Crip
Spacetime

MARGARET PRICE

ACCESS, FAILURE,

AND ACCOUNTABILITY

IN ACADEMIC LIFE

Crip Spacetime

ACCESS, FAILURE,

AND ACCOUNTABILITY

IN ACADEMIC LIFE   **MARGARET PRICE**

2 Time Harms

Navigating the Accommodations Loop

I had to spend a lot of my own time in accommodating myself.
—JACKY, participant

Something I've experienced as a student and as a teacher is
that if you don't get what the disabled person is going through,
you don't understand the need for *immediate* (emphasis)
accommodation.
—MEGAN, participant

I needed time, but time doesn't help that much.
—CAMILLE, participant

As the saying goes, "time heals." But time also harms.

Here's a story: you arrive at a building unfamiliar to you for a meeting with a new committee. You're hopeful about this committee: it's charged with doing diversity work, and the other members include deans and influential faculty members from other departments. You press the button for the elevator. It doesn't come. After a few minutes, you find someone in a nearby office and ask why the elevator isn't working. They express bafflement. You find someone else, and someone else, until finally you locate the person who explains, "Oh! The one at the other end of the building works." You travel to the other end of the building where the other elevator is, only to discover that this one leads to a secure wing, requiring a keycard. You go back to the person who helped you a few minutes ago. They say, "I can't believe no one has put a sign up there. This isn't really my job." You nod and thank them as they accompany you to the secure elevator. They swipe their keycard and up you go. You are now eight minutes late for your meeting. You are in tears but will not let them fall; in fact, you won't let them past the back of your eyes. Your nose is running and your face is sweating. During the meeting, you have little to say.

The landmarks of crip spacetime are well known to most disabled academics and, in fact, to all minoritized academics. Disbelief. Minimizing. Puzzlement in the face of straightforward requests. Gaslighting. Microaggressions. Open cruelty. Yet those same landmarks remain mysterious to those who continue to wonder: Why don't you just ask? Why would you leave a tenured position with no secure alternative? Why are you always bringing it up? Why aren't you ever satisfied? Time harms, but that basic truth of crip spacetime is rarely acknowledged in institutional discourses that involve waiting, delays, "patience," "bear with us," and promises to get back to the worker waiting on some piece of news or action.

Crip spacetime doesn't live within a disabled individual; rather, it lives in the material-discursive situation through which disability becomes. Further, crip spacetime as a reality is rarely perceptible to those not experiencing it. Throughout this chapter, stories from interviewees demonstrate not only that time can harm, but also that the harms are often not recognized—not until a disaster occurs, at which point the discourse of academe "in crisis" is once again reaffirmed (Boggs and Mitchell 2018). As Carmen Kynard (2022, 133) argues, the discourse of crisis in academe "suggests urgency and is rooted in a kind of presentism that smacks of white settler colonialism." This manifestation of white settler colonialism might identify a particular person (usually a minoritized person) as "the" problem. Alternatively, it might implicitly position white-centric academic discourses as basically good but just happening to be "in crisis" right now and thus in need of a one-time fix. Kynard and others recognize that the manufactured urgency of academe is designed to sustain a racist, sexist, ableist system of productivity.[1] However, efforts to counter this manufactured urgency often fail to address the systemic nature of academic time.

The term *slow professoring*, introduced by Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber (2016, x), urges professors to prioritize "deliberation over acceleration." Their idea has been criticized for its failure to address the privileges necessary to take up its recommendations, yet similar recommendations are echoed with increasing frequency within academic spaces. *Take time off. Don't check email after work hours. Say no.* Except in rare cases—such as the insightful article "For Slow Scholarship" by Alison Mountz and her colleagues (2015)—the complex costs of such "slowness" are ignored. Mountz and her coauthors, a collective of feminist geographers, directly engage structural inequity rather than offering glib advice about individual fixes. Their article does provide a list of recommended actions, but they are deliberately framed as both collective and complicated in nature.

For example, "Organize" is number three on the list; "write fewer emails" is accompanied by a discussion of the political implications of refusing to respond; and "Say No" is paired with "Say Yes" to encourage discussion of the ways that more secure academics can make a material difference to or share resources with less secure academics (1250–52). Similarly, addressing "grind culture" in general, Tricia Hersey's *Rest Is Resistance* (2022, 65–66) directly confronts the fact that questions of access are difficult to answer: "We center the issue of accessibility and try to answer the following questions: What becomes of the people who cannot afford to be away from their home for twenty-four hours or a weekend [for a Nap Ministry event]? What about the people who have children and no childcare? How will those who are homebound due to disability participate in a retreat that requires travel? . . . Why isn't our rest powerful enough to be accessed anytime and anywhere?" Unfortunately, such nuanced approaches to slowness are rare. More often, workplace-focused arguments about "slowing down" make the suggestion in the service of greater overall productivity, with positive mental health and happiness marshaled as part of the worker's performance.

RUNNING SLOW, MAKING UP

When Stephanie and I embarked on this interview study, our initial codes often touched on topics that had to do with time—for example, "repetition," "flexibility," "pushing through," "unpredictability," "cutting corners," and "recovery." As I worked through these codes, I thought about the dozens—maybe hundreds—of conversations I've had with disabled friends and colleagues about the ways time harms. Decades of work with the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) have taught me that fighting for access often means fighting for time: more time between sessions; time allotted by speakers and session chairs for effective work by interpreters and captioners; time on the program for disability as a topic in the first place (Osorio 2022). Given that access always unfolds through intersecting systems of racism, sexism, and ableism, these conversations sometimes involve time in messy and painful ways. For example, in 2015 the thrilling and pathbreaking Chair's Address "Ain't No Walls behind the Sky, Baby! Funk, Flight, Freedom," by Adam J. Banks, was interpreted by sign interpreters at the opening session. The interpreters' careful preparation, including their collaboration with Banks

ahead of time, had been fought for by the conference's Committee on Disability Issues and Standing Group on Disability and was supported wholeheartedly by Banks as he prepared the speech. However, immediately after the speech took place, it was posted on YouTube by the CCCC administration (not by Banks) and was accompanied by largely inaccurate auto-captions. A conversation ensued on one of the field's main listservs. A number of people pointed out the need for accurate captions, while others pointed out that a speech delivered orally in African American Vernacular English, from notes (and thus not fully "scripted" in the sense of being written out word for word), could not quickly or easily be translated into captions in standardized written English. Further, auto-captions are designed for white-centric speech, or what Keith Gilyard (1991) has called "standard*ized* English"; thus, the auto-captions manifested racist as well as ableist assumptions.

The discussion, often heated, turned on different definitions and valuations of time. Those arguing that the captions must be corrected immediately were pointing to time as a hinge of equity: if hearing people had full, immediate access to the speech on YouTube, it was unacceptable to force deaf people to experience a delay in access. And those arguing that a delay was inevitable were *also* pointing to time as a hinge of equity: the speech had never been written out, but it had been delivered as a partly improvised oral performance. Thus, transforming it into written captions would be impossible to accomplish without taking time. It would also take labor, a facet of "taking time" that is explored in more depth in this chapter and the next.

Of course, in retrospect, it probably would have been better if CCCC had waited to post the video until accurate captions had been composed. However, as usually happens in academe, the injustice was already in motion when it was discovered and had to be addressed in medias res. I want to emphasize that everyone involved—at least, everyone I spoke with personally—was working earnestly for access. The problem arose not because of a lack of effort or goodwill but, rather, because we were all part of a difficult-to-navigate system.

