



Article

# Re-Making Clothing, Re-Making Worlds: On Crip Fashion Hacking

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**Abstract:** This article explores how Disabled people’s fashion hacking practices re-make worlds by expanding fashion design processes, fostering relationships, and welcoming-in desire for Disability. We share research from the second phase of our project, *Crippling Masculinity*, where we developed fashion hacking workshops with D/disabled, D/deaf and Mad men and masculine non-binary people. In these workshops, participants worked in collaboration with fashion researchers and students to alter, embellish, and recreate their existing garments to support their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. We explore how our workshops heeded the principles of Disability Justice by centring flexibility of time, collective access, interdependence, and desire for intersectional Disabled embodiments. By exploring the relationships formed and clothing made in these workshops, we articulate a framework for crip fashion hacking that reclaims design from the values of the market-driven fashion industry and towards the principles of Disability Justice. This article is written as a dialogue between members of the research team, the conversational style highlights our relationship-making process and praxis. We invite educators, designers, and/or researchers to draw upon crip fashion hacking to re-make worlds by desiring with and for communities who are marginalized by dominant systems.



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**Keywords:** crip technoscience; design; Disability; dress; intersectionality; pedagogy

## 1. Crippling Fashion and Fashioning Design

*I’m holding hands with my Disability*

*I have the other hand free*

*Could I hold the hand of someone who fights me?*

*Or I could hold the hand of someone who loves me?*

It might seem that the dominant fashion industry is becoming more ‘inclusive’ of Disability.<sup>1</sup> There is a rise in the number of fashion products specifically designed for Disabled people from brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, Nike and IZ Adaptive. However, when Disabled people are ‘invited’ into the fashion industry, their participation primarily rests on the capitalist logics of assimilation, objectification, and depoliticization. During the design process, non-Disabled people are situated as the experts whose practices are focused on “designing *for* Disability rather than *with* or *by* Disabled people” (Hamraie and Fritsch 2019, p. 4). Disabled people are either excluded from the design of fashion, or restricted to the transactional roles of ‘user’ in an initial research phase or during the testing of prototypes (Critical Axis n.d.; Hamraie 2017). This relationship reduces Disabled people to being passive recipients of design, while it glorifies non-disabled people as the creators of design (Hamraie and Fritsch 2019). The clothing designed through this process often sanitizes Disability for non-Disabled audiences by concealing or normalizing boldly differences, erasing intersectional Disability experiences by centring white

cis-heteronormative aesthetics, and pricing Disability-friendly fashion at amounts that ignore the financial barriers that many Disabled people experience due to ableism and other systems of oppression (Barry 2019; Cubacub 2019). As with other diversity gestures towards inclusion in the fashion industry, this engagement is no surprise because discourses of ableism ‘laid the foundation, built the house, and are now opening the door’ (Mulholland 2019, p. 213).

This article analyzes our practice of *crip fashion hacking* as a process that reclaims design from the values of the market-driven fashion industry and towards a desire for intersectional *crip* experiences. We draw on Hamraie and Fritsch (2019) concept of *crip technoscience* and Otto von Busch’s (2009) understanding of fashion hacking to ground our understanding of *crip fashion hacking*. Hamraie and Fritsch (2019) define *crip technoscience* as the use of scientific knowledge and technological-making by and with Disabled people in order to intervene into the exclusionary material world and systems that construct it. These anti-assimilationist “world-building and world-dismantling practices”—and fields of knowledge that emerge from them—are grounded in the political reclamation of the word *crip* (Hamraie and Fritsch 2019, p. 4). Drawing on Disability studies scholars Robert McRuer (2006), Mitchell and Snyder (2015) and Kelly Fritsch (2016), *crip* refuses dominant narratives in which Disability is understood as an experience to be cured, fixed or eliminated, and instead recognizes it as generative, creative, and desirable. We understand fashion hacking as a design method that can apply the ethos of *crip technoscience* in the context of Disability and fashion. Following von Busch (2009), fashion hacking is a political and anti-capitalist practice in which communities who have been excluded from the dominant fashion system have open access to fashion knowledge. These communities are supported to use, modify and expand this knowledge to design garments that centre their needs, desires and imagination.

By bringing together *crip technoscience* and fashion hacking as design practices that intervene into dominant knowledge and remake existing material arrangements, we coin the term *crip fashion hacking*. We understand it as a “knowing-making” practice (Hamraie 2017) that shares, questions and overhauls dominant fashion knowledge to remake clothing by and with Disabled people in ways that centre access, aesthetics and desire for Disability. In this article, we draw upon this understanding to ask how *crip fashion hacking* might expand dominant fashion design practices and remake worlds that cultivate desire for Disability.

We draw on our project, *Cripping Masculinity*, which explores Disabled, D/deaf and Mad-identified men and masculine non-binary people’s experiences with gender, fashion and Disability. We recruited participants—across a range of race, sexuality and other social locations—who have diverse experiences of Disability. We invited these participants to engage in the three project phases: wardrobe interviews to explore their relationships with clothing; fashion hacking workshops where they remake clothes to offer access for their bodyminds and reflect their desired intersectional identities; and fashion shows and exhibitions to showcase their clothing and expand public understanding about Disability experiences. For this article, we focus on phase two of the project: fashion hacking.

We had originally conceived that fashion hacking would take place through one-day, in-person workshops. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we moved these workshops to a virtual format in which participants and research team would work in small groups over several months by communicating with each other online and mailing garments back-and-forth. One iteration of these virtual workshops, which we will focus on in this article, took place in an undergraduate elective course. The course aimed to honour and heed the principles of the Disability Justice “movement building framework” in the context of fashion design (Kafai 2021, p. 22). In 2005, Patty Berne and Leroy F. Moore Jr.—co-founders of the performance group *Sins Invalid* that centres queer and trans Disabled people of colour—developed Disability Justice with Mia Mingus, Stacey Milbern, Sebastain Margaret and Eli Claire (Kafai 2021). While we will discuss Disability Justice later in this article, we were mindful of the concerns that Disability Justice has been co-

opted—especially by white academics—without crediting its Disabled, queer and trans of colour origins or enacting Disability Justice politics (Kafai 2021). The course was intentional about engaging with readings, films, podcasts, and art by its founders and other Disabled queer and trans people of colour as the guide, as well as to centre its principles in the context of fashion design. In the course, each student was paired with a research team member, whom we called the mentor, and a participant, whom we call the collaborator. They collaboratively hacked one of the collaborator's existing garments that did not, in its current form, work for their bodymind or aesthetically express their desired intersectional identities. Each design team, or what we refer to as design pod, altered, embellished, and recreated the garment to centre the collaborator's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. By exploring the experiences of these workshops, we articulate a framework of crip fashion hacking. We position it as a political practice that educators, researchers and fashion professionals can draw on to re-make worlds by desiring with and for multiplying marginalized Disability communities.

## 2. Crippling Academic Writing

As we hold onto crip fashion hacking as a political practice to re-make worlds, we also hold onto *how* we tell the stories of these hacking processes to re-make how knowledge is generated and shared within academia. We selected a format for this article that falls outside of the typical style of scholarship. It is a mix of poetry and direct dialogue between us, the core members of the Crippling Masculinity research team. Our rationale for writing in this format is to honour the work of Indigenous, Black, Disability and feminist scholars who resist conventional approaches to academic writing, and to practice the politics on which our project is built.

