2

Imagining Otherwise
The Ephemeral Spaces of Envisioning New Meanings

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Over the past thirty years in Canada, disability rights movements have made critically important interventions into the oppression of disabled people in diverse sectors of society by striving to guarantee that many people with disabilities have better access to human and equality rights. Although disability advocates working with and as judges, lawmakers, and other decision makers have broken down barriers preventing the fuller, more equitable participation of people with disabilities in Canadian society, many acknowledge that much work still needs to be done to bring disability experiences, and more complex accountings of those experiences, into decision-making processes across all spheres of communal life. In this chapter, we open creative and artistic avenues for discussing and desiring disability rights, and diversity in those rights, as our contribution to a conversation that so often tends toward imagining rights in strictly bureaucratic, standardizing, and normalizing terms.

The artistic and creative avenues we address centre on the participatory arts-based methods of digital storytelling and digital stories (three- to four-minute self-reflexive films) produced in the communal spaces of Envisioning New Meanings of Disability and Difference, a research project specifically designed to challenge misconceptions of disability and difference and expand understandings in open-ended, non-didactic ways. Recognizing how art is not independent of the context in which it is made, we then reflect upon the

generation of an "aesthetic community" (Rancière 2009, 51) in the digital storytelling workshops; how vulnerability and intercorporeality were inspired among storytellers; and how the artworks produced demonstrate some of the ways that the arts might open creative avenues for discussing and desiring disability rights and disability justice.

We draw the concepts of "aesthetic community" and "relational aesthetic" from Jacques Rancière (2009) and Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) respectively. Rancière theorizes imagined spaces of resistance against dominant power relations of capitalism and colonialism, while Bourriaud theorizes relational art as having democratic intent and purposive resistance that is conceived relationally among artists and audiences without overdetermining outcomes. Within Envisioning, digital storytelling spaces that were constituted with attention to disability, aesthetic community, and relational aesthetic became "cripped," meaning that those embodying disability and difference, particularly at the margins, were given voice, seen, and heard in ways they previously were not (Fritsch 2012). This practice of activism and what it creates allows us to fight for disability justice–oriented social change through understanding that to live a fulfilled life requires that we reimagine the rights that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom seeks to protect and attend to justice-based concerns, which may not be definable, and therefore protectable, by such documents. This occurs not by identifying rights in the digital stories themselves, but in part through contributing to an expansive understanding, made available in the stories, that the lives of disabled persons require more than Charter rights as currently interpreted.

We write this chapter as three women who have shifting and multiple experiences living with disabilities and embodied differences. We write through our shifting and multiple relations with and within the arts-based research projects analyzed, as participant storytellers (where we each made our own digital stories), as facilitators and facilitators in training, as workshop organizers, as invested members of the research team, and as an audience of the digital stories. These multiple positions and perspectives cannot be untangled. We also write this chapter as colleagues and friends who have spent many hours thinking about this project together. We recognize (and enjoy) that the authorship becomes blurred and entangled throughout this chapter, which is representative of how these ideas were collaboratively generated. We follow a tradition in disability studies of blurry writing together (Hughes and Paterson 1997, 2004; Mitchell and Snyder 1997, 2000, 2003, 2011; Shildrick and Price 1996; Titchkosky and Michalko 2009).

Envisioning New Meanings of Disability and Difference

Envisioning New Meanings of Disability and Difference was an Ontario Trillium Foundation–funded research project that ran from 2006 to 2009 across three communities in Ontario (Toronto, Peterborough, and Sudbury) as a collaborative effort among various leaders in women's, disability, and health services sectors, including the YWCA of Peterborough, Victoria, and Haliburton; the YWCA of Sudbury; the Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women's Program at Springtide Resources in Toronto; Women's College Research Institute at Women's College Hospital in Toronto; and the Gender and Women's Studies Program at Trent University in Peterborough. Envisioning explored the efficacy and power of the arts in contributing to social inclusion by inviting women who identified as living with disability or difference to use digital storytelling and photovoice (a visual methodology that puts cameras into the hands of participants [Wang 1999]) as ways of exploring their embodied experiences. This project described "embodied difference" in a nondeterministic way, leaving the category open-ended for women to self-identify (a theme we will return to at the end of our chapter) (Rice, Renooy, and Odette 2008). Embodied difference could include, but was not limited to, women with mobility and sensory disabilities; chronic illness; mental, learning, and intellectual disabilities; and facial and physical differences (Rice, Zitzelsberger, Porch, and Ignagni 2009). Our project resists further bounding of the categories of disability and difference, agreeing with Margrit Shildrick (2007, 223) that this would "close down, and thus normalize, what must otherwise remain a shifting nexus of both physical and mental states that resists full and final definition." Envisioning was the predecessor to Project Re•Vision, a Canadian Institutes of Health Research–funded research project that used arts-based methods, specifically digital storytelling and theatre, to dismantle stereotypical understandings of disability and physical difference that can create barriers to healthcare, education, and inclusion in the broader community, on which the three of us are researchers.