My point in telling this story is not to ask what the *best* solution would have been. Searching for a definitive solution to failures of access, as I argue throughout this book, is more likely to take you further from justice rather than toward it. My point is that conversations about access in the academic workplace almost always seem to involve time as a factor, and those of us caught up in these discussions often find ourselves using terms

such as *immediate*, *delay*, *fast*, and *slow* without meaningful reference to any shared metric.

Time is a topos. A topos is a common topic—that is, it's a concept shared by many, and frequently mentioned, but rarely defined. In its undefined form, a topos becomes "part of the discursive machinery that hides the flow of difference" (Crowley 2006, 73). (Other topoi include, for example, "freedom" and "healthy.") Time and its related concepts, like "fast" and "slow," are always relative to something else—and that relativity has costs. For example, Linh discussed the issue of not being able to work "fast enough":

> There are certain emails, like, other people responded to a super lengthy email and I feel pressured to [respond to] this person with a lengthy email, but I can't. So . . . I just type, "Sorry, my body's in pain, I can't type much, but let me tell you [briefly]." . . . My colleagues, I tell them there is only so much I can type, and I would need a longer time to process my thinking. So it's not (pause) like otherwise, people just work so fast, and I can't catch up with it.

Here, Linh describes an experience that many of us have had: receiving a long email and feeling pressure to respond quickly, in equal detail. For Linh, that sense of pressure is increased because her multiple disabilities mean that she is often typing more slowly than colleagues on the same email thread. By contrast, Grace—who also is unable to use voice recognition and who has an impairment to her hands—seems to feel a lower sense of pressure, perhaps because most of her emails are with students in the context of classes that she teaches asynchronously. Grace described her pace on emails this way:

> I tried voice recognition software, and my speech isn't super clear, so that's always sort of held me up (laughs) more than it helps me. {Margaret: Mm-hm.} So I type. You know, it's not, I'm not as fast as whatever, but I can do it fine. I can get done what I need to do. {Margaret: Mm-hm.} Yeah, I don't really videoconference with the students or anything. It's all through email.

I've placed Linh's and Grace's stories side by side to point out that their relative senses of being "too slow" or "fast enough" seem to depend largely on the expectations placed on them. In Linh's case, being on an email chain with colleagues who are responding quickly creates a sense of "I can't catch up." For Grace, however, working within her own classes and according

to expectations that are more transparent to her, she "can get done what I need to do" even though she's "not as fast as whatever." Grace's use of the word *whatever* is telling: it signals the decentralized nature of the push for speed that many of us feel in academe. Very few things in the academic workplace occur quickly or slowly on someone's direct command or for reasons that are truly inevitable. Time frames are always constructed according to some logic, even if the logic doesn't make particularly good sense.

Before time-oriented research was called "critical temporality studies," fields including queer studies, feminist geography, and disability studies were making robust contributions to this topic (Freeman 2010; Halberstam 2005; Love 2007; Massey 2004; Zola 1993). Much of this scholarship calls attention to the use of time as a metric of production in late capitalism. As Rosi Braidotti (2019, 41) argues, acceleration leads to "the negative, entropic frenzy of capitalist axiomatic," while "the political starts with de-acceleration." To put that in simpler terms, acceleration tends to be associated with a grind toward ever greater productivity and wearing out of bodies and the planet, while slowing down creates pauses and interstices that enable political theorizing, organizing, and intervention. Braidotti is joined by many other scholars in exploring the material-discursive nature of time as a construct. For example, Rachel Loewen Walker (2014, 54) argues for the value of a "living present" as a resistant feminist imaginary. She elaborates:

> Just as we cannot expect to jump up and run away the minute after we twist an ankle, we cannot erase a history of exclusion with the great big stroke of "legalizing same-sex marriage in Canada." . . . The living present is heavy with lineages that mimic, critique and undo our assumed histories, and, rather than wiping away the past or seeking absolution for our actions, we can embrace this thick temporality, recognizing its ability to deepen our accountabilities to those pasts and their possible futures. (56)

In other words, Walker suggests, the living present forms a "thick" temporality (which echoes, without directly citing, Clifford Geertz [1973]). This means that past and future *matter* through what we imagine to be the present.

I am drawn to Walker's theory because it includes the key component of *accountability*, which, I argue, is underexplored (or simply ignored) in many material-discursive theories that call for "alternative modes of becoming" and "new alliances" (Braidotti 2019, 49–50) between subjects

and between fields of study. Yet the matter of disability is both foregrounded and strangely unaccounted for in most of these theories, including Walker's. Looking again at her extended example, we might ask: Is the twisted ankle in this example meant to be a minor inconvenience experienced by a generally nondisabled person? Will the ankle turner be able to run and jump, not the minute after their accident, but maybe five minutes later? Or is that metaphor meant to indicate the kind of slow, painful change and healing that might follow sweeping progressive legislation on a national scale?

This is not necessarily a problem with Walker's theory of a living present. Rather, it is an indication that the theory could extend further. What *about* the matter of disability—especially since disability studies has a long history of theorizing "crip time"? First articulated in the early 1990s as a disability-centric emphasis on flexibility or extended time (Zola 1993), crip time has been theorized as a key construct in madness (Price 2015), loss (Samuels 2017b), and imaginings of a future queer-crip world (Kafer 2013). Kafer's *Feminist Queer Crip* offers a complicated mix of takes on crip time, arguing that theories of futurity may reinscribe harm, abuse, colonization, and slavery, all while claiming to leave them behind. In her chapter on the cyborg, Kafer (2013, 128) argues that while the future-pointing potential of the cyborg is invigorating, it also demands "a reckoning, an acknowledgement, of the cyborg's history in institutionalization and abuse." A key part of Kafer's approach to crip time is its acknowledgment that no history can really be moved past; no future, no matter how liberatory, really leaves anything behind.

Drawing on Kafer, and on the theories of "becoming" described in the introduction, I argue that time and accountability are inseparable. I want to move beyond saying that we *could* recognize harm as a constituent aspect of time to argue that we *must* recognize it as such. That recognition informs my understanding of academic time. Academic time is composed not only of a fast-moving, bell-ringing present, but also of histories of inequality and abuse, as well as uncertain futures. Priya, who works in the sciences and has endometriosis, told this story:

> The way I got through grad school was basically, I would work ahead in all my classes by two weeks, because I knew that there would be two weeks out of the month when I would be completely out of commission. So, and I just became extremely efficient to the point where I finished a doctorate at [an Ivy League school] in three years. Which is great but also not sustainable, you know (laughs).

Priya's interview, which spans her years as a graduate student, postdoc, and then faculty member, is full of references to the particular crip spacetime she inhabits and its incomprehensibility to others in her workplace. At her first job, her mentor assured her that she didn't need to explain her disability to anyone else, since "your [Priya's] record kind of speaks for itself." The mentor intended this to be a supportive gesture, recognizing Priya's outstanding performance during graduate school. At the same time, however, Priya was traveling out of state for repeated surgeries, and neither she nor her doctors knew whether or for how long she might need to go on medical leave.

Priya did end up taking a medical leave in her second year as a faculty member, then applied for a "reentry grant" from her school. However, the reentry grant required that she "basically quit [my] position for a year and not be active." Priya's experience is echoed in many published accounts by disabled academics, including Emma Sheppard's (2020, 40) qualitative study of chronic illness, which notes that one aspect of crip time is "failure to move from past to present to future in a straight line or at the required pace." As Sheppard and other researchers have documented, it is often not possible to "take a leave"—making a clean break from all academic work—and then return ready to work at a full-time pace. Yet that's exactly what was expected of Priya.

