MISFITS IN THE WORLD: CULTURE SHIFTING THROUGH CRIP CULTURAL PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on our participation in D/deaf, disability, and mad arts in North America (Turtle Island), this paper introduces and explores how "crip cultural practices," cultural practices born out of disability culture that centre disabled people and our politics, contribute to micro acts of world-making. We begin with a description of how the early days of the pandemic served as a cultural disruptor that challenged us to think about how we gather in arts and culture. Following this, we offer a brief review of how disability studies and disability activism critiques normalcy. Considering how arts and cultural organizations have responded to COVID-19 public health measures, we argue that the sector has largely failed to seek out "crip wisdom" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2016), preventing the transformation of stop-gap pandemic practices into sustainable crip cultural practices. We end with a few key examples that demonstrate how crip cultural practices gesture towards cripped worlds necessary for disabled people's survival.

KEYWORDS

Disability arts; Crip cultural practices; COVID-19; World-making; Necropolitics.

DESAJUSTADOS NO MUNDO: MUDANÇA CULTURAL ATRAVÉS DE PRÁTICAS CULTURAIS ALEIJADAS

RESUMO

Baseadas na nossa participação em artes S/surdas, deficientes e loucas da América do Norte (Ilha Tartaruga), este artigo apresenta e explora como as "práticas culturais aleijadas", práticas culturais nascidas da cultura da deficiência que centralizam as pessoas com deficiência e nossa política, contribuem para atos de construção de mundos. Começamos com uma descrição de como os primeiros dias da pandemia serviram como uma disrupção cultural que nos desafiou a pensar sobre como nos reunimos nas artes e na cultura. Em seguida, oferecemos uma breve revisão de como os estudos sobre deficiência e o ativismo sobre deficiência criticam a normalidade. Considerando como as organizações artísticas e culturais responderam às medidas de saúde pública da Covid-19, argumentamos que o setor falhou amplamente em buscar a "sabedoria aleijada" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2016), impedindo a transformação de práticas pandêmicas temporárias em práticas culturais aleijadas sustentáveis. Terminamos com alguns exemplos-chave que demonstram como as práticas culturais aleijadas gesticulam em direção a mundos aleijados necessários para a sobrevivência das pessoas com deficiência.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Artes da deficiência; Práticas culturais aleijadas; COVID-19; Criação de mundos; Necropolítica.

INADAPTÉS DANS LE MONDE: CHANGEMENT CULTUREL À TRAVERS LES PRATIQUES CULTURELLES DISCAPACITÉES

RÉSUMÉ

Sur la base de notre engagement dans les arts pour les sourds, les personnes handicapées et les personnes atteintes de troubles mentaux en Amérique du Nord (Turtle Island), cet article présente et explore comment les "pratiques handiculturelles", issues de la culture du handicap et centrées sur les personnes handicapées et notre politique, contribuent à des micro-gestes de construction du monde. Nous commençons par une description de la manière dont les premiers jours de la pandémie ont été une perturbation culturelle telle qu'elle nous a poussés à réfléchir à la manière dont nous nous retrouvons dans les arts et la culture. Ensuite, nous proposons une brève revue de la manière dont les études sur le handicap et le militantisme en faveur des handicapés critiquent la normalité. En considérant comment les organisations artistiques et culturelles ont réagi aux mesures de santé publique liées à la Covid-19, nous argumentons que le secteur a largement échoué à rechercher la "sagesse du handicap" (LAKSHMI PIEPZNA-SAMARASINHA, 2016), empêchant ainsi la transformation des pratiques pandémiques temporaires en pratiques culturelles handicapées durables. Nous terminons par quelques exemples clés qui démontrent comment les pratiques culturelles handicapées tendent vers des mondes handicapés nécessaires à la survie des personnes handicapées.

MOTS-CLÉS

Arts du handicap; Pratiques culturelles discapacitées; COVID-19; Création de mondes; Nécropolitique.

DESAJUSTADOS EN EL MUNDO: CAMBIO CULTURAL A TRAVÉS DE PRÁCTICAS CULTURALES CRIP

RESUMEN

Basándonos en nuestra participación en las artes de personas sordas, discapacitadas y locas de América del Norte (Isla Tortuga), este artículo presenta y explora cómo "las prácticas culturales crip", prácticas culturales nacidas de la cultura de la discapacidad que ponen en el centro a las personas con discapacidad y nuestra política, contribuyen a la construcción de mundos. Comenzamos con una descripción de cómo los primeros días de la pandemia sirvieron como una interrupción cultural que nos desafió a pensar en cómo nos reunimos alrededor de las artes y la cultura. A continuación, ofrecemos una breve revisión de cómo los estudios sobre discapacidad y el activismo en torno a la discapacidad critican la normalidad. Considerando cómo las organizaciones artísticas y culturales respondieron a las medidas de salud pública de la Covid-19, argumentamos que en su mayoría el sector falló al buscar la "sabiduría crip" (LAKSHMI PIEPZNA-SAMARASINHA, 2016), impidiendo la transformación de prácticas pandémicas temporales en prácticas culturales crip sostenibles. Concluimos con algunos ejemplos clave que demuestran cómo las prácticas culturales crip apuntan hacia mundos discapacitados necesarios para la supervivencia de las personas con discapacidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Arte de la discapacidad; Prácticas culturales crip; COVID-19; Creación de mundos; Necropolítica.