The aim of Envisioning was to uncover and address the gaps in how women with disabilities and differences see themselves and are seen by others. In intensive workshops that taught the fundamentals of representation, storytelling, photography, and filmmaking (Lambert 2010, 2013), participants had opportunities to take photographs and make digital stories to speak back to dominant representations about their bodies and lives. Our approach resonated with that of other scholars and activists committed

to exploring the possibilities and limits of emergent arts-based methods such as digital storytelling for constructing knowledge and inciting change (Benmayor 2008; Brushwood Rose 2009; Cole et al. 2004; Vivienne 2011; Vivienne and Burgess 2013). It also followed a vibrant disability arts movement that has garnered attention in Canada and elsewhere in recent years as a new genre to give expression to disability experience and challenge imposed invisibility by reimagining bodily difference (Roman 2009a, 2009b). The disability arts and culture movement grew out of the disability rights movement in the late 1970s/early 1980s and marked a shift in disability activism away from securing legal rights for persons with disabilities and making public space accessible (in line with the social model) to focusing on aesthetic and cultural concerns (Gorman 2011). Although disability arts have been incubating in Canada for over three decades, "disability culture" has been conceived of only as a concept, and disability art has been officially recognized as a distinct form of art practice (through receiving federal and provincial funding) only since 2000 (Gorman 2011). Many credit these developments to Ryerson's School of Disability Studies' disability cultural event, An Evening of Disability and Deaf Culture, which began in 2000 as the first of its kind in Canada, and to Vancouver's Kickstart festival and Calgary's Balancing Acts, which launched soon after in 2001 and 2002 respectively (Abbas et al. 2004; Gorman 2011).

Envisioning and Project Re•Vision digital storytelling workshops were dedicated to creating spaces where disability was welcomed in, thus allowing artists to tell complex and nuanced stories about their embodied experiences. (Almost) all of our workshop organizers, facilitators, technical support people, and volunteers identify as disabled women, disabled trans/genderqueer individuals, and/or those who embody difference. Such disability leadership models part of what these projects were trying to achieve: advancement of new understandings of disabled people as agentive, creative, and effective leaders. Before the workshop, we asked participants to share with us their accessibility requirements and how we might make the workshop space and the artistic process more comfortable for them. We began each workshop with a conversation about how we could work collectively to ensure that the workshop was a safe(r) space and how we might welcome and further desire disability. We discussed how embodied differences might disrupt workshop processes in ways that we together could be open to and be changed by; rather than these differences simply being tolerated. This conversation established our space as one that would not tolerate

racist, sexist, ableist, sanist, and queer and transphobic language or behaviour, insisting that to achieve this we had to hold each other and ourselves accountable.

Working in groups designed and led by facilitators living with disabilities and differences gave participants and facilitators the opportunity to individually and collectively challenge outsider perceptions and explore alternative ideas of difference. To that end, facilitators led the group in a discussion about how a disability justice framework might approach questions of representation, suggesting that while workshop participants may share the common goal to "talk back" to dominant representations of disability or embodied differences, we were not all talking back to the same kinds of representations. Because disability is clarified by other aspects of identity, we discussed how, for example, a white, middle-class woman with a physical disability may be represented as pitiable while a radicalized psychiatric survivor who is living on the streets may be represented as dangerous and criminal. In these ways, we worked to achieve a sense of community and safety within our workshops, which allowed participants to tell complex and unique stories of disability and embodied difference.

The digital storytelling processes and outputs created through Envisioning workshops made space for new representations of disability and embodied difference to emerge. With its unique emphasis on image and narrative, the digital storytelling genre enabled storytellers to represent their sensory worlds in surprising new ways, conveying the volatility and instability of human embodied experience and opening possibilities for intimate encounters with difference (Rice 2014, forthcoming). We believe in the power and the efficacy of the arts and have witnessed how digital stories, in their multiplicity, disrupt a "single story" of disability (Adichie 2009). We have also experienced how these digital stories transform the way that we (all of us: healthcare providers, educators, administrators, cultural workers, artists, activists, and so on) understand experiences of disability – for it is hard to argue with a story, especially with one, we contend, from the margins. In what follows, we discuss and share links for two digital stories created as part of the Envisioning New Meanings project by Peterborough-based genderqueer disability artist jes sachse and Toronto-based disability artist Lindsay Fisher, and one from Re•Vision by Aboriginal disabled artist Vanessa Dion Fletcher (Potawatomi and Lenape). As our brief interpretation of these stories and the following more detailed analysis of the process of their making demonstrate, digital stories are pedagogical in ways that