During her leave, Priya continued to participate in grant projects, since it was essentially impossible to stop work on them without halting scientific studies being conducted by groups, including graduate students. Applying for, receiving, and implementing grants is a years-long process, and particularly in the sciences it is almost always team-based. Thus, a single researcher cannot easily stop and restart their work. For Priya, all these factors of academic time, including not only present issues (surgery, leave, large ongoing grants) but also past experience (maintaining extreme efficiency to cope during graduate school) and future possibilities (collaborative projects extending over years), came together to create an almost impossible situation. She elaborated:

> The advice I got from the mentor who was assigned to me was just that . . . people don't really keep tabs on you anyway so you don't really have to explain yourself. . . . [But] it was very mixed messages. I had been very productive, but at the same time, at the same time there was pressure to automatically have a two-year plan and a four-year plan when it came to grants and such. Whereas at that time in my life, I wasn't in the position

to make those kinds of plans because I knew it was very contingent upon my health.

Although the unusual patterns of academic time are often extolled as a benefit, they can also become mechanisms of harm—equaling or even outweighing the direct and present harm of a debilitating disability.

Academe as a workplace has rhythms unlike most others. Most faculty and students are not expected to follow any particular timetable outside of classes and meetings, while staff are usually expected to follow a more conventional nine-to-five schedule. At least twice a year, academics experience a temporal break (not necessarily time *off*) followed by a fresh, sometimes jarring, restart. These temporal breaks are rigorously scheduled, often years in advance. Time is constantly referenced: "time to degree," "extended time on tests," "stop the clock." Yet because academic time blends premodern and postmodern ways of working (Walker 2009), most faculty do not use billable hours; nor do many of us even keep track of our hours, despite the "percentages" that are supposed to structure our labor. Highly privileged academic employees are allowed to take part in premodern customs such as tenure and the sabbatical, both of which assume time is required to develop knowledge and creativity. However, even tenured faculty are constantly exhorted to "do more with less" and, in general, as Judith Walker (2009, 500, emphasis added) shows, are forced to participate in an "ever-increasing exigency to justify time and *to take individual responsibility for doing so*." Further, the scarcity of time for academic workers often takes place in a context of decadent abundance for certain pursuits, including marketing, new construction, and some athletics (Meyerhoff et al. 2011).
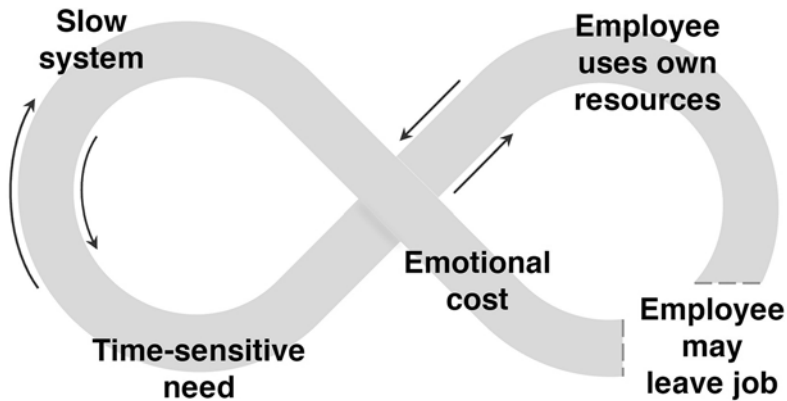
Despite the changes brought by COVID-19, many temporal patterns remained intact, or quickly snapped back into place, after a year or two. The compression of more work into increasingly limited time frames is, if anything, amplified. Budgets have been slashed and jobs cut, while those still employed are expected to do (even) more with (even) less. Women and minoritized academics, including disabled academics, are bearing most of the burden. According to both the *Guardian* (London) and the US publication *Inside Higher Education*, women's submissions of research dropped sharply in 2020 (Fazackerley 2020; Flaherty 2020). Meanwhile, Black people and other people of color are not only bearing the same or greater professional burdens; they also experience higher rates of mortality due to COVID-19. The pandemic, while sometimes extolled as a chance to slow

down, offered that pleasant kind of slowness only to the most privileged. Academic time has a particular ability to intensify and sustain structural inequities. It draws on both postmodern (for the masses) and premodern (for the elite) systems of timekeeping and practices a special regime of nontransparency with regard to how time is spent, while at the same time increasing technologies of surveillance and encouraging self-surveillance. Walker (2009) speculates, in her article's conclusion, that future studies of academic time will show "differential effects" based on subject position (race, class, gender, age, discipline). This has turned out to be true in the case of the Disabled Academics Study. Although "time" was not a main focus of the initial research questions, it turned out to be an important topic for nearly every interviewee. Further investigation led to my realization that not all of us, in academe, are inhabiting the same spacetime.

As I continued studying the codes within the dimension *Time* and thinking through the meaning they make together, I observed a predictable pattern. I call it the *accommodations loop*.

Figure 2.1 depicts a figure eight turned on its side (the symbol for infinity), with arrows along its path to indicate constant travel around and around. Text is arranged around the figure eight. From the top left, the text reads, *Slow system. Time-sensitive need. Emotional cost. Employee uses own resources*. At a break in the figure eight, a block of text reads, *Employee may leave job*. There is no beginning and no end to the accommodations loop, unless one leaves the loop altogether.

To that brief description, I now add a more detailed description, which connects this abstract diagram to the concrete events I learned from participants' stories. First, the process of achieving access is often time-consuming. When requesting accommodations, employees may have to prove their disabilities (through tests, or medical records, or even physical demonstrations), and this proof is required over and over again, thus becoming a form of surveillance. Ellen Samuels's *Fantasies of Identification* (2014) elegantly theorizes the repetitive proof-and-surveillance process as "biocertification." Once accommodations are granted, bureaucratic delays may prevent them from being put into place right away. And once the accommodation is *both* allowed *and* in place, making use of an accommodation may be time-consuming—especially if it requires coordination with other people. Thus, even when working perfectly, accommodations don't necessarily bring an employee "up to speed" as if the disability were magically erased.

2.1 The accommodations loop. Designed by Johnna Keller and Margaret Price. Full description in text.

Occupying the same curve of the figure eight as *Slow system* is an intertwined phenomenon: the *Time-sensitive access need*. Many interviewees reported that they sometimes needed an accommodation put in place immediately, because they would be unable to work without it or could experience significant harm. A related phenomenon discussed in some interviewees' stories was the abruptly arising access barrier—for example, a fluorescent-lit room, an unexpected fire alarm, or an overheated classroom.

Continuing to traverse the accommodations loop, the disabled employee may encounter significant emotional costs, particularly if the arrangements required by the slow system are onerous, embarrassing, or frustrating. Faced with all these costs, the employee may decide to self-accommodate, a choice reported by many interviewees and discussed at more length in chapter 3. The repetitive labor of the accommodations loop keeps going on, ending only if the employee leaves the job, symbolized by a break in the figure eight.

At the center of the accommodation loop is the fulcrum, or overlap point, of the figure eight. This point represents several different phenomena in crip spacetime:

1   A well-worn pathway, since someone traveling the accommodation loop will have to pass through the fulcrum repeatedly.

2   An intensifying point, where the conditions on the left curve (*Slow system* and *Time-sensitive need*) will exacerbate those on the

right curve (*Emotional cost*, *Employee uses own resources*, *Employee may leave job*).