Drawing on our ongoing participation in disability arts, specifically in North America (Turtle Island), this article contributes to disciplinary discussions of how disability communities take up access as a political and relational practice. We attend to the specific ways that access practices in the arts, particularly throughout the pandemic, have the potential to transform culture consistent with disabled people's anti-assimilationist politics (HAMRAIE, 2017, p. 8). We begin by briefly foregrounding disability, D/deaf, and mad studies' and communities' critiques of calls to "return to normalcy" throughout the pandemic as a way of moving past this global health emergency. These calls reveal how deeply normative culture is entrenched in systems, structures, and practices of normalcy, including ways of relating, that are built on ableism. We highlight academic-activist efforts to develop and preserve cultural practices that prioritize disability rather than returning to normalcy, practices that are meant to be sustained rather than serving as stop-gap measures. Turning to focus on disability arts and cultural practices, we introduce the concept "crip cultural practices," a praxis that brings together Garland-Thomson's notion of the "misfit" (2011), Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's concept of "crip wisdom" (2016), and Hamraie's (2017) framework of "critical access" into conversation with disability culture's innovative practices for art making. Working with examples of relaxed performances (RPs) (LAMARRE *et al.*, 2019; 2020; 2021; RICE *et al.*, 2021b; JONES *et al.*, 2021b; JONES *et al.*, accepted) and remote access dance parties (GOTKIN *et al.*, 2020), we end with a discussion of how crip cultural practices enact micro acts of world-making that may or may not influence broad-based systemic change but are nevertheless necessary for our survival as misfits.

For many D/deaf, mad, and disabled people,[5] disrupting normative culture is intentional for our survival. Such intentional disruptions speak back to the ways disabled people are narrated and treated as disposable within the very culture that, at times, seeks to assimilate us through depoliticized projects of inclusion (KOVESI, 2019; RICE, *et al.,* 2015; RICE *et al.*, 2021a; WILLIAMSON, 2019). Resisting assimilation, disabled people often regard the "misfit" between our bodies, minds, senses, and emotions and the world of built environments, institutions, and systems as an opportunity for world-making (GARLAND-THOMSON, 2011; HENDREN, 2020; RICE *et al.*, 2021a; RICE *et al.*, 2021e; RICE *et al.*, in press). Garland-Thomson's (2011) idea of the "misfit" "elaborates a materialist feminist understanding of disability by extending a consideration of how the particularities of embodiment interact with the environment in its broadest sense, to include both its spatial and temporal aspects" (p. 591). She continues, "the

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[5] Henceforth, we refer to communities of D/deaf, mad, and disabled people using the identity-first and people-first language of "disabled people" and "people with disabilities" as umbrella terms for the purpose of readability. We use specific terms to refer to D/deaf or mad communities as necessary.

interrelated dynamics of fitting and misfitting constitutes a particular aspect of world-making involved in material-discursive becoming" (p. 591). Hendren (2020) mobilizes Garland-Thomson's concept to explore how disabled embodiments and the way we misfit in a world that was not built for us occasions an opportunity for imagination and innovativeness. Hendren argues that attending to the dynamic of the misfit through collaboration and co-design can lead to the production of one-size-fits-one objects, such as a podium built for curator Amanda Cachia, a Little Person (2020, p. 20), or the design of D/deaf spaces such as seating for easy in-the-round signing communication in a dormitory at Gallaudet University (2020, p. 17). We follow Garland-Thomson and Hendren together with Mingus's (2011) critique of how inclusion appeals to normalcy to think with the potentiality of "crip cultural practices" that have emerged from the disability community throughout the pandemic as micro acts of world-making.