Shawn Wilson (2008) observes that conversation is a more egalitarian format for sharing knowledge because it works against academic hierarchies that prioritize academic position. bell hooks (1994) highlights the value of dialogue by observing that it allows for a more intimate experience of sharing knowledge, allowing a reader to feel as though they are present for the conversations occurring. Hannah McGregor et al. (2020) understand this conversational format as a practice of feminist consciousness raising—explaining that it builds analysis not only by engaging with academic thought, but also by centring stories and lived experiences. Recognizing we each have “partial perspectives” based on our positionalities and lived experiences, Mel Y. Chen (2014, p. 172) observes that academic work should be developed by working together among people with diverse embodiments and cognitions, or as they note, differently “cognating beings”. Moreover, interdependence—building relationships that support each other's needs—is a core tenant of practicing Disability Justice (Sins Invalid 2016). In this article, we therefore use dialogue to break down the hierarchies within our group and open-up desire for the unique offerings that each person brings to the research by generating ideas *together*. Our hope is that you can feel us as researchers working through challenges, sharing experiences, and playing with theory. We hope that you will find spaces to fit in and fill the gaps in our conversation. That way, we can start to build relationships so we can all move together.

Before we begin our conversation, it is important to note that publishing scholarship comes from a position of privilege, with power and with a responsibility to the communities about whom we are speaking. We recognize that academic publishing excludes many Disabled people, such as through inaccessible language and by restricting access to the capital that comes with writing in peer-reviewed spaces. As a group, we are still writing about shared experiences with the collaborators through our voices and we are receiving the value of authorship. Our choice to write this paper as a dialogue between us aimed to practice a process that we can use with collaborators in the future. By writing this here, we hope to stay accountable to that goal.

### 3. About the Authors

Our research team comprises a diverse group of people who come to the project from different positions, both within the hierarchical framework of academia and within our embodied ways of being in the world. To critically and collaboratively engage with one another and with collaborators, we have centred practices of reflexivity throughout the project. Key to reflexivity is maintaining transparency about our relationships with the various fields with which our research engages, the act of doing research, and the ways in which we produce knowledge (Haggerty 2003; Crooks et al. 2012). We share our positionalities to acknowledge that our identities influence how we interact with collaborators, as well as how we think about, experience, and reflect upon the project (England 1994). In sharing pieces about ourselves, we aim to position ourselves within the project through transparency and care.

**Ben (he/him):** I am a queer, Disabled person with low vision, and my relationship to clothing centres tactile experience. I am also a white, thin, middle-class, cisgender man, and my Disability is primarily invisible. My embodied privilege has granted me access to fashion; I can easily find clothing that fit my body, buy them, and express my being. As a fashion educator, designer and lead of this project, my own embodied experiences helped me to conceptualize this project while also recognizing the importance of bringing together a community of collaborators who do not have my embodied and social privileges.

**Kristina (she/her):** I am a white, visibility Disabled woman, a settler to the north part of Turtle Island in Tkaronto (colonially known as Toronto). My privilege to live and work in Tkaronto is due to the colour of my skin, the legacies of colonialism and white supremacy that have provided wealth and resources to my family. I share this information to contextualize how experiences of sexism and ableism exist within my identity. Alongside being an academic researcher, I am also a creative producer, arts administrator, and designer, rooting my practice in a drive to build spaces and experiences that make my community feel seen, desired, valued, and loved.

**Alexis (they/them/sikato):** I am a queer/non-binary, neurodivergent and mad-identified, second-generation Filipino and Pangasinan settler/migrant, community organizer, and textile artist. I share these parts of me as the intergenerational knowledge of those before me who have identified as such inform my understanding of the world and to whom I am accountable with the labor I put forth. My hopes within this project are to do the prescribed work, in the least violent way, to get materials, money, and resources to community members while I am in this space of privilege.

**Jonathan (he/him):** I am a gay/queer, Austrian-Romanian, neurodivergent fashion designer. Specializing in accessible fashion, I design queer-masculine lingerie, underwear, fetish, and intimate wear with the strong belief that all bodies deserve to feel sexy and erotic, without inherent negative fetishization. With the understanding that my fit, cis, white man's body has a classically "model-esque" figure, my work decentres people who look like me from the fashion narrative to create a more holistic and accurate representation of the bodies on the planet.

**Philippa (she/her):** I am a white, cisgender, and neurodivergent settler currently pursuing my Ph.D. with a focus on fashion and disabilities. I approach my work with a recognition that I hold privileges that have facilitated easier access to academic spaces and fostered a positive personal relationship with fashion, and an understanding that my own personal embodiment limits my understanding of the lived experiences of others. I strongly value the way collective knowledge generation can develop a more holistic view of the world and foster greater social change.

#### 4. Fashion Hacking and Disability Justice

*Holding is loving, caring*

*To hold hands is for someone to hold it back*

*given and received at our own pace*

*given and received willingly and eagerly.*

*To hold with mutual desire*

**Ben:** von Busch (2009) observes that the word “hacking” originates from the early programming culture in the 1960s, as a do-it-yourself practice of intervention into closed online networks. When applied to fashion, hacking redistributes power from the elite fashion system to previously excluded consumers. The practice transfers knowledge about the creation of fashion to them, and it supports them to modify it for themselves (von Busch 2009). Alice Payne (2021) notes that “fashion hacking” is a method within the larger fashion design strategy of “rewilding”. According to Payne (2021), rewilding aims to “seize back fashion as cultural expression from its continual commodification by industry. Rewilding actions are those that make wild spaces for fashion practices to flourish beyond the dictates of the dominant fashion system” (p. 160).

**Philippa:** Why do you think that fashion hacking worked well for a project on Disability?

**Ben:** To survive in an ableist world as Disabled people, we have long engaged in “making, hacking, and tinkering with existing material arrangements” in order to produce forms of access unavailable or economically inaccessible for us (Hamraie and Fritsch (2019, p. 4). These design interventions—what Hamraie and Fritsch (2019) call the field and practice of *crip technoscience*—are generated from knowing what works best for us, as well as from the shared expertise developed within Disability communities. For example, Bess Williamson (2019) details how Disabled people in postwar America have drawn on their Disability experiences to hack assistive equipment and everyday household tools to offer access for their bodyminds. These hacking practices recognize that Disabled people “are not merely formed or acted on by the world—we are engaged agents of remaking” (Hamraie and Fritsch 2019, p. 7). The knowledge and material arrangements that result from these hacking practices centre what Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) refers to as “*crip science*”: the skills, wisdom and resources that Disabled people have uniquely developed to navigate inaccessible worlds. Our experiences of “misfitting” into environments that do not sustain our bodyminds have therefore helped us generate the knowledge that we can use to dismantle and remake them (Garland Thomson 2011).

Following this approach, our *crip fashion hacking* workshops focused on re-making clothing that were owned by collaborators but that did not support their bodyminds or express their desired identities. Our objective was to explore alternatives to profit-driven fashion design that enable *crip* communities to affirm their embodied selves. Engaging in fashion hacking through a *crip technoscience* framework centred the knowledge and creativity that comes from Disability experiences, as well as an understanding that fashion hacking makes access through friction. According to Hamraie and Fritsch (2019), *crip technoscience* challenges the dominant assumption that accessibility is about the inclusion and assimilation of Disabled people into non-Disabled environments. It draws on Kelly Fritsch’s (2016) understanding of access as a site of friction and contestation. In this way, fashion hacking in a *crip* context intentionally pushes beyond assimilationist-based approaches to access in fashion design. Rather than aiming to hide or eliminate Disability through accessible clothing features, fashion is redesigned to be accessible through the lens of “non-compliance and protest” (Hamraie and Fritsch 2019, p. 10).