3   An obscuring point. From an institutional point of view, the left curve—the slow system at work and the access need itself—is more likely to be recognized than the employee's emotional distress and use of their own resources to achieve access. In more concrete terms, we can imagine the institutional point of view coming from the left but being obscured by the fulcrum so that the phenomena on the right curve are difficult or impossible to perceive.

Most participants in the Disabled Academics Study reported self-accommodating and/or masking the emotional cost of their struggles. Once an academic employee leaves a job, there is generally no institutional record left of the struggle that occurred (Ahmed 2021; Bailey 2021; Brown and Leigh 2018; Stone et al. 2013; White-Lewis et al. 2023). This lack of trace marks the accommodations loop as part of crip spacetime: it is well known to those who inhabit it and often invisible to those who don't.

The next sections focus on stories from interviewees and several key codes from the dimension *Time*: "duration of obtaining accommodations"; "duration of using accommodations"; and "suddenness." Interviewees' stories bring to life the abstract lines of the accommodations-loop diagram.

OBTAINING AND USING ACCOMMODATIONS

Institutional processes of diversity, equity, and inclusion are often designed to move slowly, in order to discourage people from pursuing them. This is a well-known strategy in business and public policy, identified as "slow-rolling" (Labaton 2004; Potter 2017). Elizabeth Emens (2021, 2348), looking at the phenomenon from a legal point of view, calls it "rationing by hassle." And in studies of higher education environments, Sara Ahmed (2021, 92) calls it "dragging"; Tanya Titchkosky (2011, 108–10) discusses it in terms of "not-yet time"; and Jay Dolmage (2017, 70) observes that retrofit forms of access are "slow to come and fast to expire." Anyone who has filed an insurance claim or tried to obtain a refund will be familiar with

this purposeful slowing-down strategy. Effectively, the desired goal—such as obtaining a refund—is made difficult to reach, through both tedious processes and delays. Such delays, as Rachel Augustine Potter (2017, 841) writes, are often "a reflection of bureaucrats' strategic calculations, rather than a symptom of ineptitude, malfeasance, or circumstance." In other words, deliberate slowing down of support or assistance is sometimes good business, from an economic point of view. This structural slowing-down phenomenon is well known, as evidenced by the research record across multiple disciplines, including law, organizational psychology, and sociology. Yet somehow, rationing by hassle remains a consistent surprise—at least, putatively—in academic institutions. The surprise that processes are slowed by design mirrors the surprise that academic institutions as a whole appear to be in constant crisis.

In the Disabled Academics Study, analysis of the *Time* codes reveals that when processes move slowly, academic workers experience material costs—harms—for which they must figure out some way to compensate. Some of the costs named by interviewees include paying for one's own accommodations, giving up research and creative opportunities, or even having to leave one's job.

Interviewees described two ways in which the system moves slowly: first, accommodations may take a long time to put in place; and second, once put in place, accommodations may be time-consuming to use. Both phenomena require detailed unpacking, because the dominant narrative about academic accommodation is that it proceeds smoothly, linearly, and promptly. For example, even a pro-faculty and disability studies-informed publication such as the American Association of University Professors' *Accommodating Faculty Members Who Have Disabilities* contributes to that narrative by announcing, "Once a faculty member indicates, whether orally or in writing, that he or she has a disability, a *structured process* involving several steps begins" (Franke et al. 2012, 32, emphasis added). Such statements imply that the process leading to adequate accommodation is clearly laid out, but the experiences of disabled employees tell a different story.

At the time of his interview, Roger was a tenured faculty member at a liberal arts college. His office was located on the fourth floor of his department's building, and he didn't use stairs. Like many disabled academics, Roger had arranged accommodations with his department chair rather than register with Human Resources (HR). He ran into difficulty,

however, when he discovered that the elevator in his building was shut off on weekends:

> There's a very bad, fairly unsafe elevator that I am sure was put in years ago, strictly to meet some certain kinds of standards, but they barely do. But worse is that on weekends the janitors would shut the elevator down. . . . I made a point of, yeah, of talking to people in, say, in the administrative and the dean's office about it. And the administrative assistant rather curtly told me that, you know, if I wanted anything done about it that I'd have to go to Human Resources and register as a person with a disability.

Registering with HR would not only require that Roger go on record as a disabled employee, but it would also take time to make the appointment, get whatever tests or certifications might be required (and pay for them), and then convince HR to change building policy. As his conversation about the elevator continued, he pointed out that the issue was larger than his own individual needs:

> I rather sharply responded to her [the administrative assistant] that this wasn't just about me. It was, you know, there were, there were students who might have mobility issues. . . . Now, it's still a hit or miss, but, at least the conversation was had.

After this discussion, as it turned out, a much simpler (and quicker) approach was available: Roger took his question to his school's affirmative action officer, who cut through the red tape by contacting the building manager directly. The building manager ensured that the elevator would not be shut down on weekends. But afterward it was still, as Roger noted, "hit or miss" whether that actually occurred.

Roger's accommodation story is one of the more straightforward ones among interviewees' accounts of slow accommodation. Jacky, a blind woman of color, described starting a tenure-track job at a large public state university. Her institution was slow to provide the accommodations she needed: a reader (i.e., a sighted person to read inaccessible material aloud), JAWS (screen-reading software), and a scanner. Although her university was "working on" her accommodations, weeks and months passed. She described the situation:

> First year was really like in that sense shaky. Like, I did not have a reader when I came. I did not have assistive technology. I just came, and straightaway I had to start teaching. . . . I had to look for the reader. I had to put

the ads for it, interview people, and for one or two months I did not have a reader, either JAWS or [a person]. . . . Thankfully I taught [only] one course, but that meant, like, I bought so many of my courses just to accommodate myself.

What does "I bought my courses" mean? All tenure-track faculty at Jacky's institution received eight course releases (against a three in autumn, three in spring load), intended to support research activity over the first five years. The first reader she hired, who was "wonderful" and "[made] sure everything was accessible," left the institution soon after they began work together, at which point, Jacky reported, "everything was stalled." (As other interviewees pointed out, the academic custom of hiring students as assistants means that, if a worker must be replaced mid-semester, few applicants are available, since most students seeking employment have made their arrangements already.) Left with no in-person reader and no screen reader, Jacky used up half her course buyouts in her first three semesters. As she explained, only slowly did she become aware of the implications of this. She had arrived at the job directly from her doctoral program, and finding herself so poorly accommodated, she was essentially in survival mode for more than a year. "I had no idea what I was doing, or what were the implications of [using my course buy-outs]," Jacky said. "Only in my second year, I felt like, what am I doing? Like, you know, what has just happened? I've finished half of my teaching releases and I'm only in the second year."

At that point, Jacky realized that she couldn't go on as she had been and appealed to her department chair for help. She asked for extra course releases to make up the ones she had used while self-accommodating, and at first received apologies:

> [My chair] knew. Everybody knew that [accommodations] got delayed and all that, and they kept apologizing: "Oh we're so sorry about it, we're so sorry about it." I said, "Wait. Like, sorry does not solve anything. I am literally, you know, halfway through with my course releases, and it's my second year." . . . Then the whole bargaining started (laughs).

The apology is a common theme in the accommodations loop: apologies are routinely offered along with harmful delays. Jacky's succinct response—"sorry does not solve anything"—points out that apologies do not redress the actual harms occurring.

Jacky's story shifts at this point to a series of exhausting, and sometimes insulting, discussions about what accommodations would be adequate.

