

Virtual (Dis)orientations and the Luminosity of Disabled Girlhood

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Abstract: In this article I analyze the production of disabled girlhood on YouTube. Examining the YouTube channel of Rikki Poynter, a deaf vlogger, I show how YouTube is an affective spotlight through which exceptional disabled young women and girls are insidiously called to participate in a project of able-nationalism. I trace how Poynter's channel, as an affective conduit of benevolence, participates in a project of ablebodied rehabilitation. Paradoxically, as Poynter is incorporated into the nation through the resignification of her corporeality as a disabled young woman, (dis)orienting affects that reverberate from her *#NoMoreVoicing—A Challenge Video + Closed Captioning Campaign* | ASL vlog pose the potential for a collective crip reimagining of the virtual.

Keywords: ablenationalism, affect, disability, media, US, YouTube



There are more important things that need to be talked about than
taupe eyeshadow (Rikki Poynter)

On 1 October 2014, deaf makeup vlogger Rikki Poynter uploaded a Q&A video on her YouTube channel. This was not a typical question and answer video for Poynter but was, rather, a video in honor of Deaf awareness week. In *Q&A: Deaf Awareness Week* Poynter juxtaposes a personal narrative of coming to understand her disabled subjectivity—through the eyes of an ablebodied classmate in sixth grade—with a brief critique of institutional barriers for d/Deaf people.¹ In response to the video, MellyCat commented,

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your video! I don't have the guts to do what you are doing, it's really great. I love that you have your own subtitles too, I was able to understand a WHOLE youtube video for the first time in my life! (n.p.)

Alex O'Gorman, a disabled girl commenter with severe hearing loss, articulated a similar feeling of gratitude,

rikki thank you SO MUCH for making this video. i can relate to you so much. i have severe hearing loss, and i usually just say im deaf, but people are always surprised whenever i mention it because i speak 'normally' (n.p.)



Poynter received an overwhelming, intense response from d/Deaf and disabled girls on YouTube. Self-identified disabled and d/Deaf young women and girls amplify MellyCat's and Alex O'Gorman's sentiments in many of the 400 responses to *Q&A: Deaf Awareness Week*. Not only do the disabled and d/Deaf young women and girls thank Poynter for creating a video to which they can intimately relate, but also, like Poynter, they recount instances of feeling isolated and misunderstood by the hearing world.

Not only were disabled girls affected by Poynter's video, but many able-bodied commenters were also in awe over intrepid Poynter and what they called the educational content of her video. For example, Art by Atlas commented in response to the Q&A, "I definitely learned something today. Very educational video-thank you!" TheSuperHero shared a similar sentiment: "This was Amazing. Thank you for putting this out there and educating people ... Also, I enjoyed your sass in this video." Following the upload of the Q&A, gratitude, disbelief, relief, and feelings of belonging traversed and circulated within and by way of Poynter's channel. The affective exchanges in the Q&A comment section are a reminder that technology is "lived: it alters our subjectivity" (Sobchack 2000: 138). In this article I characterize affect as an intersubjective intensity that can exceed emotion, and, like Sara Ahmed (2004), I argue that it works to shape the surface of bodies. Moved by the affective responses, Poynter decided to change direction with her YouTube channel: she is now a Deaf vlogger.

Following Sarah Hill (2017), I position this article as a feminist disability studies intervention that takes seriously disabled girls as social media cultural producers. Disabled young people are often envisioned as "unexpected participants" (Slater 2015: 91) in spaces that have been traditionally dominated by their able-bodied peers. However, YouTube, as a video sharing platform and social networking site, offers disabled girl users and creators the opportunity to "perform their [disabled] identities in ways that are not possible elsewhere" (Nakamura 2007: 205). Despite the proliferation of disabled girl users and creators on YouTube, there is little scholarship in the growing field of girls' media studies that accounts for the complexities of the dynamic, robust community of disabled girls online. Generally, in girls' studies scholarship, the intersection of being a girl and being disabled is rarely explored (Stienstra 2015). Disability is most often "framed as a problem or lack," and thus "experiences of disability for girls appear to trump or silence other experiences, such as those of sex and gender" (Hill 2017: 114). Further, in media studies more broadly, the intersections of youth, disability, and technology are most often discussed only in therapeutic or diagnostic terms (Adkins et

al. 2013; Alper 2014; Ellis 2015; Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2010). However, as Rikki Poynter and her disabled commenters illustrate, “Youth with disabilities are hanging out, messing around, [and] geeking out with digital media too.” Disabled girl users and creators on YouTube push back against the erasure they face in a larger cultural and academic imaginary that ignores the “pleasures and frustrations” and the “day-to-day” (Alper 2014: 3) goings on of disabled youth.