Part of how we respond to misfitting is through conceptualizing, practicing, and "building access" (HAMRAIE, 2017). Different from taking up access as a straight-forward logistic concern, disability arts communities engage access through the iterative praxis of creating and sustaining innovative cultural practices that presence disabled people and our politics in public and private spaces (CHANDLER *et al.,* 2021; COLLINS *et al.,* 2022; HAMRAIE, 2017; JONES *et al.,* 2021b; JONES *et al.*, accepted; PAPALIA, 2018; RICE *et al.,* 2021c). As we discuss here, when taken up as a relational process, access helps us engage in micro acts of world-making that may not change the world or create a new one but is nonetheless necessary for our survival. By "micro-acts of world-making" we mean material instances where access needs, dreams, and intimacies are realized despite an ableist environment. As Indigenous writers such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Mississauga Nishnaabeg) (2017) have described, everyday practices, such as emotions, embodied experiences, ways of making knowledge, reality, and relationships, and building access (re)enact and (re)encode our worldviews, rendering material our values and knowledge systems. Depending on our worldviews, such enacting and encoding could reproduce hegemony, as is the case when access is practiced in ways that attempt to smooth over the differences that disability makes. However, when we rethink and remake the everyday through critical praxis that emerges from a lineage of decolonizing, abolitionist, transformative, feminist, and disability justice movements, worldviews can become rich sites for decolonial — and we add, crip — praxis in which everyday practices become acts of micro acts of world-making. For instance, when we practice access through a commitment to disruption access can be used to re-make the world, even fleetingly, rather than confirm hegemonic value and knowledge systems (RICE *et al.*, 2022; JONES *et al.*, 2021b; JONES *et al.*, under review; SHANNON, 2020). Our notion of micro world-making is also guided by Klein and Noeth's (2011) argument that the "world" is neither fixed nor given but in a constant process of creation, "made when actions and language bring forth [new] meanings" and new materialities (p. 8). Worldmaking, they assert, does not refer to "one world"; rather, "different way[s] of worldmaking provoke different, interlocking worlds" (p. 8).

PRACTICING NORMALCY THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

The end of the world is a beginning.
Saidya Hartman, 2020

When the world changed seemingly overnight in March 2020, many disabled people in the Canadian disability arts community had a shared reaction. Suddenly, amid a global health crisis and fears of an overwhelmed healthcare system, our vulnerability increased. As disabled people whose unfilled access needs are often brushed aside with the empty, forever deferring statement "change takes time," we paid attention to the rapid cultural shift that took place — that we participated in — in the wake of lockdowns. Suddenly, for example, it became possible, mandatory even, to work from home or have a virtual book tour when previously disabled people were told that these accommodations were not feasible. As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on and its end is difficult to predict, many disabled and otherwise marginalized people are thinking deeply and collaboratively about how we can mobilize "crip wisdom" here, at the "end of the world," to create a new beginning (LAKSHMI PIEPZNA-SAMARASINHA, 2016; 2022; MINGUS, 2022; HARTMAN, 2020). The pandemic, as many have noted, is revealing on a grand public scale the inequities that many of us have privately and communally endured LAKSHMI PIEPZNA-SAMARASINHA, 2016; 2022; MINGUS, 2022). Despite these revelations, a reckless charge to "return to normal" reverberates across public discourse (BRAND 2020; CALDWELL, 2021). Offering an early critique of this desire, novelist and former Poet Laureate of the City of Toronto, Dionne Brand (2020, July 4) wrote, "I have never used [the word normal] with any confidence in the first place; now I find it noxious. The repetition of 'when things return to normal' as if that normal, was not in contention" (p. 2).

Normalcy has long been a contentious notion in disability studies and the disability justice movement. Davis (2017), Titchkosky and Michalko (2009), and other disability studies scholars call attention to how the legitimation of normalcy necessitates the construction of its opposite, abnormalcy, a social category that is often filled in by disabled people along with others who embody difference, such as racialized or aging people. In her pivotal definition of ableism, Kumari Campbell (2008) articulates how the dynamic between normalcy and abnormalcy produces an understanding of disability as a "diminished state of being human" (p.

44), a framing that justifies discrimination, state-sanctioned barriers, and violence (e.g., the lack of accessible and affordable housing), and, as the pandemic has revealed, unequal distribution of life chances (IGNAGNI *et al.*, 2021; RICE *et al.*, 2022; MINGUS, 2022). For example, as many disability, fat, and racial justice activists have noted, the triage protocols established in hospitals to treat patients with severe Covid-19 reveals how some lives are valued over others (HEDDLES, 2020; LUNSKY, 2021; RICE *et al.*, 2021c). Offering a particularly heinous, though unfortunately not uncommon example of the biopolitics of COVID-19, Lydia Brown (as quoted in Heddles, 2020) recounts reported instances in which personal ventilators were taken from disabled ventilator users and given to non-disabled COVID-19 patients during ventilator shortages in hospitals in Texas, United States.

