

# CRITICAL NEURODIVERSITY AND ABLEISM: CONCEPTS FOR BETTER TEACHING

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# CRITICAL AS CRUCIAL

- **Power – and thus social justice**
  - Not just normalising approach to disability – “analysis of the social processes and cultural meanings that impinge on social actors” (Meekosha and Shuttleworth p52)
- **Why not the social model?**
  - “Under the social model, accounts of lived experience are essential as they are the best guide for researchers on barriers to independence and equality. ... [However] there is little recognition of the ways that embodied differences may bring about new forms of knowledge and potential in individual or family lives” (Rosqvist, Stenning, and Chown, 2020)

# POWER?

- **Our everyday understanding of disability is dominated by a medical lens**
  - “The aim of the medical model is ... twofold: to prevent an individual from living a life that deviates from a supposedly ideal state and to ameliorate those difficulties that arise from living in a society that is constructed according to assumptions of the ideal neurological state.” (Rosqvist, Stenning, and Chown, 2020)
- **Disability, neurodivergence, madness**
  - “critical disability studies as a methodological approach to studying power, privilege, and oppression of bodily and mental norms which is not dependent upon the presence of disabled people, yet is informed by social perspectives, practices, and concerns about disability.” (Schalk 2017)
  - The "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" (Fristch 2015 p44)

# POWER IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

- An engaged pedagogy is one "that does not offer them information without addressing the connection between what they are learning and their overall life experience" (hooks 2014, p19)
- Not just about neurodivergence:
  - "the nontraditional student becomes responsible for the consequences of their precarity, even as they have no agency over the systems producing such precarity." (Bahrainwala 2020, p256)

# CRITICAL NEURODIVERSITY IN T&L

- **“Diversity is a trait possessed by a group, not an individual” (Walker 2014)**
  - Individuals are not neurodiverse but either neurotypical or neurodivergent
- **Engaging in critical neurodiversity means to “question norms governing sensory, affectual, and cognitive functioning ... [and] question the assumption of neurotypicality and dominant constructions of rationality and sensory processing” (Rosqvist, Stenning, and Chown 2020)**
  - Yergeau sees neuroqueering as a way of being in the world that “uncovers, upsets, and unsettles power structures in normative spaces” (Yergeau, 2018, p. 205).
  - ‘normality’ arises from a discourse of normative development

# ABLEISM IN T&L

- **Critical ND lens exposes how “institutional inflexibility [is] reinforcing productivist/abled temporalities” (Chazan 2023, p5)**
  - “the messy, ill-fitting jigsaw of impairment, personal adaptations and institutional practices, where disability can be seen as relative both to the person and to the situation” (Merchant, *et al*/2018, p275)
- **Instead: “a social relational understanding helps understand how disablement is experienced through a threefold combination of effects” (Sang, Calvard and Remnant 2022 p725)**
  - Impairment effects;
  - Barriers to doing;
  - Barriers to being.

# FOR EVERYONE

- **Also impacts colleagues**
  - "By radical care, I mean the practice of taking care of ourselves as interwoven with taking care of each other" (Chazan 2023, p1)
  - "accommodations are not charitable offerings; they are spaces we open to the best of our abilities, and revise, and revise again" (Price 2014 p102)
- **This is not a kindness – it is justice work**
  - "We should be wary of how the expectations for BIPOC faculty, staff or students to enact or (especially) receive kindness, reify the 'imperialist white supremacist capitalist [hetero]patriarch[al]' (hooks 1984) academic habitus. Kindness and expected reciprocity or gratitude may collude with hegemonic norms in ways that are currently uninterrogated." (De Welde 2022 p59)
  - microrebellion - recognition that "academic discourse is always already composed through and by the deviant" – the mad and the crip are already within the walls and we can take action now (Price 2024. pp86-7)
- **Access as joyful (Piepzna-Samarashinha 2018)**

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