In this part of the accommodations loop, the disabled employee is often asked to prove that they are disabled or how badly they actually need the requested accommodation. This is a question of time in a different way: How much is loss of time actually affecting the employee? And by *affect*, the counter-bargainer does not mean, "How much pain is it costing you?" but, rather, "How detrimental is it to your productivity?"

Jacky recounted extensive conversations during her second year among multiple administrators and staff at her institution:

> So back and forth between the dean and the provost and dean and pro—
> And they were like—The second year was full of all this drama, [and] I was
> not in any of those meetings, . . . [but] I got to hear a lot of nasty things
> from the provost and, like, from the administration. Like, first of all, they
> said, like, I'm being too needy and demanding. {Margaret: Really!} Yeah,
> too demanding. They were like, her needs never get over, like she wanted
> a scanner, $1,700 scanner, we got it. She wanted the second reader, . . . she
> got it. Now she wants course releases. She doesn't want to teach.

Jacky was not called needy or demanding to her face.[2] Rather, an ally in the Office of Diversity reported this back to her, not in an effort to hurt her, but to note that the administration was being "nasty" and that Jacky would have to advocate more forcefully. As Jacky said, this process not only delayed her work even further but carried significant emotional cost: "I was in tears. I was in tears." During her interview, Jacky cried again, recalling the pain of these events. I cried too.

At this point, the administration began to discuss granting the course releases but insisted that they be awarded on the basis of low productivity rather than calling them an accommodation. Jacky was asked to sign a form stating that she would be granted the course releases *because she had not been productive enough*, despite the fact that she had already obtained three grants in her first two years. "I said, that doesn't make sense," she recalled. Although Jacky had no way of knowing it, given the scattered and poorly publicized nature of research on disabled academics, this tactic of granting an accommodation as an exception or on an ad hoc basis is frequently used by institutions. A 2013 study of thirty-five academics with multiple sclerosis documents the practice:

> Our findings show that when requested accommodations were granted it
> was virtually always on an ad-hoc basis. This decentralized approach cre-
> ates the problem of there being no institutional memory regarding accom-

modations to allow others to know what might be possible. As well, while some participants made their own work modifications, this practice also meant that there was no institutional documentation to show they had been made. (Stone et al. 2013, 167)

That point, about avoiding institutional memory, is a key part of the accommodations loop. As academics traverse it, whether they leave the institution altogether or find another way to do their jobs in an inaccessible environment, the loop simply repeats. It does not progress anywhere, and it doesn't leave many traces.

Jacky refused to sign the form stating that she would receive additional course releases due to her own lack of productivity. She consulted with her chair:

I was like, OK, what should I do? I don't want to sign. She's like, just forget about it, don't sign it. Just fizzle it. Let it fizzle away. . . . I had asked for five course releases. They gave me two, and then they said, we will review the request for two [more] courses releases next year, depending if you do these, these, these, these [things].

Numerous other participants told stories about being taken through similar bends and twists while attempting to gain accommodations. Jacky had an outstanding work record ("I said, just look at my CV [curriculum vitae]") but was met with a double-bind response: *if* you need accommodations, you must be able to show that you are performing poorly, but *then*, poor performance means you are not a competent faculty member and, thus, you should not receive benefits such as course releases. This paradoxical logic often has a clear purpose. In Jacky's case, as she noted herself, the institution wanted to avoid admitting that it "had not complied" with its obligation to accommodate her adequately. Numerous other interviewees in the Disabled Academics Study reported being caught in a similar paradox. As Iris put it, "It's like, [I have to] explain what's happening that's difficult, and then explain how great I'm doing anyway, and I kind of rhetorically move back and forth."

Jacky was not asked to prove she was blind or to take a vision test. However, many interviewees reported being asked to do just that—certify or enact their disabilities in specific ways, vetted by specific authorities—demonstrating, again, Samuels's (2014) concept of biocertification. Some interviewees were forced to obtain letters from their doctors or undergo expensive tests, while others proactively sought documentation in an effort

to avoid at least part of the accommodations loop. One deaf faculty member, already tenured, arranged a new audiology test when moving to a different (also tenured) job and requested that the results be placed in her personnel file.

Depending on specific circumstances, an employee's disability may be disbelieved—either its specific effects or even the fact that it exists in the first place. Disbelief of disability is unfortunately so well known that the phenomenon is analyzed in law, rhetoric, and other disciplines.[3] The legal scholar Doron Dorfman (2019, 1082) conducted a national survey combined with in-depth interviews and found that "a central interview theme concerned the reluctance of people with disabilities [to ask] for accommodations and rights. In some cases, this reluctance was exacerbated by the fear of being regarded as fakers or abusers [of the system]." Dorfman's work documents assumptions about the "disability con" across many kinds of workplaces and in popular culture. Disability con narratives are familiar parts of the accommodations loop for many disabled employees. First, one must negotiate the question of whether one is faking one's disability or faking one's need; next, one must undergo some process of surveillance designed to test whether one's biocertification is valid. These parts of the accommodations loop were a central part of another interviewee's, Miyoko's, story.

Miyoko is an Asian American woman who left her job shortly after earning tenure at a midsize private university. Her disabilities include chronic pain in her legs, arms, back, and neck, as well as chronic fatigue. During the first several years at her job, Miyoko self-accommodated in many ways—for example, remaining seated while teaching and avoiding use of classroom blackboards. However, work that required extensive use of a computer keyboard and mouse (including use of her school's online course management system) was especially problematic. Eventually, and after undergoing two medical leaves, Miyoko formally requested disability accommodation from her university's HR department.

A key part of bureaucracy in general, and the accommodations loop in particular, is the introduction of slowness through seeming failure to understand the problem. For Miyoko, claims not to understand her accommodation requests stalled her case repeatedly. She sent her initial request letter at the beginning of a summer, several months before she hoped accommodations would be implemented. The first stall was caused by the fact that she requested a different computer. She had originally been issued a Mac but then learned (after her conditions became debil-

itating) that the software program Dragon NaturallySpeaking worked much better on Windows. Her request was misinterpreted to mean that Dragon *could not* work on a Mac. Yet instead of contacting Miyoko for clarification or even rejecting the request, HR simply did not respond. This is a known technique for stretching out bureaucratic processes, identified by Ahmed (2021, 86–87) as "blanking." A second misunderstanding centered on Miyoko's request to reallocate her teaching load. Miyoko's usual load was 3/3, which she asked to have reallocated to 2/2/1/1 (two autumn, two spring, two summer). She explained:

> Basically this first HR [employee] persisted over the summer in being very slow to respond . . . , and at some point I figured out that she, her main objection was that she thought that I was asking for a course reduction (laughs). So then I couldn't believe it but I wrote a letter saying, you know, that three plus three is the same as two plus two plus one plus one, and I actually made a little table to, you know, [show that].

Ahmed's interview study *Complaint!* observes a situation similar to Miyoko's and notes that when a complaining faculty member is forced to keep repeating themselves, it shifts the appearance of unreasonableness onto them. "She has to keep saying it because they keep doing it. But it is she who is heard as repeating herself, as if she is stuck on the same point" (Ahmed 2021, 141).