Within the disability community, discrimination, barriers, and the violences of normalcy are attenuated by differential experiences of race, class, gender, and colonialism. An intersectional lens clarifies the ways that disability is in conversation with the other identities that we embody and live through (CHANDLER, 2019; RICE *et al.*, 2015). Some examples of this are found in how historical and ongoing systemic racism and medical abuses experienced by “disadvantaged, marginalized, Mad and enslaved Black women” have led to a mistrust of the healthcare system and barriers to services (SWAIN, 2019). We can also think of how settler-colonialism has created conditions whereby “settler imposition of political and economic regimes [...] have produced high degrees of debility and disability among Indigenous peoples” (RICE; DION; CHANDLER, 2021d citing PUAR, 2017, p. 17–20), and how in these pandemic times, some disabled people remain isolated in continuous lockdown (LUNSKY, 2021; RICE *et al.*, 2021c) while others are disproportionately put at higher-risk because they are unable to “shelter in place” per public health orders due to precarious housing or their status as “essential workers” (NUNEZ, as cited by McRUER, 2021). As these examples demonstrate, attending to the different experiences and life and death chances disabled people have through the lens of intersectionality means recognizing that appealing to normalcy will always mean leaving many disabled people behind. In a pointed critique of normalcy, Mingus (2011) writes, “We need to think of access with an understanding of disability justice, moving away from an equality-based model of sameness and ‘we are just like you’ to a model of disability that embraces difference, confronts privilege, and challenges what is considered ‘normal’ on every front. We don’t want to simply join the ranks of the privileged; we want to dismantle those ranks and the systems that maintain them” (p. 5).

As we are writing this piece, in late 2022, we are living through a time in which the violent impacts that follow a desire for normalcy are particularly acute. To situate ourselves temporally, during the early months of the pandemic we began to think about the possibilities that the "break from normalcy" as a result of public health measures could (have) usher(ed) in. Alongside our very real anxieties about how crip necropolitics (IGNAGNI *et al.*, 2021; RICE *et al.*, 2022) might play out in the pandemic, we were hopeful that the cultural practices many mainstream art galleries and cultural centres were embracing in their online pivot, such as live streaming, free events and other practices that make the arts more accessible to our communities, would be sustained. Now, over two years later, our optimism is waning. At the time of writing, the most recent example of public demand to "return to normal" in Canada was the right-wing celebrated and funded Truckers Freedom Convoy that occupied the country's capital city, Ottawa, and the areas surrounding its federal parliament buildings for several weeks. The so-called Freedom Convoy also occupied the Ambassador Bridge, a major Canadian-American trade and transportation artery between Windsor, Ontario and Detroit, Michigan between January 29th and February 21st, 2022 (MUSSELL, 2022). The Convoy's white leadership rallied its mostly white supporters, many of whom expressed or associated with racist and white-supremacist views, by making claims that equated "freedom" with the interests of white, masculinist, non-disabled people and erased the ongoing harms of lifting mask mandates to disabled, racialized, and aging communities (DYSART, 2022; LENNARD, 2022). These occupations clarify that at this point in the pandemic, the political drive to return to normal is a eugenic one which will almost certainly continue to isolate disabled people and let us die (KELLY *et al.*, accepted; KELLY *et al.*, 2021; FOUCAULT, 1978). Although media coverage framed these occupations as fringe disruptors, public policy was soon to follow suit. Less than a month after the Convoy was removed from Ottawa, the provincial government lifted mask mandates and capacity restrictions. To varying degrees, organizations and institutions, including those in the cultural sector, are abandoning their pandemic practices, many of which were also accessibility practices, as demonstrative of their rush to return to normal.

We note that this desire for normalcy is evidenced in aesthetic choices as we watch people throw away their masks, peel up the social distancing decals affixed to floors, and put out signs in front of office buildings announcing that it is time to replace our sweatpants with 'professional' attire. As members of disability communities who are invested in Ranciere's (2004) notion that aesthetics reflect the world and gesture towards new worldly arrangements, we are interested in how these aesthetic decisions might forecast future tolerances about sensorial reminders of sickness and disease, including reminders in the form of disabled people, crip aesthetics, and crip cultural practices (CHANDLER *et al.*, 2018). On a broad scale, the pandemic has revealed how deeply normative culture invests in its own reproduction and subsequently, the vulnerability and ephemerality of otherwise worldmaking on a grand scale under late capitalism, which acts on states to entrench the power relations from which it benefits. In these conditions, micro-worlding might be our best and only hope to enact cultural transformation, even fleetingly, in service of our surviving the apocalypse (LAKSHMI PIEPZNA-SAMARASINHA, 2016). Indeed, similar to Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor's (2008) term "survivance" to signify Indigenous artists' creative work of surviving resisting, and remembering the ongoing colonial apocalypse, we might consider disabled communities as engaging in our own artistic-activist praxis of "survivance", one that creates moments of micro-worlding.