**Philippa:** The hacking workshops focused on small group experiences, where participants worked with one or two research team members via Zoom to hack their garments. Ben, you also created an elective course as a branch of *Cripping Masculinity*. What was this course about?

**Ben:** The course aimed to cultivate a deeper understanding and practice of social justice in the context of Disability and fashion design. For the first half of the course, students learned about the Disability Justice movement, *crip* fashion and fashion hacking. They watched Sins Invalid's *Crip Bits* video series, read their *Skin, Tooth and Bone: A Disability Justice Primer* (2016), and engaged with works by Disabled queer of colour scholars, activists and designers such as Shayda Kafai, Mia Mingus and Sky Cubacub. For the second half of the course, each student-designer worked in a virtual 'pod' with a mentor (research team member) and a collaborator (research participant) in order to hack one of the collaborator's garments. The pod was led by the collaborator's experiences and desires, and the student supported the redesign of the collaborator's garment. A mentor facilitated the collaboration, supported the knowledge exchange, and provided care for the student and collaborator throughout the process.

**Philippa:** The aspect of exclusivity in fashion that Ben spoke about is also something that is foundational to academic spaces. To me, it is amazing to witness both fashion students and scholars work against this and, by doing so, work against harmful, ableist systems built out of capitalist frameworks. This is something that's key to Disability Justice.

**Kristina:** Disability Justice, at its core, is a movement led by Disabled people of colour. It aimed to expand upon the Disability Rights Movement that sought equal rights for Disabled folks within the legal system. One of the most well-known examples of the Disability Rights Movement's activism was the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. The ADA granted legal protections based on Disability status in the United States, and it has been a framework for similar legislation around the world. Disability Justice was developed to respond to gaps in the Disability Rights Movement that focused on whiteness, maleness, heteronormativity and mobility as the default Disability experience (Kafai 2021). Disabled activists of colour and who are queer and trans were rarely reflected in the Disability Rights movement; it was primarily led by white, cis heterosexual Disabled people who discussed Disability as a single and isolated issue. Disability Justice aimed to centre leadership of Disabled people of colour and to cultivate community with them. It underscores how ableism, white supremacy, racism, sexism, colonialism, patriarchy, cis-heteronormativity and other forms of oppression work together to oppress people whose bodyminds do not conform to dominant understandings of normalcy, intelligence and behaviour (Sins Invalid 2016; Lewis 2022).

As we discussed in the introduction, the performance group Sins Invalid has been invaluable to Disability Justice. They outline ten core principles of the movement: intersectionality; leadership of those most impacted; an anti-capitalist politic; a commitment to cross-movement organizing; recognizing wholeness; sustainability; a commitment to cross-Disability solidarity; interdependence; collective access; and collective liberation (Sins Invalid 2016). The definition of Disability Justice that I relate to most on both an emotional and physical level is Mia Mingus' (2018) declaration that Disability Justice is just another term for love. To practice Disability Justice is to love Disability, and to love it *publicly*. A *crip* and loving approach to time and pace is one aspect that J has said he personally connected with in *Crippling Masculinity*.

## 5. Crippling Time While Hacking Fashion

**Jonathan:** I came to form an intimate relationship with *crip* time throughout the development of the project. *Crip* time is a concept and a practice developed by Disability scholars and activists (e.g., Kafer 2013; Price 2011; Samuels 2017), and it is one that we have been utilizing for our project to reject capitalist ideals about productivity, creation, and collaboration. *Crip* time reimagines temporality through a recognition that current expectations of productivity and time have been based upon ableist frameworks (Kafer 2013, p. 27). It creates new temporalities that attend to the needs of our bodyminds, allowing us to take breaks and refuse to push through when the dictates of capitalist expectations tell us to continue (Samuels 2017). Throughout the hacking workshops in the course—as well as in the earlier iterations of them—*crip* time has been central to our

design practice and relationships. We encouraged every group to organize their schedules in ways that centred their needs and created a space to reimagine what productivity could look like for them. One pairing between the student-designer Julie and the collaborator AJ really highlighted crip time throughout their process of collaboration. Julie often felt the pressures of university time and felt overwhelmed during the process. They didn't complete the garment by the end of the course, and it's still a work in progress, but this is actually something we encouraged. We wanted Julie to experience the practice of crip time by being supported to question and reimagine the pace that she was taught to expect of herself in a university course. AJ reinforced these ideas using comforting words and plenty of encouragement. To many members of crip and Mad communities, crip time is not just a theory, but an active force in their life. It is a reality of survival in a world with ableist barriers, and a way of respecting the changing capacity of each bodymind, even when the constraints of capitalism work against it.

**Jonathan:** Although we wanted to encourage crip time and support an anti-capitalist, Disability-centred approach to time and pace in our workshops, there was another 'time signature' with which we had to grapple: university time. University time follows a capitalist-based system of time that requires progressive and consistent work, with set due dates and expectations. It often leaves little room for adaptation because results are based on scores or grades rather than experiences. Unfortunately, no matter how much we wanted to encourage crip time, we still had to work within the constraints of university time. Just as in music, it is next to impossible for a song to exist within two different time signatures simultaneously—this was the dissonance we felt while undertaking fashion hacking through the structure of a university class. When practicing crip time in the workshops, the greatest success we found has been when it was not just our dominant time signature, but our *only* time signature. By stripping down the capitalist timeframes, crip time can flourish and cultivate crip fashion hacking.

**Ben:** I have been reflecting on the differences of embedding crip time into the university compared to the fashion industry. Plural understandings of fashion and fashion design have historically existed since time immemorial and continue to operate geographically today. However, a singular white European definition of fashion has become hegemonic and it associates fashion with capitalist production and consumption, as well as with clothing of the moment. This definition was developed during the European modernist period, and it prioritizes novelty, constant change, and speed (Payne 2021). We can therefore coin 'fashion industry time' that requires a fast pace for fashion design to support the demand of constant change. In the fashion industry, this timestamp is practiced by the expectation that designers produce at least four distinct collections per calendar year—fall/winter, spring/summer, pre-fall and resort—and showcase these collections at four scheduled industry events (Wong 2013). In the university, there are specific timestamps for courses, semesters and academic years, yet the university also provides the material conditions that can make space for crip time. Individual faculty—particularly those with more security and seniority—have agency over their courses, and they can intentionally bend their pacing and deadlines toward crip time. Students and faculty can also request and receive formal 'accommodation' through their university in order to develop a schedule and deadlines that better supports their pace. While the fashion industry does not offer these same conditions, fashion design in the university can offer more flexible timestamps to support the pace of the design collaborators. While our hacking workshops provided this flexibility, I wonder about the extent to which this affirmation of participants' intersectional crip embodiments moved beyond our design spaces and into their everyday lives.

**Philippa:** The collaborator Birdie really comes up for me. Her student-designer, Aris, helped her to create a new bra that worked for her body (Figure 1). For context, Birdie had top surgery years ago, but during the workshop, she was de-transitioning and identifying as female again. It was important for Birdie to find a bra for her flat chest, which didn't seem to exist in the world. Even though it wasn't something that was necessarily seen by other people, a bra was something that created a sense of gender euphoria and validation

in her own embodiment. Under Birdie's guidance, Aris ensured that none of the alterations to the bra were permanent, should Birdie want to take it apart so it returns to its original cup size. Aris also created a document of how to do similar alterations to other pieces (Figure 2). This provided a format for Birdie to follow if she wanted to alter other pieces. In our closing meeting, Birdie talked about how important that document was going to be for her future. For example, she had a wedding coming up and had nothing to wear but had a lot of dresses that held potential. She would use that document to fix the chest and be able to wear the dresses again, helping to give her the confidence and validation to be in the world. I know that didn't necessarily happen in all the groups, but this was one case that did show a deep impact on Birdie's intersectional crip embodiment in their everyday life.