disrupt bio-pedagogical ways of teaching – that is, normalizing and moralizing instructions for life – and instead work as body-becoming pedagogies that open up new, non-didactic possibilities for living in and with difference (Rice 2014, 2016). In other words, as sure as we are that these stories do teach, we cannot be sure *what* they teach. Central to the project of understanding these digital stories as arts-based interventions that work toward achieving disability justice, as we explicate throughout this chapter, is the idea that the artworks undoubtedly teach us about what it means to acquire justice and live a fulfilled life; they also allow us to approach the project of obtaining rights and freedoms in an open-ended, undetermined way, one that does not profess, prescribe, or standardize how justice is enacted.

We recognize that these stories could be subject to critique. At the same time, we note that the stories in digital story artistic form have been brought forth from the margins, from abjected parts of selves. When embodiments have been marginalized, abjected, or minimized through colonization, ableism, heteronormativity, and so on, the emergence of new representations need to be given time and space to breathe – to allow their justice-seeking effects to unfold, be heard, and take hold. This could be understood as an inverse contrapuntal reading, following Emma Larocque's (2010, 12) argument regarding the need to foreground Aboriginal self-representations rather than criticize them according to traditions of Western criticism that can be aggressive and ruthless. Larocque explains that both the creation of Aboriginal material and literary criticism of it represent new bodies of knowledge that distinguish themselves from Western literary traditions. Extending Larocque's insightful analysis to disability, we assert that art making and storytelling from the margins deserve time and space to breathe, in recognition of the works' struggles to come to representation. When thought of as newly emerging, representations from the margins deserve consideration from whence they came.

Our approach is indicative of our commitment to upholding and enacting disability justice. Embedded in our open-ended, undetermined approach to imagining what kinds of representations participants might be "talking back" to, as described previously, we also imagine the sorts of rights and justice that individuals require to feel safe, secure, and fulfilled to be multiplicitous. All disabled people are not protected equally under the Charter. Because such protection depends on citizenship and immigration status, differently located and embodied disabled people resist and talk back to the lack of rights or to injustices in different ways. Although our

workshops did not formally address the Charter per se, we engaged themes of what is needed for disabled people to live safe and fulfilled lives in the midst of a culture that, because of ableism, can feel inhospitable and even dangerous for those of us who embody difference. We anticipated that the people who came to our workshops shared in our belief that art is an effective tool to mobilize change and that creating new representations of diverse embodiments can provoke new understandings of disability and embodied difference, but we did not hold assumptions about what forces and circumstances might make one feel insecure and, therefore, what (artistic or other) avenues one must take to mobilize justice. Experiences of ableism and, thusly, tactics for resisting it are vast and not wholly knowable. It is this understanding that led us to set up the workshops in a way that prioritized listening deeply to stories. Traditionally, digital storytelling workshops highly value stories, particularly stories that are marginalized, and we worked hard to establish a safer space in which stories could be told and listened to – even stories that were disruptive to our closely held beliefs and disability politics. In our workshops, storytellers and story-listeners shared the responsibility of respecting stories, learning from stories, and being changed by stories (Dion 2009). This held true even when they exceeded our expectations for what a story about disability or embodied difference could be or should do.

One evocative illustration of the power of digital stories to bring audiences closer to disability experience is found in a digital story made by genderqueer disabled artist, Envisioning filmmaker, and now Re•Vision facilitator jes sachse. In their piece *Body Language*, sachse explores the complexities of looking at relations for people with disabilities within a representational history of disabled people that can largely be characterized as one of being put on display or hidden away (Chandler and Rice 2013; Garland-Thomson 1997, 2009; Metzl and Poirier 2004; Tregaskis 2002).[1] In this digital story, we see many different photographs of sachse, from childhood to adulthood, laughing with friends, creating in the art studio, and standing by train tracks. Toward the end of the video, we see photographs of sachse, nude, stretching their limbs and standing in front of sun-filled windows. By daring viewers to look at their body and imagine how it feels to look like them, sachse subverts the typically voyeuristic, dominating practices of looking that structure encounters with bodily difference and provokes us to consider how intense looking can remake audience perceptions (http://www.envisioningnewmeanings.ca/?page_id=40). sachse's incitement to us to look, coupled with an invitation to question our urge to

stare, challenges audiences to acknowledge our responses to their differences and, ultimately, our relationships with our own. Through this refraction, sachse refocuses our collective gaze onto societal views of difference and illuminates the myriad ways we may share the experience of what it is to be vulnerable, flawed, and in other ways embodying of "difference," especially in relation to the culturally idealized masculinist, non-disabled, and neoliberalized mode of embodiment – impregnable, independent, self-contained, and always under control (Shildrick 1997, 2002).