Both of the stalls Miyoko encountered that spring and summer were aggravated by the fact that each response (when finally given) took more than a month and was sent by certified mail, despite repeated requests from Miyoko to use a quicker method, such as email, telephone, or in-person meetings. Titchkosky (2011, 87) identifies this move as the "inherent lack of alarm" of bureaucratic processes—a lack of alarm that countermands, and might even exacerbate, the anxiety felt by the person trying to confront that bureaucracy. Slowness is not the only feature of certified mail, however; the use of certified mail also signals legal communications. When she received her first certified letter, Miyoko reported, "I realized that [the situation] had become this very legal thing." In keeping with the university's distanced approach to the exchange, Miyoko was not usually permitted to enter the discussion directly. She in fact never learned from the HR department directly that it had misunderstood that 2/2/1/1 was not a course reduction. Her dean revealed that error while admonishing her for asking for "less teaching," at which point Miyoko wrote the corrective letter. The reallocation was then granted, but only for one

year—"subject to renewal." Miyoko was also required to obtain "medical documentation"—again, the biocertification stage of the accommodations loop's slow system. Numerous other interviewees reported undergoing a similar repetitive process of "Prove you're disabled" and "Ask for this accommodation again," including Veda, Dalia, Tom, Evan, Nate, and Iris.

In response to her documentation letter, Miyoko received shocking news: some authority at her university had Googled her, found a YouTube video in which she raised her arms above her head once, and accused Miyoko of lying in her documentation. Although this was a particularly lurid instance of surveillance, numerous other interviewees told stories of having to construct rigid predictions about how long their disabilities would last, how severely disabled they would be at specific points in the future, when they anticipated the disability would go away or be alleviated, and what their pace of work would be if accommodations were received. (The theme "surveillance" is discussed at more length in chapter 1.) In summary, institutional discourses required Miyoko's disability to be constant, predictable, and certain, yet the accommodations themselves were temporary, awarded only conditionally, and required yearly biocertification.

Requests for accommodation tend to turn on precise measurements of chronological time, but most disabilities don't run on chronological time. They run on crip time. Pain might change a "five-minute" walk between buildings one day to a "twenty-minute" walk the next. "Inability" to use the phone might mean "inability to use the phone for calls longer than two or three minutes" rather than "total inability to use the phone at any point, for any reason." And the need for recovery time stretches and contracts according to myriad factors. Interviewee after interviewee described the complex, subtle calculations they make every day while trying to manage and predict their stamina. For example, Nicola said that she routinely turned down invitations to attend social events after teaching because she knew "if I do this I won't be able to teach tomorrow." Trudy described a long series of such calculations, affecting every aspect of her work and personal life: "I have to be super organized about the semester, assuming that at some point in there I'm not going to be doing well. . . . I probably look at my Google calendar more than anybody else I know because I have to anticipate what kind of energy this day is going to take, where I'm going to find time to rest." As these stories indicate, attempting to fill out an accommodation request truthfully can feel like writing one's own book-length autobiography. Fitting one's story into the yes/no, possible/impossible, reasonable/unreasonable discourse of accommodations

makes it extremely difficult to express one's access needs accurately (Bê 2019, 1344; Yergeau 2018, 60).

In a desperate effort to keep her job, Miyoko paid out of pocket for many kinds of software, keyboards, and computer mice, as well as a personal assistant to help her manage the dozens of hours of computer work required of her each week. One of the last events that occurred before she quit her tenured job was learning that her assistant would be barred from campus:

> I hired my own assistant because I realized that the university was not moving quickly enough and I needed somebody to help me prep for class. . . . So I did that and then I got a letter [from HR] saying you must not allow this person, this person will not be allowed onto campus because she was not hired through the payroll system. Any person that you have as an assistant has to be hired by [this university].

Miyoko received that letter just before the autumn semester began, and in accordance with its directive, she began working at home more, continuing to pay the assistant out of pocket. Matters did not improve, though, and although she had just been tenured the year before, she ended up quitting in December. As she spoke about the decision, Miyoko emphasized how carefully it was made.

> MIYOKO: I decided to make it public that I was resigning and that it was because of a disagreement over accommodations. I felt like that was a final message that my colleagues deserved to get from me. I was the coordinator of the new and not-so-new faculty network, which was a peer mentoring network for junior faculty, which then extended to include senior faculty, and so I had about a hundred people on my email list. And I sent it out to all of them saying, just to let you know, I resigned on [date] and it was due to the University's inability to provide accommodations to my disability. And I just left it at that. I tried to, you know, not be slanderous or libelous or whatever, but I also didn't want them to, I didn't want people to think, "Oh, she just quit because she couldn't hack it," or whatever, like, because I knew there would be questions.
>
> MARGARET: Yes.
>
> MIYOKO: And yeah, I got a couple of emails from people saying, oh, you know, [university's] loss is your gain and good for you

and, you know, good luck. And then some people were just like, "Oh, what happened? What happened? Let's have lunch." . . . And then other people were saying, "Well, are you just doing this as a principle thing? You know, are you just doing this to make a point?" And I was like (pause), you really think I would just quit my job to make a point? You know, I'm not that kind of person. I know some activist people might resign out of protest, but I was like, no, I threw away a tenured position knowing exactly what I was doing. And I would have kept it if I could but I just didn't have the energy.

Miyoko's decision to resign came after years of self-accommodation and months of active effort to obtain accommodation. During her interview, she added that if she ever had another academic job, "I would give myself, like, two years (chuckling) to get accommodations."

　　During the interview, I followed up to ask whether she would work as a professor again. Miyoko responded that she probably would not. "It takes a long time for academe to change," she reflected, "and so in the meantime I will be doing other things."

SUDDENNESS

In both Jacky and Miyoko's stories, unwanted slowness is a prominent feature. For some disabled academics, however, unwanted quickness—relative to the pace of other events—is the salient factor. Lack of access might be brought on by a sudden issue such as an overheated room, an interpreter who does not arrive as scheduled, or a ramp that is too steep to navigate safely. In the next section, I expand on the codes "pace," "suddenness," and "unpredictability" to explore the section of the accommodations loop in which a sudden need might arise.

　　When I first identified this phenomenon, I tentatively coded it "bodymind event." In the article "The Precarity of Disability/Studies in Academe," I defined a bodymind event as "a sudden, debilitating shift in one's mental/corporeal experience" (Price 2018, 201). That article tells a story from Del, a professor who was supposed to receive a warning before scheduled fire alarms. Del is autistic, and loud noises, including fire alarms, caused her to have immediate panic attacks or meltdowns. One day, however, either the scheduled warning was forgotten or the alarm was pulled

unexpectedly. In any case, Del did have a meltdown—while teaching—and fled the building, falling down the stairs as she went. Fortunately, in that particular case she was teaching students who—due to the discipline Del taught in—had some experience responding to disability-related crises. They responded to the fire alarm and Del's panicked reaction with care; some gathered together outside to check on one another, while one student took Del aside to make sure she was safe. Del recounted the aftermath of the incident: "We got back to class . . . [and I said], 'OK, so you all aced the pop quiz on getting the melting-down autistic safely out of the building during a fire.'" However, despite Del's good humor while telling the story, the potential for serious harm is obvious. Del could have been seriously injured, as could one or more of her students. Furthermore, having a meltdown is a terrifying and draining experience, even in the best circumstances, and it can be professionally damaging to have one at work. Del is white, meaning that her meltdown was more likely to be read by her students—and any colleagues who observed some part of the event—*as* a meltdown rather than as an act of aggression. Disabled people of color are killed—not occasionally, but often—in public. As I write, Jordan Neely's death is only the most recent of such stories. In summary, while bodymind events are common for disabled people, they can also have horrible consequences, including death, particularly for multiply marginalized disabled people.