**Figure 1.** Birdie's finished garment. The image shows a maroon bralette lying flat on a white background. The fabric is ribbed, with an iridescent band on the bottom.

- 1) Pin the area of your garment you'll be working on to the tabletop. Then, fold up the area you'll be sewing to flatten it (in this case, I used a v-shaped "cut" along the original dart) and pin that down in as many places as needed. Try to have some places that anchor into the bottom band or binding on the edge of the cups so that there's some extra stability holding the shape in place once you let all the pins loose. When pinning your fold, keep in mind how the rest of the cup looks too; you might have to keep it a little looser so that both the folded area and the fabric around it aren't pulled too tight. I took some time to play with the balance on both sides to create a look I felt was natural.

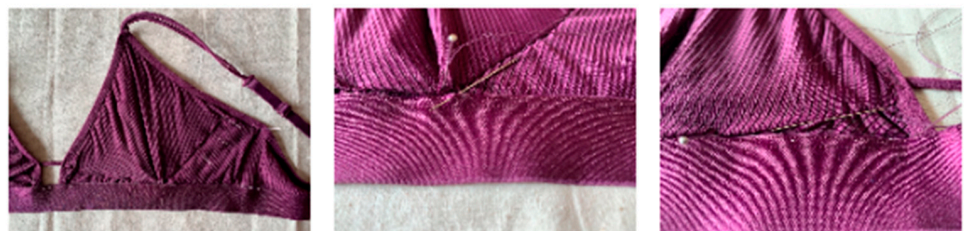


fig. 1 pinned bralette

fig. 2 anchoring in binding

fig. 3 ladder stitch

**Figure 2.** A sample of the hacking document created for Birdie by Aris. The image shows a screenshot of black text that reads "(1) Pin the area of your garment you'll be working on to the tabletop. Then, fold up the area you'll be sewing to flatten it (in this case, I used a V-shaped "cut" along the original



dart) and pin that down in as many places as needed. Try to have some places that anchor into the bottom band or binding on the edge of the cups so that there's some extra stability holding the shape in place once you let all the pins loose. When pinning your fold, keep in mind how the rest of the cup looks too; you might have to keep it a little looser so that both the folded area and the fabric around it aren't pulled too tight. I took some time to play with the balance on both sides to create a look I felt was natural". Below the text are three photographs: the first, labeled "fig. 1 pinned bralette", shows one side of a maroon ribbed bralette with pins, flat against a white linen textile; the second, labeled "fig. 2 anchoring in binding" shows a bra cup and band that have been pinned together; the third, labeled "fig. 3 ladder stitch" shows the bralette's band with visible stitching.

## 6. Honouring Collective Access

*Holding hands in all the ways we can*

*The form taking different shapes*

*with all the fingers or none of the fingers*

*All of the glorious ways our genders, races and sexualities*

*meet our stutters, disassociations and aches*

**Philippa:** Another tenant of Disability Justice we explore through the project is a major shift away from that singular Disability rights-based framework Kristina spoke about toward Disability Justice. That really comes through when thinking about different understandings of access.

**Ben:** It does. From a Disability Rights perspective, access is focused on supporting Disabled people solely based on their Disability experiences. In contrast, access from a Disability Justice lens understands Disabled people as whole people rather than siloing their Disability from their other social positions. In our fashion hacking workshops, we aimed to incorporate this latter understanding of access through every encounter—from how we remade clothing to how we communicated with collaborators. We recognized that each encounter would not always be accessible, but we would do our best with small-scale actions to bring about access. As [Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha \(2021\)](#) has observed about Disabled mutual aid, "We were maybe not going to save the world, but we were going to save each other" (n.p.).

**Philippa:** There are so many examples of encounters with access needs that happened in tandem with much larger, perhaps more obvious access needs. I think one great example is in the way the student-designer Eesha worked with the collaborator Cam.

**Ben:** Yes! Cam wanted their garment to support their experiences as an East Asian, trans masculine, fat-identified, Lolita-loving Disabled person. Their original pre-hacked garment was a long vest that did not care for their intersectional experiences (Figure 3). It was too tight. The lining caused sores on their sensitive skin, while its floral pattern didn't reflect their trans masculinity. The silhouette also did not have the volume they desired for their Lolita aesthetic. Cam and student-designer Eesha hacked the vest to centre an intersectional understanding of access and care for all the parts of Cam's identities (Figure 4). The vest was made larger; the lining was changed to an ultra-soft blue textile; and a removable bustle skirt was added. This latter hack especially brought about care for Cam as a racialized, trans, Disabled person by recognizing that the exaggerated volume might get tangled in Cam's crutch when they moved about their city, and its hyper visibility might put Cam in danger in particular social contexts. The removable design offered Cam the agency to detach the bustle and easily store it in their backpack when they traveled from one location to another, and to then reattach it when they arrived at the destination where they felt safe to wear their voluminous piece.

**Philippa:** We also see this in the experience between the collaborator Rowan and the student-designer Lisa. What really came through here was what Jonathan spoke about—navigating time and capacity within deeply-entrenched, capitalist systems of productivity.

**Alexis:** One small but significant practice where Rowan and Lisa's needs were navigated was in how this collaboration actually took shape rather than how we as a research team planned for it. Originally, these hacking workshops and virtual meetings were to take place during the class, using that time to build relationships and hack the clothing. However, it was still under the misguided assumption that when the meetings were set, folks' capacity would remain the same and each person would have the emotional, physical and mental energy readily available. In order to meaningfully address access barriers, we had to first recognize that it would be impossible for each group to stick to the format that we had intended. We had to recognize that our first draft of this process was essentially flawed. That opened up discussions about alternative ways to maintain communication and build relationships. We talked about how we could support this process, get Rowan the sweater they desired, honour Lisa's schedule and labour, and honor my capacity. We created a Google drive that allowed each of us to input design inspirations and concepts while sharing personal interests and tidbits of who we are, as we might in a virtual or in-person conversation. All of these small interactions looked to collective access to care for each persons' needs.

**Philippa:** It's interesting how personal interests came up in some of the collaborations, which was fostered by these dialogues between the collaborators and student-designers.

**Alexis:** Talking about personal interests created a pathway for more tender and intimate collaboration. For example, Lisa and Rowan had a common interest in Gangnam, which influenced what their collaborative design looked like. Furthermore, meeting up became easier because there was an eagerness to come to a meeting, knowing that we were all desired as full humans, rather than just meeting up to complete a goal.



**Figure 3.** Cam's original garment. The image shows a long, black vest hanging on a wooden hanger against a white painted brick background. The vest has brushed silver buttons along each side, fastening a front panel together. The interior of the vest is visible. It is white with a pattern of dark red and yellow roses with green stems, leaves, and thorns.



**Figure 4.** (a) Cam’s hacked garment without bustle. The image shows a long black vest with a blue interior on a wooden hanger against a painted white brick background. The vest has silver buttons on each side and a narrow blue belt at the waist that matches the vest’s interior. (b) Cam’s hacked garment with removable bustle attached. The image shows a long black vest with a blue interior on a wooden hanger against a painted white brick background. Attached at the waist is a bustle that resembles a skirt, with a blue bottom layer and a black top layer. It is left open with silver snaps showing.