The second digital story we discuss was created by Lindsay Fisher, a visual artist, a graphic designer, an Envisioning storyteller, and a Re•Vision workshop facilitator. Fisher's film, *First Impressions*, does more than grant people permission to look intently at her. In her search to discover what onlookers see when fixing their eyes on her face, she asks audiences to see beyond first impressions to find value in difference (http://www.envisioningnewmeanings.ca/?page_id=28). This digital story features hundreds of photographs, in which Fisher is making different facial expressions that accentuate her difference, flashing rapidly on the screen. Fisher describes beginning her storymaking process by recollecting moments in her life when she was most aware of being different; while she aimed to tell a counter-story that disrupted the typical disability tragedy narrative, she also wanted to discover something about her bodily difference that would surprise her when she saw it – something that she herself did not know was there. What emerged from her technique of taking and editing into a short film over three hundred photographs of herself "making faces" is a provocative exploration of embodiment from inside her skin – fluid, dynamic, continuously shifting – which she contrasts with the view from outside it, the ways that responses to difference are thought to be already socially and culturally made. Layering this insight, she offers a delightful meditation on the pleasures and sensualities of her embodied experiences. By subverting the usual ways that difference is either desexualized or fetishized in normative culture, she claims her facial difference as a site of sensuality charged with erotic possibility.

The final digital story we discuss illustrates another counter-representation of disability. Vanessa Dion Fletcher is an Aboriginal artist (Potawatomi and Lenape) living in Toronto. In her work entitled *Words*, Fletcher uses homophones to juxtapose her first-person experiences of a learning disability with the objectifying language of diagnostic tests. This digital story features a blank piece of white paper on which the viewer sees a hand write out words, homophones, and sentences from a psychologist's diagnostic report.

The soundtrack consists of Fletcher's playing with the different meanings of homophones – "whole" and "hole," for example. She asks us to consider the ways that the language of deficiency limits children and how the magic of words might open other possibilities for being and becoming (http://projectrevision.ca/videos; scroll down to Vanessa Dion Fletcher and enter the password, projectrevision). Fletcher also identifies as a person living with a learning disability who spells in non-normative ways due to a lack of short-term memory. Using words that sound alike but have different spellings and meanings, Fletcher provokes audiences to consider how her own unique ways of spelling, typically read as mistakes, can instead be understood as her means of injecting new meaning into written language. Her piece beautifully illustrates the unpredictable and non-proscriptive possibilities that open when we welcome disability in. The works of sachse, Fisher, and Fletcher offer important insights into how disabled artists themselves learn even as they teach others to see and, in multiple and diverse ways, to sense difference and disability differently. Put another way, the self-learning that the artists share is inextricably connected to the teaching they offer us as viewers.

The Fleeting Enactment of Aesthetic Community

Thus far, we have highlighted individual digital stories that have, in sachse's film, subverted looking/staring relations and intervened in normative perceptions; in Fisher's, claimed sensuality, erotic possibility, and delight in her embodied experience; and in Fletcher's, created new sites of meaning from words transformed from "errors" (so-considered by the outside) when she becomes the centre and empowered subject of her film. At the conclusion of every digital storytelling workshop – both Envisioning and Re•Vision – the films were screened together with their makers present. We have noted how this collective experience gave rise to the experience of aesthetic community, a community whose artful constitution is primarily sensory and unrepresentable in words and that beckons towards a future of possibilities.

Relational Aesthetics and Aesthetic Relations

During the screenings held at the close of Envisioning and Re•Vision workshops, we experienced how the digital stories conveyed the specificity of each person's experience through artistic renderings that poured forth complex and multiple meanings. The films flooded the senses with visual and aural representations and story narratives to hover over and fill the space in,

between, and among the filmmaker-viewers. In these screenings, there was no imperative to bring the multidimensional sensations we felt in the room under the control of language and analysis, nor did we feel that was possible. Instead, participant-viewers tacitly acknowledged a rich polyphony that disrupted language and analysis. We talked little after viewing the stories; together, they created an affective effect that acknowledged new subjective experiences that transmitted sensations of understanding irreducible to existing scholarly narratives of disability and defied language. A palpable prelinguistic moment of understanding lingered in the air, one that unsettled us in part because of the diverse and multiple manifestations of living with disability and difference ushered in. Facilitating the workshops and the film screenings unsettled stereotypes and uplifted us in that something new, but not yet known in language, was brought forth that had not been invited forth previously. It was also suspenseful in that participants tacitly acknowledged how the prelinguistic knowledge could gestate for future narratives and possibilities. Disability arts challenge dominant norms of disability, create cathartic recognition of the lived experience of disability outside those dominant norms, and generate a moving sense of possibility for the future (Abbas et al 2004; Roman 2009a; Ware 2008). We seek to build on this knowledge by bringing into words an aesthetic dimension that is critical to evolving conceptions of disability justice: a cripped relational aesthetic (Changfoot 2016) and aesthetic community that preserve the polyphony and specificity of stories such as those of sachse, Fisher, and Fletcher. The relational aesthetic and aesthetic community support an expansive meaning of disability rights because the experiences brought to light exceed the understanding or imagining of a rights-bearing person living with disability and difference.

