impaired or disabled. Avoiding those terms also helps to avoid presenting students with disabilities as lesser than their peers or needing to be brought up to a standard, instead placing the focus on accessing learning. Ultimately, the statements should appeal to students seeking out help, rather than making them feel pushed aside by the corporate language being used and the heavy emphasis on the timeliness of documentation. If higher education institutions are to truly include students with disabilities as a demographic of inclusivity and diversity, we must change how we talk about disabilities.

With this in mind, I push institutions that truly wish to work on their inclusion practices to utilize the following practices:

- Use person-first language (student with disabilities; not disabled student)
- Rename Disabilities Services to Student Access Services
- Refer to barriers to learning, rather than "disability"
- Show empathy and responsibility by using active language (accommodate vs. accommodations)
- Remember that when we speak about inclusion, accessibility should be part of that conversation.

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