## 7. Interdependence through Fashion Hacking

*I’m holding hands with my Disability*

*I’m holding hands with my clothes*

*I have the other hand free*

*Could I use that hand to throw it away?*

*Or could I use that hand to mend it?*

**Philippa:** Interdependence is a core principle of Disability Justice (Sins Invalid 2016). I wonder if we could discuss a little bit more about how this practice played out in our workshops.

**Kristina:** [Mingus \(2017\)](#) explains that “Interdependence moves us away from the myth of independence, and towards relationships where we are all valued and have things to offer” (n.p.). Counter to dominant ableist logics, in interdependence there is no ‘lack’ to remedy, but an abundance of ‘have’, to share and to share willingly and eagerly. However, much like access intimacy ([Mingus 2011](#)), interdependence cannot be artificially created; it grows naturally in loving and care-filled environments. In the workshops, we attempted to create interdependent hacking pods, in some cases pairing two students with less fashion experience with one collaborator and an experienced mentor. We didn’t always experience our desire for interdependence between the two student-designers. In fact, the opposite occurred—it ended up being more challenging to build interdependent relationships within the time constraints of the course when an additional person was integrated. While the integration of an additional student-designer was intended to lessen the labour of the hacking itself, it disproportionately increased the amount of labour and time it took to foster relationships within the set meeting times. On a strictly logistical level, it takes four people more time to introduce themselves than it takes three. On a more nuanced level, it takes more labour to understand two people’s desires, intentions, politics, and capacities than to understand the same facets of one person. The meetings were filled with greetings, pleasantries, and technical updates, but there simply was no time to discuss hobbies, interests, or creative endeavours, essentially developing relationships. As Jonathan mentioned, we were working within the time constraints of a university, an institution built from the roots of capitalism and not always hospitable to interdependent relationships.

A friend of mine, Jenna [Reid \(2022\)](#) once said: “It’s a beautiful thing to *learn* how to *receive* love”. Through this project our team is not only learning how to receive love within our work, but how to foster interdependence within our hacking pods. This learning, like all forms of love, takes time, intention, and freedom to develop. Although we saw deep relationships form in some pods, there were others that were disconnected. We could not control the time of the course, or the emotional intentions of our student-designers or collaborators. We will continue to desire the cultivation of interdependence within this project, and we will continue to fail in relationships that are not given the time, intention and love that we have developed as a team.

**Alexis:** A question that arises for me when thinking about interdependence is: How can fashion build interdependent relationships by being both a relational medium—like a mutual friend that two people can share conversation about and find connection through—and an active community member? The hacking workshops could not unfold without textiles and garments. Garments became a support system that offered care to collaborators because these materials connected how they presented their intersectional identities in an embodied way. Furthermore, through the process of fashion hacking, we further developed emotional and tactile relationships with garments—we made sure that these unused garments are getting used again. To me, this is rooted in Indigenous worldview and practices. [Wilson \(2008\)](#), Rebecca [Sockbeson \(2009\)](#), Manu [Meyer \(2008\)](#) are some people who come to mind that explore this connection.

**Philippa:** You worked closely with the collaborator Keith and the student-designer Melanie. They had a deeply interdependent relationship that was built on a lot of what you are discussing.

**Alexis:** Although this is my interpretation from being in the same space as them, I witnessed Keith and Melanie’s relationship develop through their transcultural shared experiences, Keith being Métis and Melanie Native Hawaiian. The three of us talked about how we viewed the inclusion of more-than-humans and Land as community and how the Land can offer such generous insights. Halfway through our conversation, it felt like our shoulders relaxed, to use the words of [Mingus \(2017\)](#). Our friendship felt so immediate and special. I want to share something Keith offered during our last conversation: “I think Melanie and I, our connection, which is a weirdly amazing, intergenerational, transcultural . . . I don’t know, I can’t even describe it. But I just feel like we connected right away, and our ideas flowed together in a really good way. And then [the hacked shirt] that came out

of it is the most beautiful transformation of something that used to hold some negative connotations. And it's been transformed into this beautiful, powerful symbol of solidarity between nations". There was a meaningful relationship between all of us and a shifted relationship with the shirt Keith and Melanie hacked.

**Philippa:** Keith's words and summary of their relationship with Melanie is just so perfect. What were those negative connotations embedded in Keith's original, unhacked piece—a rodeo shirt?

**Alexis:** When Keith, Melanie and I all first discussed the shirt they wanted to hack, Keith talked about the idea of rodeo and how in Alberta, where Keith lived, there was and continues to be violence against Indigenous communities at rodeos. However, Keith shared that the elements of rodeo are rooted in many Métis traditions and shares roots in other Indigenous communities. Melanie immediately chimed in about how her mom goes to the rodeo every year in Hawaii and how rodeo is popular amongst Native Hawaiians. What came from this was a collective choice to use traditional beading and embroidery knowledge to adorn flowers along this rodeo "western shirt". The hacking served a reclamation of Indigenous relationships to the rodeo, and symbolized a rebuilt relationship with the rodeo through the design process and final shirt. When the hacking plan was decided, Keith offered to give Melanie the beads to make it possible. I was able to go to Keith's place to pick up these beads, and Keith gifted me a pin that said "babies against colonialism" because they had found out that I was pregnant. I mention these small parts that may not seem related because these practices nurtured our embodied, interdependent relationships in material ways that included more-than-human entities.

## 8. Desire for Disability as a Design Principle

*Palms touching*

*Holding all of it*

*All of our bodies-minds-spirits*

*All of the kinships and fabrics that embrace them, embrace us*

**Philippa:** [Sins Invalid \(2016\)](#) shares, "A Disability Justice framework understands that: All bodies are unique and essential; All bodies have strengths and needs that must be met; We are powerful, not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them; All bodies are confined by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion, and more, and we cannot separate them" (p. 19). In this project, this ethos of Disability Justice was not only experienced through the relationships that were formed, but in the design process too. Ben, how did you, the student-designers and the collaborators engage with these principles in the design process?

**Ben:** When fashion design includes Disabled people, the design approach is often that of adaptive fashion. Here clothing originally designed for non-Disabled people is modified for Disabled wearers. This practice centres non-Disabled bodies as the starting place in the fashion design process, and then adapts these designs for Disabled bodies. While these adaptive features recognize the needs of Disabled bodies, these elements are often visually concealed in the overall design of garments and, as such, sanitize Disabled bodies for non-Disabled people. For example, the Tommy Hilfiger adaptive polo is designed with magnets along the front to open and close in the same way as a button-down shirt. This design feature supports ease of dress for people with limited mobility and dexterity. However, rather than making these closures visible, using this access feature as an aesthetic feature and celebrating Disability, the magnets are hidden inside the shirt and disguise the fact that the shirt is designed for Disabled people. Adaptive fashion design therefore does not embrace desire for Disability but instead views Disability as a problem that fashion design can conquer, solve, hide, and normalize. In contrast, Disabled designer Liz Jackson explains their crip approach to design, "Usually in design when people consider Disability, typically the goal is to smooth things out or to fix a thing. But for me, it's really about honoring the friction of Disability. Really thinking about what sort of creative opportunity Disability has

to bring to design". (in [Fonder 2019](#), n.p.). Our approach heeded Jackson's understanding by honouring the beauty and imagination of Disability experiences, and inviting desire for what Disability disrupts and generates into the design process and outcome.