The creation and presentation of the stories constituted, using the work of Rancière (2009), a dissensual sensory knowledge whereby perception and emotion were brought to light from experiences not previously given much attention. What was invisible was brought into focus and became the centre of attention, even if only briefly. This constructive searching remains, for us, a constant reminder of how daily experience at the margins needs to be presenced to strategize how to make change for the better. Rancière (2009, 58) refers to two regimes of sense: "a regime of conjunction and a regime of disjunction." Interpreting Rancière, we understand conjunction as referring to the multiple, intersecting complexities of the current age or a specific locality and disjunction as referring to the contestation

and resistance arising within an aesthetic community in the current age and a specific locality. For Rancière, the two regimes coinciding at once create dissensus, the intermingling of minds and hearts of those involved, upon which community is built. To illustrate: in their film, sachse reveals a regime of conjunction comprising the dominant able-bodied gaze and bodily norms of self-control, invulnerability, and containment of one's flaws. In inviting the viewer to become vulnerable through sachse's film, they bring the community of filmmakers, now viewers, into their world, and in so doing, troubles and decentres the dominant able-bodied gaze and norms. This troubling and decentring does not manifest in words: it manifests in a chastened and productive silence having to do with the intersubjective encounter created with the viewer(s) and a questioning and shattering of the able-bodied gaze. By deftly making the able-bodied gaze visible in relation to what it makes "other," a dissensus emerges that troubles, decentres, and shatters ableist assumptions and ways of looking. The collective experience of making and screening digital stories created multiple moments of dissensus that together constituted a new sense of community, a new possibility or emergent understanding of disability and difference (which created space for sachse's body in ways not yet fixed or completed), and with this, a new awareness of the conspicuous absence of vocabulary for what was coming into existence. This new sensing of community that did not yet exist hovered above and within the present, creating a tension of yearning for the new amid the complex problematic of the present.

Importantly, the bonds created within this aesthetic community were formed through a relational aesthetic that developed during the making of the stories themselves, especially the sharing of the story narratives in the story circles prior to and as foundational for the creation of the films. Bourriaud (2002, 16) argues that "relational aesthetics" arise from art itself because art "creates free areas and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life." Art facilitates certain encounters between persons that would not occur otherwise because our communication with one another is so highly regulated. Among Envisioning filmmakers, facilitators, and researchers who attended the workshops and final screenings, new encounters occurred that generated a deeper understanding of the very wide range of experiences that living with disability and difference entails, both challenging and enlivening. Bourriaud likens encounters with art to a game of tennis: there is a serve and a return, implying continued exchange with a willing partner and a potential for transformation from competition to

communication along with an emergent understanding that the communication brings forth. In such encounters, Bourriaud anticipates the emergence of a horizon, "a desired future or world which the exchange will reveal in discussion" (23).

Forming a temporary community through intimate contact over three intense days (the length of the workshops), Envisioning filmmakers and facilitators carried the memory of the relational aesthetic, of artful relating and relating artfully, which continues to be a powerful memory and inspiration for further action. We engaged in no debate or dialogue over specific political, social, or economic change or how the group would be part of that change. At the same time, we experienced a palpable sense that better conditions of life were possible by virtue of the conditions and experience of the digital filmmaking and the resulting films themselves. Participants did not put these possibilities into words or a program of action per se. Rather, we witnessed how these came into existence as a *present absence* from the stories themselves. We felt the future in the *negative* spaces, in the interstices, created by the stories that showed implicitly what should not and need not have happened in terms of experiences of marginalization, indignities, violence, and exclusions that the storytellers had experienced and animated. Multiple and complex identities were held together, observed, and respected without the push or goal to constitute new authoritative narratives or to forge a forced sense of solidarity. Becoming knowledgeable in a sensory and aesthetic way prior to problematization, scholarly narrative, and activism was enough in this space, knowing that the rest would come in time.