My ability to identify the "bodymind event" came in part from lived experience. I know the abrupt horror of seeing a friend's wheelchair hit a bump in the sidewalk, sending her flying onto the pavement. I know how it feels to say to a nondisabled friend, "I need to go home right now" and receive an oblivious, "Can you hang on just fifteen more minutes?" in response. Every few weeks, as I walk along the sidewalks and hallways and stairwells of my workplace, I am startled by something (a loud noise, a tap on my shoulder from behind, even just a nearby voice I'm not expecting) and flash immediately into a panic attack—usually to the dismay of whoever inadvertently caused it. I could name dozens of such examples. But it took some time to figure out what I meant by "bodymind event," beyond chronological suddenness. Through analysis of interviewees' stories, my original definition has expanded. I now define a bodymind event as one that includes the following elements:

- It involves a sudden, debilitating shift in one's mental/corporeal experience.

- It unfolds faster than the possibility of redress. In other words, it cannot be alleviated while it's happening.
- It may be ignored altogether (as in my story from chapter 1 about falling down during a conference), or, paradoxically, it may be met with anger and violence. The position of the person experiencing the bodymind event, including their race, gender, and class, weighs heavily in what sort of response occurs.

A crucial aspect of the bodymind event is that comprehension of its stakes transform in a flash from "What's the big deal?" to "Oh, gosh—you're right. This IS an emergency!"—at which point the disabled person is left saying "I TOLD you it was an emergency." By the time that point is reached, the damage is done. To return to a point from Irene H. Yoon and Grace A. Chen (2022, 80): in cases of institutional violence, there is often "little room for response or reconciliation" since "institutional actors commit assaults from ambiguous positions."

My emphasis on the stakes of this kind of situation, and the fact that different actors in any situation will perceive those stakes differently, are continuations of my earlier work on kairotic space (Price 2011b, 2017a). As with kairotic space, the stakes of a situation—that is, the potential for harm or benefit—are always different for different actors; are not perceived the same way by different actors; and, in the case of a bodymind event, are governed by differing knowledges of time. Crip spacetime is a material-discursive reality that is rarely perceived by those who do not inhabit it. A bodymind event, as part of crip spacetime, may be perceptible only in a fragmented way. For example, my physical reaction at the beginning of a panic attack is usually noticed by those around me. But without direct knowledge of crip spacetime, my reactions may appear to be coming out of nowhere. Within crip spacetime, a bodymind event makes sense, in terms of being fully embedded in a crip context. But it doesn't make sense from outside crip spacetime, and those differing realities can be harmful.

In this book's introduction, I discuss the intense affective pitch that disabled people often feel in everyday life. It's not easy to be grief-stricken or enraged by something as seemingly minor as a bump in the sidewalk or a tap on the shoulder. It's even harder to be surrounded by people who are baffled by or contemptuous at displays of emotion. For this reason, many of us try to power through bodymind events, despite significant distress. Exposing seeming weakness doesn't play well in academic life. A powerful

example comes from Iris, who told a story about being asked to engage in strenuous walking and climbing during a campus visit. She was asked to do this without warning, in the middle of her visit, despite the fact that she had laid out her access needs well ahead of time:

> At the time, I didn't have a scooter. I said [ahead of time], I need to sit down for my talk. I can't stand for more than five minutes. . . . I can only walk two blocks. I can't walk up hills, [and] I can't climb more than one flight of steps. So you would think those are very straightforward accommodations.

Iris had laid out her access needs via email at the same time that other arrangements, such as travel and lodging, were being made. Despite this careful preparation, she was scheduled to meet with a dean whose office was in a historic building, with no elevator, and situated at the top of a hill. Without mentioning anything about Iris's access requests, the professor guiding Iris led her up the hill. She described the experience:

> To get there, you have to climb a very steep hill, and they didn't say, like, we're going to climb this steep hill. They were like, let's go. And we started walking, and I sort of realized as it, like, what's happen—I'm walking up a hill, what do I do? Do I stop and say, "I won't go a step further (funny voice)!" {Margaret laughs}

As Iris's story shows, events unfolded quickly enough that she was unable to find a point to *stop the flow* and say—as she suggested, humorously—"I won't go a step further!" For those thinking, "Well, *I* would have said something," recall that being a job candidate often means getting into a role of cheerful acceptance for hours or days on end. It's not an easy role from which to break and suddenly have an unexpected opinion, let alone an unexpected access need that will result in being late for the next appointment. Recall, too, that campus visits are typically scheduled at breakneck speed, with little or no time to rest between events (Dadas 2013; Price 2011a). And finally, if you are nondisabled, you probably aren't aware of the level of effort that disabled people already extend just to get through an ordinary day. It's not an easy pattern to break.

Iris continued the story:

> We finally got up the hill, and I was dying. And we get in the building, and they [the professor] head for the steps. (Acting out herself speaking) Is there an elevator? (Acting out other person speaking) Oh no, there's

no elevator. {Margaret: Oh my god.} And that was really, you know, it was a difficult situation. In retrospect, I don't know if I would have handled it differently. They clearly should have, because I mean I climbed the stairs *very* (emphasis) slowly. I got to the, we were meeting with the dean. I was clearly in very poor shape when we got up there. I was out of breath, I was dizzy, I was sort of wavering, you know, and the dean was like, "I could have come downstairs . . . [I could have come to] the department building and met you. You didn't have to come up here." And, you know, it was kinda like, yes, that would have been nice.

I quote Iris's story at length because she narrates so well the experience of being caught in a situation as it unfolds. In such situations, it's extremely difficult to resist the powerful imperative of running on time during a campus visit to say, "I'm not OK. I can't do this." Even if a job were not at stake, it's difficult to intervene in those moments of chronological imperative. Referring again to the earlier discussion of academic time, campus events generally run on "manager's time" (Graham 2009), and slowness is noted and penalized. Iris's planning ahead (another code within the dimension *Time*) had been to no avail.

Most of the "bodymind event" stories I've told have ended without lasting harm. However, sometimes the harm is lasting, even career-ending. This was the case for Whitney, who was misdiagnosed, lost her job, and was rehired with a "demotion" (her term). She explained:

When I was in my late fifties I began having a lot of trouble with cognition. I was very confused working and had memory problems. I felt I was no longer able to write and was having trouble teaching, as well. I went to a neurologist, who diagnosed me with early Alzheimer's disease. He actually gave me psychological tests that supposedly determined this. I was so upset about this that when I went to get my flu shot at work I told two other faculty members I was going to go home and commit suicide. I planned on taking pills. They urged me to call my therapist but did not take any other steps. I did call my therapist, who said that I needed to be hospitalized right away. I was hysterical at the time. I called one of the faculty members, who drove me to the hospital. By the time I got there I was completely calm and felt nothing. It was the psychiatrist at the hospital who said that I did not have Alzheimer's but that my problem was severe depression with some psychosis. He gave me a new kind of medicine, which worked wonders at clearing up my thoughts and my memory issues.

After two weeks of hospitalization, Whitney took a medical leave for the rest of the semester. But when she returned the next semester, she was informed that if she came back, she would lose her tenure and her associate professor title, and she would be rehired as a senior lecturer. This decision was made despite the fact that Whitney had been in close contact with her chair from the time she entered the hospital, and "he told me not to worry about anything, that we would figure it out."