**Philippa:** This crip approach was exemplified by our student-designer, Brigit, in the workshop with you, Kristina, and the collaborator Adam.<sup>2</sup>

**Kristina:** Absolutely, it was. It's important to note that when participating in this project, it's not the first time some of our collaborators have worked in a proudly crip space, specifically the visibly Disabled community members who cannot hide or camouflage their bodies through clothing or other means. For Adam, as for other visibly Disabled participants, the Disabled body has been the entry point to community. For them, to desire Disability is not a political act, but rather a tool for survival. To quote trans and Disabled scholar Syrus Marcus [Ware \(2017\)](#), "the desire for our Disabled kin is desire". For Adam, a power chair user working as an artist, desire was the centre of the hacking workshops. Adam wanted to make a worn-out jacket of Adam's favourite NHL hockey wearable again. Adam loved wearing this jacket out in public, as people would speak to Adam about the most recent game or even ask about the score if a game was happening. But the jacket was no longer wearable for Adam. Adam works with care attendants to dress each day, a practice that puts unexpected stress on the fabric and seams of the jacket's shoulders and arms. To be able to wear the jacket again would be an act of love, for Adam's team and body.

Adam worked with Brigit who had a keen interest in technology but had never worked with, or even engaged with, someone who looks like Adam, who moves through space like Adam. In our first meeting, Adam's Disabled body was proudly on display: Adam's face was close to the screen, the joystick of Adam's wheelchair obscuring a corner of the camera, and Adam's speech was non-normative in both sound and pace. Adam spoke about the way care attendants help dress Adam each day, mobility limitations, and Adam's favourite hockey team with the same type of pride. For Brigit, this was a jarring experience, highlighting that unless we are entrenched in the crip community, we rarely see crip pride. But Adam's pride is not unique. As Disability scholar Catherine Frazee notes, "Before we can begin to push back against injustice and indignity, before we can rise up from the swirl of rate and despair, before we can speak back to a script and that casts us as tragic victims and bitter villains, we must have pride" ([Roman and Frazee 2014](#), p. 5). As Brigit moved through the design process, she designed to represent and desire Adam's pride in Adam's body and favourite hockey team. She removed the leather sleeves, replacing them with sleeves of a down filled bomber jacket and making them adjustable from underneath the arm, facilitating easier dressing. Brigit moved the team's logo from the back of the jacket to the front so it would not be obscured by Adam's chair, and then added other logos and symbols that Adam selected. Brigit integrated a micro-LED pixel thread that outlines the logos and lights up via a Bluetooth connection controlled by Adam's iPad. This is a jacket that demands to be seen, demands to be admired and desired. In wearing it, there is no hiding Adam's body, nor Adam's love for Adam's favourite hockey team—There is only to celebrate, to enshrine with love, to desire with pride.

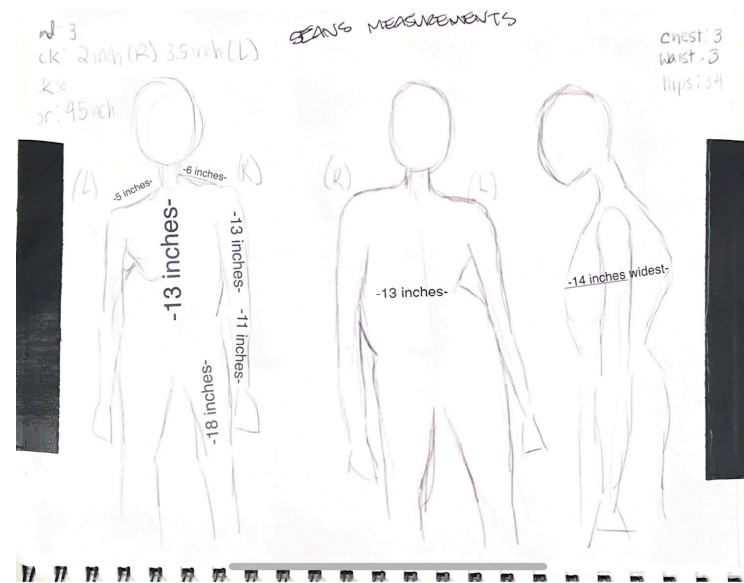
**Philippa:** A very different example of this desire for Disability through fashion hacking was with the collaborator Sean and the student-designer Diego Ortega. The garment that these two created was one that reflects sort of a 'capital F fashion' aesthetic, something that feels rather avant-garde, and also celebrates the physicality of Sean's body. Ben, you worked with this pod.

**Ben:** It was an incredible hacking experience. Sean is a queer, East Asian visibly Disabled art curator with a very experimental fashion aesthetic. His hacked garment was a pair of voluminous jersey black pants that he never wore because the length did not work for his short, asymmetrical body. Sean's access needs require the garment to not constrain or constrict his body, but instead allow for an ease of mobility and an offering of comfort. Diego deconstructed the pants and draped the fabric into a top. The design did not force Sean's body into a particular shape or structure but allowed the garment to take the shape of his body. Moreover, the top has six possible openings for Sean's arms and head. It also has five yards of detachable chiffon that can go through these openings and can be shortened by buttoning it to a custom wristband (Figure 5). This modular design gives Sean agency to style the garment in a multitude of ways, create novel silhouettes, and centre comfort and mobility.



**Figure 5.** (a) Sean's original garment. The image shows a pair of black, wide-leg pants with an elastic waist on a metal clip hanger against a white painted brick wall. (b) Sean's hacked garment. The images shows a black, slightly sheer sleeveless top on a wooden hanger against a white brick wall. The top is drapery with a cowl neck. (c) A different styling option for Sean's hacked garment. The image shows a sleeveless garment on a wooden hanger against a white painted brick background. Grey material is woven into the right arm of a black sleeveless top, coming through the left arm and attaching at the bottom of the garment.

**Ben:** An important moment in this hacking exchange was when Sean shared his measurements with Diego. Diego originally sent Sean an illustration of a non-Disabled cis man's body that a tailor would use to collect measurements to make a suit. However, the illustration and requested measurements didn't reflect Sean's short and asymmetrical proportions. Sean redrew the illustration to mirror his body and sent it back to Diego (Figure 6). This intervention allowed the design process to honour Sean's body as the starting point in the design, desiring for the ways in which Sean's body would direct the garment.



**Figure 6.** Sean’s drawing of their body with measurements. At the top of the sketch reads “Sean’s Measurements”, with the measurements handwritten on either side of the text. The sketch shows three views of a body: a front view, a back view and a side view, with the relative measurements listed on top of the drawings.

## 9. Reflections on the Fashion Hacking Workshops

**Kristina:** One of the biggest challenges in these workshops was the balance of how much time there was to teach the students in the classroom through texts about Disability Justice and Disability Studies. We understood these texts to be formative to creating a space for our student-designer to be informed and collaborators to feel safe. This learning took space, and reduced how much time student-designers and collaborators had to work together, to develop relationships, share embodied knowledge through conversation, and ultimately hack garments.

As much as academic knowledge can be a tool of teaching, there are only so many readings you can give someone in the first six weeks of a course, and we can only hope that reading these works will shift everyone’s perspective. There needed to be time dedicated to this, time for the students to understand what they were going into, as that knowledge generation does feed into the relationship building and the creation of the actual garments. While the time for hacking itself was limited by university time, it was also limited by the research teams’ conception of what knowledge was necessary to foster interdependent relationships. University time became a problem because so much needed to be done in such a short amount of time. In a utopian world, the students would have met the collaborators earlier and had a longer time to develop relationships and make the garments. There was a consistent and paradoxical struggle between time to develop knowledge about theory and to develop relationships that require both an understanding of theory and a removal of time constraints to be generative and comfortable.