We recognize that the aesthetic community created in the Envisioning and Re•Vision workshops was ephemeral; in these spaces, disability and difference were desired, but when the workshops ended, we were still confronted with the ableist logic that circulates in normative culture. The workshops created an important place of freedom that is not (yet), or only partially, experienced outside the space. We think Envisioning and Re•Vision offered this space of freedom in part through the temporary suspension of the everyday, where sensate experience of embodied difference is largely outlawed (Changfoot 2016; Hennessy 2002, 85), where it is rarely possible to express and explore personal reflections entwined with the social, economic, and political in a meaningful way. In this way, the spaces of alterity created through Envisioning and Re•Vision could be described as a "fleeting [enactment] of community" (Chandler 2012) that is "fragile and vulnerable" (Bauman 2001, 14).

Intercorporeality and Vulnerability as Conditions of Possibility for Aesthetic Community

We each experienced how a fleeting aesthetic community was generated in our digital storytelling workshops as the boundaries between us (research-ers and workshop facilitators) and them (workshop participants and story-tellers) were blurred. Thus, we experienced how our corporeal boundaries were necessarily similarly blurred. There remained, of course, the distinc-tion between those whose bodily differences caused them to encounter ableist attitudes and disabling practices more frequently than others (we are not suggesting that we all became disabled within the workshops, even within our open-ended understanding of what disability is and could be-come). We repeatedly noticed, though, that in the workshops – filled with stories, emotions, technical instructions, creativity, and, undeniably, the re-quirement for physical and emotional stamina, no matter our attempts to make these workshops into accessible and flexible spaces – we experienced our corporealities in relation to the others in the room. This corporeal mix-ing inspired embodied self-reflexivity and provoked vulnerability, which, in turn, created the conditions of possibility for generating an aesthetic community among those present.

Self-reflexivity – the willingness to turn the gaze on one's self even when this may lead to discomforting and unsettling truths – requires that critical researchers make themselves vulnerable (Behar 1997). Since we were asking women involved in Envisioning to expose their vulnerabilities, disabled and non-disabled researchers on the project also felt ethically impelled to ac-knowledge their/our own vulnerability through creating digital stories that called attention to power relations based on appearance, ability, and bodily difference; that analyzed shared vulnerabilities across differing experiences of body privilege and abjection; and that blurred boundaries that exist in our culture – by this we mean Western anglo hegemonic culture – between categories of normal and abnormal, disability and other bodily difference, male and female, and the disabled and non-disabled worlds. Through consideration of their/our vulnerabilities and corporealities via the digital storytelling genre, disabled and non-disabled researchers entered into aes-thetic relations with disabled facilitators and storytellers in the workshop space. Thus, the willingness to make oneself vulnerable and to make a story of the intercorporeal became the conditions of possibility for entering into the aesthetic community the workshops fleetingly created.

Beyond the omnipresence of ableist attitudes and disabling practices in normative culture, what in part contributed to making Envisioning's

enactment of aesthetic community so fleeting and ephemeral is that vulner-ability is defined so negatively in our society: a conventional definition de-scribes it as a susceptibility to being wounded or hurt and an openness to criticism or attack. Vulnerability is also associated with the feminine, the disabled, the aged, the marginalized, the weak – all groups seen as more prone or susceptible to harm due to their embodiment (illness, disability, pregnancy) or social disadvantage (poverty), especially in an ableist, mascu-linist world that privileges self-contained, autonomous, and independent selfhood (Shildrick 2000, 2002). While vulnerability can increase people's susceptibility to suffering and inequality (since groups marked as vulnerable are socially rendered violable), it is also the ground for human exchange, empowerment, and growth. It is necessary for human being and human understanding. It is fundamental to relationship and to social life. Legal scholar Martha Fineman (2008, 8) reclaims the term "vulnerability" from its negative associations to its potential as a "universal, inevitable, enduring aspect of the human condition" shared by every human being. She argues that the negative and positive possibilities of vulnerability are important, since they capture the inherent interdependence that underpins human existence. This challenges the myth of the invulnerable autonomous self that is the basis of Western legal systems and social policies and enjoins us to rethink these by taking the vulnerable self, our shared common human ex-perience, as our starting point in building a more equitable society.

Because our culture uses vulnerability to justify cultural abjection and social exclusion, it is difficult for people to be vulnerable. Some groups, such as people with disabilities, are forcibly positioned as vulnerable (Brecken-ridge and Vogler 2001). And people learn that they may be violated if they show vulnerability. But when people decide to make themselves vulnerable, this can interrupt prevailing norms and provoke personal and collective transformation. This is especially true when individuals in privileged pos-itions unmask their vulnerabilities in an effort to deepen understanding and expose the operations of power surrounding constructions of vulner-ability. For example, in contrast to the typical ways we culturally "know" researchers as disembodied experts, those who write from their body hist-ories reveal a shared vulnerability, animating Fineman's (2008) declamation of the term and blurring boundaries between bodies forcibly and inten-tionally positioned as vulnerable (halifax 2011). While there are different social and material consequences for those whose vulnerability is imposed rather than (ethically) impelled, non-disabled researchers' articulations of vulnerability in the context of the cultural imperative as, or at least appearing

to be, all-knowing challenges expectations of who and what a vulnerable self is or could be. Even more, the provocation to shared vulnerability created in Envisioning and Re•Vision workshops fostered ephemeral communities that opened participant-viewers to sensate experiences of embodied difference that enabled them to begin imagining otherwise. This imagining otherwise opens possibilities of who is and is not a rights-bearing citizen and exposes the limits of this dichotomy alongside inviting a fuller conception of disability justice.