ACCESSING THE ARTS THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

Our interest in how we as misfits practice access as micro acts of world-making became concretized early in the pandemic when we began our publicly-funded community-engaged research project, *Accessing the arts: Centring disability politics in access and design (ATA)* (PI Author A). Conceived of prior to the pandemic, and working with Hamraie's (2017) assertion that access can both be practiced critically and be the subject of critique, ATA proposed to work with disabled artists, curators, and art enthusiasts to explore how access practices change, and new access practices emerge, when they are led by and for disability communities and centre anti-assimilationist crip politics (BERNE, 2015; HAMRAIE, 2017; HAMRAIE; FRITSCH, 2019; JIMMY, 2020; MINGUS, 2011; PAPALIA, 2018). We took up research questions about how disability communities experience access in the arts, and would like to experience access in the arts, through a theoretical framework informed by Hamraie's (2017) notion that access should be taken up critically and always have the potential to be a critical project. We explored these questions through interviews, focus groups, and arts-based workshops in community to understand how D/deaf, disabled, and mad people currently experience access and "access frictions" (HAMRAIE, 2017; HAMRAIE; FRITSCH, 2019) in the arts and their 'access dreams' for how they would like to experience access in the future. We oriented our questions and workshop prompts to encourage participants to consider access not only as a set of straight-forward logistics invested in inclusion, but also as directed towards generating new possibilities for creating and experiencing arts and culture. As it turned out, many of our research participants were skilled in practicing access towards anti-assimilationist ends. Creative Users Projects (CUP), our community partners on this project, were in the process of building a digital platform through which disabled people could search for accessible arts events across Canada[6].

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[6] To see a prototype of this platform, please visit: https://creativeusers.net/accessing-the-arts/. Access in: set. 7, 2023.

And so, these initial conversations informed curriculum for co-design workshops. In these co-design workshops, which took place in the second phase of this workshop, CUP engaged disabled artists in activities through which they elaborated on their access dreams as they worked together to shape the user experience for this new digital platform, providing real-world applications for these speculative conversations.

Since we held our focus groups in the early months of the pandemic, responses to prompts about how we and our co-researcher participants currently experienced access in the arts and how we would like to experience access in the future were attenuated by circumstances we could never have predicted. For instance, conversations largely focused on the "digital pivot" we were experiencing across the arts sector as the sector shifted its programming to digital platforms, such as Zoom, as shelter-in-place orders demanded that we stay home, even though not all of us could due to circumstances such as housing insecurity and work precarity (e.g., working as an 'essential worker' without access to paid sick days or income replacement programs (NUNEZ, as cited by McRUER, 2021). The digital pivot and the (disability) cultural practices it solicited created opportunities for disabled people to access cultural events remotely, something that many of us have long desired to expand our access to culture. However, these practices often failed to reach their full crip potential. For example, speaking to how they were accessing the arts in the early phase of the pandemic, co-researcher participants noted live streamed events often failed to include other standard access features, such as American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, captioning, and audio description. Noting a loss of potential, they also pointed out that these events were not promoted specifically to the D/deaf, disability, and mad communities through CUP's disability cultural listserv, *Network Connector*, and were not described as disability or crip-friendly events. This is significant given that our ATA research with disability communities about how they access the arts revealed that because normative culture reinforces the idea that the arts are not for us, "many D/deaf and disabled people simply assume that artistic experiences are not for them" (2021, p. 8). Participants also referenced how many events missed the opportunity to program D/deaf, disabled, and mad artists in their new online venues, which held the potential to be more accessible[7] than their physical spaces. Evidently, live streamed events, which before the pandemic were standard accessibility practices within the D/deaf and disability arts sector, were being taken up as *pandemic* practices rather than *crip* practices.

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[7] It is important to note that although online events may be more accessible to some, many people did not have access to computers and smart devices, particularly when public and university libraries were closed early in the pandemic, and many do not have access to internet bandwidth, particularly Indigenous people living in Northern communities on Turtle Island.

“RELAXING THE RULES”: PANDEMIC CULTURAL PRACTICES TO CRIP CULTURAL PRACTICES

Ignagni *et al.* (2020) distinguish between “pandemic time,” the way we experience time in the pandemic, and crip time, a challenge to normative and normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling (KAFER, 2013, p. 27). Following this distinction, we orient to pandemic practices as those taken up as an urgent response to what is hoped to be a temporary crisis rather than as a sustained commitment to re-routing normative practices towards the goal of making culture more hospitable to those who are routinely and systemically elided under normative cultural rules. Reflecting on this distinction makes it clear to us that while some of us were approaching the cultural break that the pandemic offered as an opportunity to institute practices which otherwise changed how we (mis)fit in the world, others were orienting to them as stop-gap measures to hold us over until we could return to business as usual. Parsing out how notions of normalcy are embedded within the recognition of an “emergency” and desires for normalcy’s return prompts emergency responses, Ellcessor writes, “The core ideological work of emergency, reinforced through its constant [technological] mediation, is to uphold the existence of a “normal” state of affairs and to offer a path to restore such normalcy. Of course, such normalcy is not universally available; insofar as emergency is defined in terms of normalcy, it entrenches and extends inequalities that marginalize the many who are the most vulnerable” (2022, p. 5). We see this play out in the recognition and responses to the emergency of the pandemic: when the pandemic threatens normalcy, it is recognized as an emergency, and the response to this emergency is motivated by a desire to return to normalcy rather than to create something new. Stop-gap measures are created to approximate normalcy, including whom and how it excludes, until its return. Within this context, micro-worldmaking by and for disabled people in the form of cultural practices that emerge in (or acquire new relevance within) the emergency of the pandemic which do not replicate normalcy and are meant to be sustained after the pandemic ends are understood as unnecessarily subversive or complicated at best and aesthetic signifiers of sickness at worse. Building on the potential of these emergency responses that resist normative and assimilatory logic, our research took interest in how transformative “crip cultural practices” might use the disruption of normalcy to create something new.