**Jonathan:** To build on that, groups that faced the most challenges were the ones where there was less of a connection, and so it didn’t necessarily come down to the academic content that they were learning at the beginning of the course. While that content shared important knowledge, it was more so the connection of their lived experiences, or the desire to learn about these lived experiences and apply them in the context of the hacking workshops. As [Mingus \(2011\)](#) explains, access intimacy doesn’t always come down to a person’s political understanding of Disability or access— it’s an elusive sense of someone “getting” your access needs. Those connections are what made both the collaborator and the student-designers want to go above and beyond, because there was an interpersonal value beyond the class grade.



**Philippa:** That’s something I was thinking about as well, getting out of this mindset of this being just a class, which is a really hard thing to ask of students who are *in a class* and working for a grade. And Ben, as much as you fostered an environment that does work against those structures, it’s hard for a student to get outside of that. It speaks not only to the academic system, but also to the fashion industry. These are students who are working toward a particular industry that is grounded on a restrictive ideal of time, or in ‘fashion industry time’ as you called it. Even though we had good relationships develop, it was hard to get some of the students out of that designer-client mindset rather than these interpersonal relationships; it was hard to get them to understand that part of making garments with their collaborators was getting to know them and their whole selves. [Sins Invalid \(2016\)](#) includes “recognizing wholeness” as one of their ten principles of Disability Justice. They explain, “Each person is full of history and life experience. Each person has an internal experience composed of our own thoughts, sensations, emotions, sexual fantasies, perceptions, and quirks. Disabled people are whole people” ([Sins Invalid 2016](#), p. 24). To recognize the wholeness of the collaborators, we need time and space to work closely with them. This was possible in the first workshops that we had outside of the course, but less possible within the structure of the course and the university timeline of an academic term.

**Ben:** Going back to the experience of Aris and Birdie is important because our hacking workshops spanned different formats. Aris and Birdie worked with the same timeline as the course, but Aris wasn’t a student in the course, so they had more flexibility. I think that understanding the differences of what we could do, what we couldn’t do and how these different contexts changed relationships is valuable. Beyond that, I’m thinking a lot about this “versus” mindset you mention, Philippa. In the context of a course in a fashion design program, there is a critical perspective as well as an industry focus. There was this idea of designing for a client in the course, even though we tried to move away from it, but isn’t there also value in that? I’m cautious to dismiss it as inherently negative. For example, I remember one student-designer sharing with me that they’ve never designed with or for an actual person in school – talking to them, learning about them and creating for them. It’s valuable to gain experience designing for living, breathing humans with lived experiences and bodies who navigate the social world in different ways. Students were also not designing for people who have an idealized fashion body or who are wealthy and can afford custom clothing. There is value in learning about those experiences, designing with those experiences, and bringing those experiences with you in your future courses and career. Designing with and for Disabled people disrupts how design pedagogy typically operates in fashion school—The human body is absent, or if a human body is present, they are an idealized model who does not share their perspectives.

**Philippa:** I think this is something that happens so much in fashion for people who don’t fit within that idealized fashion body. If you’re outside of that ideal, it’s considered peripheral or sub-cultural by the fashion industry. The fashion needs of people with embodied differences are met mostly in DIY spaces, or through movements that fall outside of the mainstream fashion industry. These are incredibly valuable spaces of resistance and community, and that shouldn’t be diminished. But it’s something that frustrates me with the ways that fashion is talked about, especially for Disabled bodies, where embodied differences are defined only as resistant. It is valuable to treat Disabled people as couture clients and offer access to custom fashion, having garments made specifically for bodyminds that are not always valued in the mainstream industry. There is value in showing students this reality as an industry practice. Some of the collaborators are people who want customized fashion in the same ways as those who are non-Disabled.

This came through with Max Q and Audrey Chou—their meetings were short, usually only ten minutes, even though we would put aside an hour. I tried to facilitate a deeper relationship between them, but they didn’t seem to connect in a more personal way. Nonetheless, Audrey created this couture feeling piece for Max that reflected Max’s identity (Figure 7). In the garment, Audrey included aspects of art that Max made, reflecting his

work in the colours, textures and techniques that were part of the design. Audrey also included aspects of comfort that were essential to Max without foregoing the couture feeling of the piece. The relationship perhaps felt transactional in the beginning, but it resulted in this beautiful hacked piece. To me, their relationship and the final garment perfectly illustrated access intimacy where even in short meetings, Audrey got what Max's needs were and built that directly into the garment. This highlights that transactional relationships can, too, be crippled. While we encouraged deeper relationships between the student-designers and collaborators, these couldn't be forced, and in a case like Audrey and Max, it didn't seem to be necessary. Carrying with them lessons from Disability Justice activists, Disability studies scholarship, and the experiences of those with whom they collaborated, students can move forward in their work with an understanding of the need to centre Disability in their design practice, even in transactional relationships. It is important to distinguish that a lot of Disabled people don't want to participate in that fashion system, but there are also Disabled people who *do* want to participate but aren't welcome. It is important to show students that Disabled people can and should be part of the fashion industry.



**Figure 7.** Max Q's finished garment. The image shows a bright green, long, sleeveless vest with a high neck on a wooden hanger against a painted white brick background. The neck is embellished with burgundy piping alongside silver and green piping that resembles a vine. The body of the vest is embellished with two white and pink textile flowers. The bottom half of the vest is a dark, sheer fabric overlaid with green textile and burgundy piping and embellished with clusters of small burgundy flowers.

**Ben:** I have been thinking about this Philippa—the impact of fashion hacking on students-designers and collaborators, and the bigger shifts that might come from them in the future. Collaborators have shared with us that they valued creating a garment that

honours their bodyminds and through a process in which their intersectional Disability experiences were desired. That might not systemically transform the fashion industry or culture-at-large, but it impacts individuals. Collaborators emotionally carry and physically wear this experience with them in their everyday lives, and they can share these experiences with their communities.

As you shared Philippa, the students who participated in the course might bring the knowledge and practices that they learned into their other courses, and eventually into the fashion industry during their internships and when they finish school. I don't want to be too utopian about the changes that students might enact solely because of taking this course, but the fact that they will enter other fashion spaces opens up possibilities. For example, students might draw upon crip theory to centre the beauty of crip embodiments rather than assume non-Disabled embodiments as the standard when they design. They might recognize the fashion knowledge that comes from Disability experiences and subsequently intentionally heed and hire Disabled people when they work on projects about design and Disability. Students might introduce crip time into their design processes in order to slow-down tight scheduling, and they might engage with Disability Justice principles to expand one-dimensional understandings of Disability. Bringing these concepts—and others from this class—into their other university courses and workplaces can start to reduce stigma and cultivate new understandings among peers, faculty and colleagues and, eventually and slowly, transform practices in fashion education and the fashion industry.

**Alexis:** There are a lot of challenges that come with having classes like this—classes that offer different ways of knowing and then experiment with putting that into practice. These ways of knowing were in tension with other courses that the students were taking. Despite telling some students that they did not have to finish the project and to honour their bodymind's cues, they still told me they stayed up all night working and lost sleep. It is a slow build to break down dominant practices, but the fact that some practices, such as drawing on crip time and desiring Disability, actually manifested within this space, no matter how small, should be recognized.

