





# *Access as Care*

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# Starting Point(s)



- Disability justice – and universal design – as an approach alongside/within radical kindness in academia
- What does it mean to apply these ideas to access in research?
- Building from
  - Fritsch's statement that: it is an "ableist failure of imagination exposes how it is the case that disabled people are increasingly included and integrated into western neoliberal economies and social life and, yet, disability simultaneously remains a deeply and profoundly undesirable category of being" (2015, p44)
  - Academic kindness as "incorporating self-care and responsibility as well as care for others" (Thaler and Jauk-Ajamie 2022, p5)
  - "In what ways might we construct terms and paradigms of "kindness" which both [recognises] structural inequality but also [operates] with an awareness of academics as being the structure in question?" (Burton 2021 p29)



# Academic (un)kindness

- Cruel optimism of kindness – papering over inequalities with veneer of politeness
- kindness so often combined with *pity*, with the removal of agency
  - "Contemporary definitions of kindness ... tend to focus on the recipient in need by relating kindness to the domain of caregiving, implying a passivity on the side of the recipient. For this reason, when the word kindness is used in the context of disability it often acquires troubling connotations." (García-Martín 2021 p149)
- toxic individualism of neoliberalism - tied to metricisation and bureaucracy;
  - "the neoliberal institution itself continues to tell its inhabitants that the problems they face are a result of each individual's lack of 'resilience' and 'grit'" (Burton 2021 p23)

# Radical Kindness?



- “Kindness may ease the sting, but it is not a substitute for equity, fairness, or justice in academic life” (De Welde 2022 p58)
  - De Welde asks about kindness as a strategy in justice work - pointing to alternative and subversive approaches to academic practices as those leading to change
- Burton and Turbine (2019) point to potentials of radical kindness – as opposed to 'politeness'



# Disability Justice?

- “A Disability Justice framework understands that all bodies are unique and essential, that all bodies have strength and needs that must be met. We know that we are powerful not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them ... Disability Justice holds a vision born out of collective struggle” (Piepznasamarashinha 2018p21)
- Access as act of joyful *collective responsibility*
  - “care must emerge between subjects considered to be equally valuable ... and it must be participatory in nature, that is, developed through the desires and needs of all participants.” (Price 2015 p279)
  - Access and care in confrontation with individualism (Chazan 2023)

# *Academic Kindness as Access*

- Enabling access – through making it possible to make real decisions about:
  - How/when to claim (if at all!)
  - When/how to engage with “adaptive” ideas
- So many accommodations and adaptations are temporary (see Price 2015, Chazan 2021) – what if they were built otherwise?
  - Space to explore what is wanted or needed
- Rather than having to go through a process of applying for reasonable adjustments – what if those adjustments were in place already, without asking





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