Whitney (and her chair) were left to wonder exactly who had decided to demote her, and on what basis. The initial misdiagnosis and breakdown? The two-week hospitalization? The subsequent semester of medical leave? The precise causes and effects of her demotion were never explained. She outlined the events as she had experienced them:

> After I had the mental breakdown and was at the hospital, my doctor wrote me a letter stating what accommodations I needed. He said that I needed to be able to work part time in order for me to remain mentally stable, that full-time work was too taxing for me. He also specified the importance of managing stress in the work environment. At this time I met with the Human Resources person, a person from the faculty union, the dean of the School of Education, and my boss to determine what accommodations I would get. They did assign me a thirty-hour workweek, which I appreciate, but they also took away my title of associate professor and made me a senior lecturer. I also lost my tenure. The union person disputed this, but he did not win.

Whitney had a single episode of psychosis caused by misdiagnosis and wrong medication. I emphasize this not to imply that those who have repeated episodes of psychosis (like me) shouldn't have academic jobs, but, rather, to emphasize the thinness of Whitney's margin for error. A single crisis caused her to seek help, to accept hospitalization, and to take a legal medical leave. These responses to sudden mental distress are not just casually, but *strenuously*, advised by nearly every institution of higher education in the United States. In other words, Whitney did exactly what she was supposed to do. Yet that single event has been nearly ruinous for her career. She elaborated: "The worst thing, in addition to losing tenure, was being told that if I ever went back to working full time, I would have to earn tenure all over again. It was hard enough the first time, and I have no desire to do this."

This mismanaged process cost Whitney not only her rank, but also a substantial amount of money. She stated later in her interview that, according

to the terms of her pension, she would have to retire soon, at sixty-four, with inadequate funds. And it cost her time.

BELIEVING

Many academics know that disability accommodations can be difficult to put in place. But the extreme delays, and the systemic cruelty, built into the accommodations loop might not be as familiar. Furthermore, even when accommodations are granted fairly readily, they often cannot be used without investing huge chunks of time. For example, in "Time, Speedviewing, and Deaf Academics," Theresa Blankmeyer Burke (2016), a Deaf professor of philosophy, describes the time and effort she dedicated to locating American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters when she was invited to give two talks at two different schools within the same time frame.

> What I cannot predict is how much time to spend on dealing with the universities or other academic organizations. In the case of the two universities [I] mentioned . . . , one took 3 emails to resolve (my detailed request, university response and confirmation, then my response) and the other took close to 200 emails. Contrary to what you might think, the wealthy [Ivy League] university was obstructionist; the impoverished state university, expedient.

Even if both her hosts had been quickly accommodating, Blankmeyer Burke (2016) notes, arranging interpreters is still a time-consuming task and cannot usually be handed off to a proxy (such as a departmental assistant) because "even highly skilled ASL–English interpreters are not fungible." That is, for a philosophy professor like Blankmeyer Burke, interpreters must be well versed not just in general "academic" interpreting, but in interpreting within the discipline of philosophy.

Thus, although accommodations are often referred to as measures that "level the playing field," that metaphor produces a dangerous misrepresentation. Close study of the accommodations loop shows why. The loop is arduous to traverse; must be traversed over and over again; and extracts time, money, effort, and emotional cost. The loop must be traversed by anyone seeking accommodations, whether they are quickly granted or fiercely contested. And, perhaps most important, *the loop is almost always invisible to those not traversing it*. Its travelers continue funding their own accommodations; find a way to manage the constant labor of justifica-

tion and biocertification; or disappear from the system (dropping out, not having contracts renewed, not getting tenure).[4] When a disabled person leaves the university system, their disappearance removes both the need for accommodation and any trace of its history.

Institutional discourses suggest that waiting for an accommodation is a value-neutral event. Maybe it's inconvenient or a little frustrating, but if the accommodation is eventually forthcoming (and if everyone has good intentions), no real harm is done. I argue that we must counter that assumption by recognizing a basic law of crip spacetime: *time can cause harm*. The need to assert and reassert access needs becomes a kind of repetitive stress injury, named by Annika Konrad (2021) "access fatigue."[5] Repetition has received considerable attention in the philosophy of time. Ahmed (2006, 57) points out that "the work of repetition is not neutral work; *it orients the body in some ways rather than others*." Thus, when interviewees referred to the need to negotiate vis-à-vis their disabilities "all the time," they were not describing a mere nuisance. They were describing a drain on their emotional and physical resources, which often led to a drain of professional and financial resources, as well.

Not always, but sometimes, the just response to an inaccessible situation is easy. Not always, but sometimes, the just response is simply to believe another person when they say what they need. An example of this comes from one of Nicola's stories. As a non-tenure-track instructor in the Midwest, Nicola encountered an overheated classroom on a suddenly warm spring day. For many of us, an overheated room is uncomfortable, but in Nicola's case, it was debilitating and dangerous.

> NICOLA: We had this random day where it was like 70 degrees and the heat was turned on in all the buildings, just because it had been like 25, 30 degrees.
>
> MARGARET: That happens up north a lot.
>
> NICOLA: Yeah. And immediately I went to the maintenance guy, and I was like, "Listen. Please, please help me. Like, I can't do this. I'm gonna have to cancel this class." It was a two-hour class. And I, I went in the room and I tried. I mean, the room was like 90 degrees.
>
> MARGARET: Oh god.
>
> NICOLA: And it was nobody's fault. It just, even the students were like, "Wow. It's really hot in here." And within ten minutes, I

couldn't feel my hands and I couldn't feel my feet, which for me is like a sign that things are gonna go south really quick. And I was like, "OK, guys. I need you to get in groups and work on [specific task], and I'll be right back." . . . And like, I just like bolted out of the room and went to maintenance and was like, "Please, please help me. Like, please. Like, I—" And at that point again, like I disclosed. I was like, "Listen. I have MS [multiple sclerosis]. The heat, like, I'm, like, I'm gonna get really sick. Like, please." Like, I mean the guy could tell that I was basically just, like, desperate. I'm like, "I'm gonna have to cancel this class." Like, "I can't. I can't be in this room. I just can't" (laughs). And I think he could tell that I was kinda like on the verge of tears.

MARGARET: Yeah.

NICOLA: And, and he got somebody within, like, ten minutes. The guy showed and he's like, "I just put the [air conditioner] on for you." I was like, "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

In a way, Nicola's story flies in the face of my thesis. I am arguing against individual accommodations as fixes, and this moment—turning on the air-conditioning for one instructor—is certainly an individual accommodation. But in another way, Nicola's story vividly illustrates the importance of access as relational and emergent. The real justice in this situation was not the accommodation itself. Rather, it was that Nicola was listened to and respected, and her sense of urgency was immediately believed. If we responded like that to all inaccessible situations, the usually rigid distinction between "accommodation" and "access" would soften.

Accommodations, as currently practiced in academic workplaces, are predictive moves attached to an individual and designed to make that individual's disability disappear. Access, by contrast, is simply *what you need* in a particular situation as it becomes.

As I write this book, injustices of appalling scale are sweeping the United States and the world, dragged to light and inflamed—but not created—by the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the many declared and undeclared wars, and the escalating frequency of shootings in the United States. In this context, I am moved to reflect that in its twelve years thus far, the Disabled Academics Study has yielded one finding that is more urgent than any other: not only collective action, but *collective accountability*, is the only way forward. Individual accommodations—and by ex-

tension, individual efforts—no matter how warmly granted or skillfully executed, will only lead us further from equity and justice. Collective accountability is not just desirable, but necessary, if we want academic life to change for the better.

The work will take a long time. It will be an ongoing practice, not an event, and I can't predict how it will unfold. But I'll leave you with this one suggestion for breaking out of the accommodations loop, one move toward collective accountability in crip time. The next time someone tells you they need something—anything, any accommodation for any reason—believe them.