One of the ways cultural producers could have turned pandemic practices into crip practices would have been to integrate relaxed performances (RP) principles into their live streamed events. RP, a practice common within disability culture, particularly neurodivergent culture, invites audiences to be in the theatre space in ways that disrupt normative conventions by “relaxing the rules” (GREEN, 2019; LAMARRE *et al.*, 2021, p. 189). Audiences are invited to arrive late, leave, return, talk aloud, move about, and do whatever they do when we let "bodies be bodies" (LAMARRE *et al.*, 2021; LAMARRE *et al.*, 2019; LAMARRE *et al.*, 2020). Productions using RP principles typically incorporate modifications, such as dimming lights, reducing sound levels, and creating a "chill out space" for people to escape sensory overload (LAMARRE *et al.*, 2021). Since the pandemic, many people have attended live streamed events from private spaces, such as their homes or even their beds — spaces where people commonly feel relaxed. As such, live steamed events have the potential to become RPs. To turn live-streamed performances into RPs and invite audience members and artists and performers to experience them as such, cultural producers could modify specific production elements, such as eliminate loud noises and flashing lights, provide trigger and content warnings, invite audiences to arrive late, leave early, take breaks, and be however they need to be in their body to experience the event comfortably. Cultural producers could also advertise their events as RPs to D/deaf, disability, and mad communities; explaining to audiences what RPs are and their affordances; and, of course, adding in other accessibility elements, such as ASL interpretation and audio description, as our co-researcher participants noted. Moreover, Zoom links for events, especially those administered through Eventbrite, often became deactivated after an event started, disallowing for late arrivals and for moving in and out of a space freely, which comprises a key feature of RPs. These restrictions, along with curators' and producers' failure to centre disabled people, seek out disability leadership, and recognize the potential to shift pandemic practices into crip practices, removed the critical potential for RPs to take place and left out many people who could have produced and experienced artistic events.

When we discussed the missed opportunity for artists and cultural producers to make their pandemic practices accessible during our ATA focus groups, many participants expressed their frustration over disabled people not being consulted when, essentially, artists and producers were trying to make their programming *accessible* to this new way of being in the world that we were all getting used to. Recognizing that these sentiments expressed a collective frustration, the ATA Research Report (2021) notes, "many focus group participants expressed the surreal experience of seeing the issue of accessibility becoming mainstream, yet still being left out of the conversation, leaving them feeling extra-marginalized" (p. 8). As one participant observed in a focus group, "seeing how things disabled folks have fought for, for years, have been co-opted and used against us" is discouraging. Another shared,

> I've been saying repeatedly for the past two months [...] disabled folks know how to deal with this kind of thing. And we can bring it back to art as well, just like any of the relaxed performance techniques or having a live stream of shows you could witness from home if access to public transit or leaving the home is a barrier, there's so many things that within the disability community we have been suggesting for so long.

During a time when crip wisdom is so clearly called for and needed, participants noted their frustration at experiencing the cooptation of crip practices while simultaneously having their crip wisdom invisibilized and subsequently not sought after in the form of paid work, consultancy or otherwise. Moreover, orienting to the cultural practices that emerged during the pandemic as temporary, particularly as the pandemic is over for some (those invested in the return of normalcy who can do so with little consequence) but not for all (including disabled people who cannot risk getting sick due to our embodiments, health conditions, and experiences of medical ableism) reinforces Ellcessor's notion that what constitutes an emergency is deeply entwined with a hegemonic determination of human value (p. 3–4). If mediated emergency measures respond to and are shaped by a potential loss of what "we" value as a culture, then witnessing pandemic practices as wholly temporary reinforces crip necropolitics. We see evidence of this when public-facing leaders, such as a Director of the Centre for Disease Control, remark on how it is "encouraging news" that disabled people are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic to bolster support for loosening emergency measures (WALENSKY, 2022). The necropolitics of the pandemic — what Mingus reference to as "eugenic abandonment" becomes impossible to deny (2022, p. 2). Now more than ever we need to hold onto our crip micro-worlds to carve out spaces of safety as we navigate the cultural charge towards normalcy.

CRIP CULTURAL PRACTICES

As we explore the ways our pathways to accessing the arts are changing throughout the pandemic and track the adverse consequences of neglecting to take leadership from disabled people and our collective crip wisdom, we are beginning to attend to the impact of practicing access through a distinctly political disability cultural perspective. Without crip wisdoms and perspectives, as the example of live streaming without RP demonstrates, the efficacy of access practices can be compromised, particularly when the focus and investment in access is on making things "better for all" over disrupting normative culture in order to make it more hospitable to disabled people, or create new cultural enclaves altogether (HAMRAIE, 2017).