Disability Justice Approaches to the Charter

We end our chapter by positing that arts-based interventions, such as Envisioning and Re•Vision, can move the disability movement beyond a rights-based framework. While we respect and are indebted to the important wins of the disability rights movement, we propose that we must work alongside the movement for social change beyond rights-based orientation and toward disability justice, toward what Eli Clare (1999, 168) refers to as "liberation." For our definition of disability justice, we refer to the Bay Area–based disability activist movement that emerged out of an acknowledgment that rights-based movements serve only subjects who are recognized as rights-bearing citizens, leaving behind people who are not recognized under legislation such as the Charter. These are people such as stateless bodies who may not be recognized as citizens within the nation-state in which they live. Disability justice also opens up to and desires different ways of experiencing disability and acknowledges that social exclusion and oppression of disabled people may be caused by the ways that ableism interacts with racism, sexism, colonialism, and queerphobia (Mingus 2011). As disability justice activist Mia Mingus (2011) writes,

Disability justice activists are engaged in building an understanding of disability that is more complex, whole and interconnected than what we have previously found. We are disabled people who are people of color; women, genderqueer and transgender; poor and working class; youth; immigrants; lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer; and more.

At the same time as disability justice acknowledges that disability rights may not recognize and therefore not protect all citizens, this framework, particularly when used to think about the political potential of arts-based interventions, does not determine or predict what obtaining justice would look or feel like. Rather, disability justice acknowledges that because systems

of oppressions – such as racism, colonialism, and ableism – work together to oppress people in ways that are pervasive and multiplicitous, we cannot predict what liberation from such oppression would look or feel like. We propose that arts-based interventions, such as the digital stories created in our workshops, can "crip" – that is, open with desire that which disability disrupts (Fritsch 2012) – what disability activism could be and what disability justice could become. In this section, we attend to three critical possibilities for crip activism in three prongs: *what we are fighting: what we are fighting for who we are fighting beside/with, and how we are fighting.*

First, arts-based interventions can crip *what we are fighting for* in that, through a disability justice framework, we can work for social change beyond the rights recognized and protected under the Charter. Among other things, sachse's, Fisher's, and Fletcher's digital stories are all calling for a radical recognition of crip(ped) subjectivity, demanding of their audience that we attend to what is produced through disability. Fisher's film, for example, is demanding recognition of her disabled body as sexually agentive and desirable. More than articulating her sexual subjectivity, she gives us a sense of the sexual pleasure generated by her difference in her description of how, when a boy kisses her "missing ear," she can feel it through her whole body. The right to be recognized as a sexual subject, one in charge of one's own sexuality and sexual health, is not a right that could accurately be defined and therefore protected by the Charter. Even if the right to be understood as sexually agentive did appear in the Charter, there would be no way to guarantee that this right would be protected. Art has the capacity to open up what we are fighting for – a shift in imagining what is required to live a fulfilled life – and art's ever-expanding essence has the capacity to hold a polyvocal understanding of what our justice-based concerns are and could become.

Second, arts-based interventions can crip *who we are fighting beside/ with*, in that a disability justice framework can expand our understanding of who disabled people are and which disabled people are recognized as citizens and, more than this, worth protecting under the law. Recognition of the gendered, racial, sexual, class, and geographic diversity within the category of disability requires an understanding that what provides rights and freedoms for one person does not guarantee the same for another. For example, legislation such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act may allow some disabled people in Ontario to access public space with greater ease. A disability justice framework requires us, however, to attend to the imbricating ways that certain bodies are kept out of spaces through

systemic racism, sexism, queer and transphobia, and more, and goes beyond positioning disability as a logistical problem to be fixed. As an example, as important as it is to create barrier-free environments like washrooms, the dismantling of systemic transphobia to ensure that all barrier-free washrooms also be gender neutral/all-gender is also required to make sure that public space is accessible to all disabled people. Shifting our imagination of who "we" are, thinking carefully about how different aspects of our social location and identity can clarify how disability is interpreted and, thus, how we experience disability, helps us to know, unquestionably, what rights we should be fighting for.