**Kristina:** Another challenge was the disconnect that sometimes happened as a result of the project taking place virtually. I know it was impossible to all come together during a pandemic and while working in different locations, but there is a lot of embodied knowledge in actually sharing a physical space and sharing a material environment.

**Ben:** We were facilitating a material and embodied process virtually, but this format provided access for some collaborators who wouldn't have been able to visit campus. This opened up participation to take part in a fashion design that is typically an in-person experience.

**Philippa:** It would have also been so much easier for the student-designers and collaborators to do fittings on the body if they were together in the same space, as you talked about Kristina. At the same time, the virtual space was a site of so much possibility that we didn't foresee. For example, the virtual spaces allowed collaborators and student-designers to communicate and collaborate through the flexible and frequent scheduling of meetings, the intimacy of each person being in their own homes, the mitigation of safety and anxiety that may have come from traveling to and from an in-person space. I think it's difficult to say whether in-person or virtual or hybrid would be best in the future, but I do think the virtual format was both a benefit and a challenge.

**Alexis:** Further to that, there's no choice in the vulnerability that you hold when you're in a body. In a society embedded with white supremacy, I will always come into a space and be a racialized body. In a society entangled with ableism, Kristina will always come in with a visible, physical Disability. And that's something that can't be hidden at any time. Therefore, entering any new space means the possibility of subjecting oneself to harm, leaving one vulnerable. This isn't to say that online is better than in-person, but having the choice to be online can help some people navigate how vulnerable they want to be with themselves and their embodied experience. For example, I could choose to keep my camera off, and Kristina can meet from wherever she chooses to be. In a lot of ways,

being online and being in the pandemic has allowed us to take on this space that a lot of Disability communities have always been occupying (Kafai 2021).

## 10. Conclusions

This article has articulated the practice of crip fashion hacking that fosters relational ways of designing fashion to centre intersectional crip experiences and decentre ableist logics. As explored in our dialogue, crip fashion hacking creates the conditions that foster flexibility of crippling time, collective access, interdependence, and desire for intersectional Disabled embodiments. More importantly, crip fashion hacking offers the possibility of fostering social justice beyond one's singular engagement in its practice. We recognize that not all collaborators and student-designers in our hacking workshops finished with the experiences, resources or desire to implement their crip fashion learnings. However, we are hopeful that some collaborators might carry out future alterations of their garments and share their learnings with their communities, and some student-designers might centre intersectional crip embodiments in their future fashion design practices. As adrienne maree brown (2017) observes, "What we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system" (p. 53). In this way, the learnings and skills developed in our workshops can be practiced in spaces in the future, re-making fashion paradigms and re-making worlds. We invite educators, researchers, and fashion professionals to explore using crip fashion hacking by desiring with and for communities who are marginalized by the dominant systems.

For those who wish to try out crip fashion hacking, we encourage reflection about the benefits of different workshop formats. Prior to developing the course, we conducted one-on-one virtual workshops between a small number of participants and research team members. These workshops did not have the time restraints of a university course, and therefore provided the space and pace for collaborators and research team members to develop relationships by working slowly on alterations together on Zoom over a few months. Strong, intimate and interdependent relationships were formed—some of which lasted beyond the scope of the project. These relationships took on aspects of collective access, or what many Disability Justice activists refer to as care webs: these complex webs and small exchanges that resist concepts of charity and favour care (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha 2018). Beyond sharing skills and hacking clothing, the participants and research team members shared images and memes over social media that brought them joy, and they exchanged physical notes and handmade items unrelated to the project. They were also conscious of each other's time and changing capacity. As we implemented the hacking workshops within a university course, we intended to continue the focus on fostering relationships through the facilitation of virtual meetings, check-ins and other exchanges. However, we quickly learned that interdependent, intimate relationships are impossible to manufacture. We could not insist that student-designers and collaborators engage with each other in a particular way, or expect that they would fully engage in collective access and interdependence. While some groups developed meaningful relationships during the course, other groups did not. It was difficult for this not to feel like a failure, as we had seen it work well in past workshops. However, we observed that less intimate relationships in our fashion hacking workshops still crippled transactional relationships that typically occur during adaptive fashion design because our workshops centred intersectional crip embodiments. Our hacking workshops led to the creation of custom garments that were accessible, fashionable and desirable—pieces that reflected the embodiments of collaborators but that were created in conditions that we initially wanted to resist. We learned that the intimacy that we were perhaps trying to force was not always necessary to honour intersectional crip experiences with fashion design.

Conducting our fashion hacking workshops virtually led to both benefits and challenges. Disabled people have long engaged in online communities in order to resist the loneliness and isolation that comes from living in an ableist world. Many virtual spaces have fostered Disabled queer-of-colour activism and Disability Justice practices (Kafai 2021; Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha 2021). The virtual fashion hacking spaces illuminated the creativity

of our Disabled collaborators, who came up with imaginative ways to share inspiration, workarounds for sharing custom measurements and alternative ways of collaborating when Zoom fatigue set-in. However, we also recognize the beauty and vitality that can come from coming together in a physical space, and the opportunities that in-person workshops may have had for building communities of Disabled people with shared interest in fashion and fashion design. Perhaps the embodied knowledge that arises from a material environment was lost in the virtual space. We look forward to exploring what we can differently experience through crip fashion hacking during the next iteration of shorter, in-person workshops.

The start of each section of this article has begun with pieces of a poem. As we shared in the introduction, one objective of this article is to think through our learnings from crip fashion hacking through dialogue—a format that might creatively re-make how we do academic analysis and writing. We endeavored to experiment with format not only by using dialogue but also by crafting a poem. Our poem was inspired by our wardrobe interview with the collaborator Cam who shared: “Picking out clothes is a spiritual process for me. It’s touching the clothing and saying hi to it and being like, do you work? . . . It’s like holding hands with someone. I’m holding hands with my Disability and have this other free hand. Could I hold the hand of someone who’s barking angrily at the other person? Or I could hold the hand of someone who’s loving towards them”. Grounded in Cam’s words, we have collectively written this poem as a research team to share how we have experienced the ways in which crip fashion hacking re-makes worlds that centre desire for intersectional crip embodiments and resist ableist logics of the fashion industry.

### **I’m Holding Hands with my Disability**

I’m holding hands with my Disability  
 I have the other hand free  
 Could I hold the hand of someone who fights me?  
 Or I could hold the hand of someone who loves me?  
 Holding is loving, caring  
 To hold hands is for someone to hold it back  
 given and received at our own pace  
 given and received willingly and eagerly.  
 To hold with mutual desire

Holding hands in all the ways we can  
 The form taking different shapes  
 with all the fingers or none of the fingers  
 All of the glorious ways our genders, races and sexualities  
 meet our stutters, disassociations and aches

I’m holding hands with my Disability  
 I’m holding hands with my clothes  
 I have the other hand free  
 Could I use that hand to throw it away?  
 Or could I use that hand to mend it?

Palms touching  
 Holding all of it  
 All of our bodies-minds-spirits  
 All of the kinships and fabrics that embrace them, embrace us

Thank you for holding my hand.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In the article, we intentionally capitalize D in Disability and Disabled as political acts that proudly centre these terms as a culture and identity respectively. Similarly, we capitalize the first letters of Disability Justice to honour the labour, work and impact of the Disability Justice movement and the Black, Indigenous and People of Colour Disabled activists who founded it.
- <sup>2</sup> Adam uses Adam as pronouns. Adam's decision intends to resist the de-humanization that Disabled people experience.

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