As we reflected on our conversations with D/deaf, disabled, and mad artists and arts-enthusiasts in relation to our collective experiences of pandemic practices failing to meet their full crip potential, we began to consider the vital ways that "crip wisdom" (LAKSHMI PIEPZNA-SAMARASINHA, 2016), a desire for disability (CHANDLER, 2018), and crip ingenuity shape how access is practiced and to what ends. Further to this, the way that cultural organizations took up access through the pandemic — as temporary, as stop-gap — revealed how committed we as a culture are to maintaining the normative order of things. For, even when circumstances force us to do things differently, we find ways to use access to grab hold of the normative culture that is slipping away from us. Practicing access through an anti-assimilationist and abolitionist politic in service of creating otherwise worlds does not come as easily as we may have hoped. We now understand that disability leadership or, as it is more likely to play out, consultations, may not be enough to assuage the powerful drive towards normalcy in the midst of a normative culture that is set up to reproduce itself: all the planning for RPs we can muster will not matter if the event host forgets to read out the guidelines, or if Eventbrite does not allow one to receive the Zoom link after the event has started. These realizations prompted us to consider just how radical our approaches to, practices of, and hopes for access really are. Not simply different ways of practicing access, our anti-assimilationist and abolitionist access practices commit to building access informed by a crip/ped worldview that encodes/enacts access practices led by crip wisdom, intentionality, and desire, and surrounded and supported by other practices from inside disability communities, such as access check-ins and plans to address inevitable "access frictions" that occur (HAMRAIE; FRITSCH, 2019; HAMRAIE, 2017). We came to realize that what we had been thinking about as access practices were, in fact, *crip cultural practices*.

Crip cultural practices are practices that emerge from D/deaf, disability, and mad communities that centre D/deaf, disabled, and mad people and crip wisdom, and that mobilize our anti-assimilationist politics. They are cornerstones within crip culture and aim to influence and shape normative culture to make it more hospitable to disabled, D/deaf, and mad people in micro-acts of crip-worldmaking. Crip cultural practices include access practices that are taken up critically through an anti-assimilationist and abolitionist politic, rendering material a crip knowledge and value system, and focusing on disruption over achieving inclusion. In this way, crip cultural practices contribute to micro acts of world-making through a crip perspective and are affirming in their reminder that another world is possible, even if that other world cannot be sustained amidst current conditions of domination. Our next section gives an example of crip cultural practices enacted.

CRITICAL DISTANCE CENTRE FOR CURATORS' *PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION*

In September 2020 the Critical Distance Centre for Curators (CDCC) in Toronto, Canada introduced Public Displays of Affection (PDA), an online workshop series exploring accessible arts publishing practices "that considers the pleasures, desires, and disruptions of making arts publishing initiatives more accessible" (2020). Their first event, a panel discussion called "Crip Culture and Digital Experiments," featured Jessa Agilo, Aimi Hamraie and Yo-Yo Lin in discussion with Lindsay Fisher of CUP. In their remarks, Hamraie reminded the audience that though the experiential knowledge and creativity found within D/deaf and disability communities, access has always been connected to crip wisdom and has often generated micro-acts of world-making. Hamraie (2020) spoke about how, working across numerous mediums, disabled people have always invented tools and pathways to accessibility — from participating in social movements, to creating architectural access, to acting as artists and inventors, some without any formal training (HAMRAIE, 2020; HAMRAIE; FRITSCH, 2019; HAMRAIE, 2017). Inventive acts of world-making and access creation which are then taken up by non-disabled people often go unrecognized as originating from crip wisdom; yet despite this, crip wisdom and micro-worlding persist.

Building on this history of access creation to focus on ways disabled people have developed access practices in the early stages of the COVID-19 lockdowns, Hamraie discussed how the Critical Design Lab (CDL), an online network developed by them and other disabled designers, started to host *Remote Access: A Crip Nightlife Gathering*. *Remote Access* is an online space for crip nightlife events "with opportunities for playful and participatory ways of producing access as a collective cultural practice" (CRITICAL DESIGN LAB, 2020). The Zoom-based open-ended series showcases various ways that disabled people have "long used remote access as a method for organizing pleasure and kinship," and features DJ Who Girl (Kevin Gotkin) and artworks from *PDA* panelist Yo-Yo Lin (GOTKIN; HICKMAN; HAMRAIE, 2020).