Finally, arts-based interventions can crip *how we are fighting* by expanding what is counted as effective activism. In her chapter "Unhealthy Disabled," Susan Wendell (2013) uses a feminist disability studies analysis to interrogate traditional activist practices, suggesting that thinking about disabled materiality crips the ways we practise and recognize activism. Wendell (2013, 163) suggests that many of the ways that disability political action is structured are, indeed, exclusionary. Of the intimate ways that disability materiality, particularly chronic pain, touches normative activist practices, she writes,

On a bad day of physical or mental [pain], we may be unable to attend a meeting or workshop, to write a letter, to answer the phone, or to respond to e-mail. We may need notice in advance of work to be done, in order to work only on good days or more slowly on days when we are very ill. We may need to work in teams, so that someone else can take over when we cannot work at all ... Commitment to a cause is usually equated to energy expended, even to pushing one's body and mind excessively, if not cruelly ... Yet in political activity, all-day meetings and evening events after a full day's work are assumed to be appropriate. Stamina is required for commitment to a cause. (167)

As we conclude this chapter, we wonder, with Wendell's provocation, how we might crip what counts as activism in a way that pushes beyond the traditional forms of activism that may require people to stay up late, be publicly present, write letters, and walk or roll long distances, and therefore be accessible only to certain bodies. Opening up understandings of activist practices to include forms such as arts-based interventions could be more inclusive to different kinds of people, such as people who get tired, who may not be able to leave the house, who cannot spell in normative ways,

and whose sexuality is fetishized or framed as deviant. Arts-based activist practices may also be more accessible to precariously placed people who cannot come into contact with police because of a different set of risks, such as disabled people with a criminal record; disabled people who are stateless; immigrants on caregiver visas who become disabled on the job and risk deportation should their disability be revealed; or mad people who cannot risk incarceration. What possibilities open up beyond traditional and exclusionary activist practices when we think about artistic interventions as activism?

sachse's, Fisher's, and Fletcher's stories, along with others in the Envisioning and Re·Vision archive, were made with the animating question of "what is your difference as a woman living with disability and difference?" Their own stories are part of an extensive polyphony that is unruly, defying control by existing concepts of disability and difference. We are in the wonderfull and challenging labour of making meaning from the stories and channelling their unruliness toward generative possibilities, including rethinking disability rights and moving toward disability justice. The opening up to multiple and richly diverse new narratives with accompanying sensations provided through the visual and aural in the films pushes us to open further and disrupt our imagined identity of the normative rights-bearing person living with disability. The films push and move us to a capaciousness to imagine the multiplicity of identities of persons living with disability, persons who should willingly and rightfully participate fully in all aspects of society as they choose. The films are themselves activism in their conveyance of multiple and richly diverse experiences of women living with disability and difference. sachse's, Fisher's, and Fletcher's films tell stories that not only disrupt ableist stereotypes concerning looking and beauty, sensuality, pleasure, and learning; but point in their own directions to possibilities for advocacy, meaningful support, and, perhaps more importantly, new practices of living well. Seeing these films as activist themselves, as part of and within an established activist disability arts movement, can productively support a rethinking in approach toward rights and justice.

More than changing the way we practise and recognize activism, might arts-based activism also allow us to think differently about what it is we are fighting for and, indeed, the kind of world we are fighting for? Could artistic interventions move the conversation about disability rights beyond bureaucratic, standardizing terms, beyond what is achieved in the recognition of disabled people under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and on to liberation and the multiplicity of rights- and justice-based worlds that

we are fighting for? Might the aesthetic community enacted in our workshops, and the ways of being (vulnerable) and becoming together that these spaces allowed, serve as a model for a kind of world we want to imagine and inhabit? We engage this discussion not to diminish the absolute necessity of having (some of) our rights protected by the Charter and similar legislation, nor to dismiss the labour and fierce activism of the formative disability rights movement. The framework underpinning Envisioning and Re•Vision, with its expansive, body-becoming understanding of what disability is and who disabled people can be (Rice 2014), opens the category of disabled people to people who may not be recognized as disabled under the law or protected under various charters, who are often the same people who have been marginalized with our movement – sick people, trans folks, mad-identified people, non-disabled people with visible and invisible physical differences, fat people, psychiatric survivors, people with workplace injuries, new immigrants, migrants, and stateless bodies. More than this, disability arts, as sachse's, Fisher's, and Fletcher's films demonstrate, "imagine otherwise," create new possibilities for living together and experiencing the world rather than attempting to fit our different bodies in a system that does not desire us, or desires us only and always as "problems," living reminders of what it means to be abnormal. Disability arts, such as these digital stories, allow us to imagine disability in new, self-determined ways and open up to ideas of disability justice and how we might imagine a world otherwise.

NOTE

1 The singular "they" is sachse's preferred pronoun.

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