During the panel, Taiwanese-American interdisciplinary new media and performance artist Yo-Yo Lin described her disability art practice as exploring "the possibilities of human connection in the context of emerging, embodied technologies" through animation, interactive objects, and sound design (LIN, PDA, 2020). Her *Resilience Journals* examine the invisible "soft" data points of illness experience, and her *Rotations* series centres body sonification and impairment-generated dance. Through computer animation software, coding, and webcams, Lin seeks out the different ways that a body can be rendered digitally "to see if [she] can glitch the body in digital spaces" (LIN; PDA, 2020). In Lin's work, digital connectivity issues, such as the lag and the glitch, are conceptualized as inherent in disability culture and life. For *Remote Access*, Lin described how she collaborates with Gotkin to create different performance videos. In these collaborations, she mixes videos of Gotkin with videos of herself moving across the computer desktop, where she applies layering and glitching to accompany a track by Gotkin about the "glitch" as a disability aesthetic (LIN; PDA, 2020). Referring to the piece as a "joyful performance," Lin's work "crips" computer aesthetics for the community (LIN; PDA, 2020). She focuses on building spaces where there is no shame in lateness and leaving — just time to be (LIN; PDA, 2020). By simultaneously questioning and offering new ideas about space making, and what that means in both physical and digital realms, and across time zones and borders, Lin's art practice works to presence and bridge gaps of isolation while creating new worlds to inhabit (LIN; PDA, 2020).

During this discussion, Lin and Hamraie spoke to relationality as they described how, while growing up, they were able to connect to disability community through the internet, and that within this community, the digital can take on crip meanings and sensibilities, becoming about collaboration, interdependence, flexibility, difference, and connection (PDA, 2020). Hamraie discussed how working to maintain balance and slowness within the digital realm can mediate the toxic and/or exhausting elements found therein. They explained how the frictions between bodies, technology, and the political can create an ambivalent relationship with technology for D/deaf and disabled people, as the flipside of digital access is digital surveillance through data collection and standardization (PDA, 2020). Neither wholly emancipatory nor exclusively oppressive, digital spaces can become a site of micro worldmaking and a tool and a portal for crip community. Lin spoke about how crips who have experienced displacement before and during the pandemic find a pathway to connect through the digital; and that connection is life-saving and life-giving (PDA, 2020). Pre-figurative art and design practices such as Hamraie and Lin's that centre crip wisdom and the misfit in access creation forge deeply necessary pathways of imagining/knowing being-in-the-world differently; imaginings and relationalities which can then manifest in digital and material spaces.

The PDA series took interest in how disability-led accessible publishing practices, which we would call crip cultural practices, disrupt and change existing structures and practices. The artists and designers who were part of this panel took this as an opportunity to think about how "access as a collective cultural practice" as taken up by and within disability communities during the pandemic are creating new possibilities for connection and intimacy in the midst of isolation — as disabled people have always done. Lin's *Rotation* series provides a rich example of the creativity and aesthetics emerging through the digital communities we are creating and living through as she leans into the tech disruptions of Zoom and other digital platforms, using them to generate new crip aesthetics. Moving towards these glitches reminds us that Zoom and other technologies do not need to work perfectly to be useful in a non-assimilationist and non-normative sense.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we demonstrate how access has always been engaged within disability communities as a relational and political practice. The access practice of relaxed performance, for example, is both relational in how it is built upon considerations of how bodies come together in support and frictions and is political in the way that they focus on carving out space wherein difference is anticipated and desired. However, when cultural producers take practices of relaxed performance order to make spaces more inclusive but without a disability politic for disruption and anti-assimilation, disabled people can become de-centred. One example is when relaxed performances invite parents and toddlers to make noise and move about without the inclusion of a sign language interpreter or audio describer. Differently, when access is taken up as a crip cultural practice, that is, generated by crip wisdom and directed towards disruption and transformation over inclusion, it can build spaces and possibilities for relating to and knowing disability and embodied difference differently.

Disability communities have long practiced access under capitalism and have attributed the failure of crip world-making to influence transformation on a grand scale to capitalist domination. And so, when the pandemic seemed to grind normative ways of being to a halt, we were hopeful that disability-led cultural practices would contribute to reshaping culture. And in some ways, they were. But again, and as Hamraie points out (2017; 2020), these practices have been co-opted and unrecognized as originating from crip wisdom and cripistemologies (JOHNSON; McRUER, 2014), thwarting worldmaking efforts and possibilities. Indeed, at this stage of the pandemic, in 2022, the drive to return to normalcy at all costs, including engaging in crip necropolitics, letting disabled people die and remain isolated and institutionalized as the rest of the world “re-opens,” means we cannot afford to turn away from crip-worlding. As futile as it may seem, we think that, and have experienced how, crip cultural practices can continue to “create safety in an insecure world” (BAUMAN, 2000, p. 7) within crip enclaves and fleeting interactions wherein a desire for disability overrides a desire for normalcy. And we must persist, as we have always done, in influencing our allies to take these practices and our cripistemologies into the spaces within ableist worlds, together creating moments of micro crip-worlding wherein misfits can survive.

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