Before moving on, it is important to note that throughout this article I use girl and young woman interchangeably, unless the person I am discussing explicitly identifies as one or the other. Poynter started creating YouTube videos in high school and is now well into her 20s. I, like many scholars of girls’ studies, take girlhood to be an elastic construct, not an essential, pre-determined biological state, and recognize the inherent slippages and overlaps between girlhood and young womanhood. Poynter’s youngness is an integral part of her subjectivity, and she often discusses how her experience of deafness is shaped acutely by how others read her, as a young, feminine subject. Poynter possesses a distinctly girlie aesthetic, cultivated through her obsession with anime cartoons, and the production of her earlier videos, such as *Q&A: Deaf Awareness Week* (2014) that were filmed in her bedroom at her parents’ house. Although Poynter is in her 20s, many of her subscribers and fans are teenage girls, evidenced in her video *Yes, Teenage Girls are at Vidcon* (2015), who articulate how their own experiences of disability and d/Deafness are strikingly similar to Poynter’s. Girls’ studies affords a productive theoretical lens for analyzing Poynter’s and her fans’ and subscribers’ specific experience of disability at the intersection of gender and age.

Not only a space for making visible and performing disabled identity, YouTube also produces disability, as Poynter’s journey from makeup vlogger to disability vlogger attests. In her 2014 video, *I’m Over the Beauty Community on YouTube*, she explains,

Ever since I uploaded that video a couple of days ago, I realized that I want to do something better. I want to do something different and I want to talk about things ... There are more important things that need to be talked about than a taupe eyeshadow ... All I have to say now is I am finally so happy that I am finally honest with myself. I have been lying to myself for the past year and a half ’cause I have always felt that makeup was the only thing that I could do. And after that video, I know that’s not the only thing that I can do. I can do a lot more than that. And that’s exactly what I’m going to do. So here’s to new and hopefully better things and I will see you in my next video. Bye.

The YouTube vlog, as a genre, functions through establishing intimacy between the creator and viewer. For example, vlogs are characterized by a

direct address to the viewers and the conversational form “inherently invites feedback” (Burgess and Green 2009: 54). In this way, vlogs operate, as Tobias Raun (2012) points out, as a “feedback loop,” or in terms of their “interactivity” wherein “subjectivity and affect work reciprocally to constitute a formation of self in constant interaction with others” (Dijck cited in Raun 2012: 140).

In this article, I pay close attention to the ways in which YouTube user comments are illustrative of a new cartography of affect. Through an analysis of Poynter’s YouTube comment sections, I investigate what Adi Kuntsman (2012) calls the “affective fabric of everyday internet engagement,” or the deeply felt and embodied “everyday sociality of connections, ruptures, words, emotions, politics, and sensory energies.” Today’s digitalized environments can be characterized by paradoxical logic—ephemeral and intense, technical and embodied, tangible and ungraspable, visible and invisible. Kuntsman argues that, online, “Speed and circulation co-exist with extensive documentation and preservation,” which in turn transforms “digital feelings, interactions, and events into virtual fossils” (4).

In mapping these “virtual fossils,” I analyze how Poynter becomes luminous, or called forward, as an exceptional disabled young woman under the affective spotlight cast by YouTube. I am interested in the process by which she is called to participate in a new regime of disabled girl productivity, one that is produced through the intersecting logics of postfeminism and ablenationalism. Through tracing how Poynter’s channel functions as an affective conduit of benevolence, I show how her role as a disability educator is made valuable. I argue that this works, unwittingly, to shore up what we might call a post-Americans-with-Disabilities-Act (ADA) disability exceptionalism, which ultimately functions to neutralize disability politics. Paradoxically, since Poynter is incorporated into the nation-state as a paradigmatic able disabled subject, (dis)orienting affects that reverberate from her *#NoMoreVoicing—A Challenge Video + Closed Captioning Campaign | ASL* (henceforth *#NoMoreVoicing*) vlog provide the potential for a crip² reimaging of the virtual.

“I Thought the Entire Thing Was Fake”: Ablenationalist Luminosities

Shortly after Poynter uploaded her Deaf Awareness week video, an article was posted on the *Huffington Post*: “This Beauty Vlogger is Hard of Hearing,

and She's Stepping Up Her Game on YouTube.” The article ends with the sentiment, similar to that of a commenter on her YouTube channel, that “if one of her goals is to raise awareness for what she calls a ‘hidden disability,’ her online presence, mixed with the vibrant colors showcased on her Instagram page, makes it pretty hard to look away” (Matthews 2014: n.p.). The *Huffington Post* article illustrates how the Q&A video instigated a stir of public feelings—intense flows of affect spilled over from the intimate space of Poynter’s channel to other online outlets. As Poynter articulates in the video she uploaded, “Deaf Awareness: I’m on the Huffington Post!” following the appearance of this article,

I can’t believe I’m actually getting to say this in real life, I’m on the Huffington Post! I’m on the Good News portion of the Huffington Post world. To be completely honest with you, I thought the entire thing was fake all weekend until the very second that the article actually went live. I mean it’s not every day that somebody from the Huffington Post emails you and says, ‘Hey! I wanna write about you.’ After the Deaf Awareness video went viral after 3,000 views—FYI: to the little YouTuber people like us, 3K is viral—Cate Matthews from the Huffington Post emailed me ... and said, ‘I’d like to do an interview.’

One way to understand *Q&A: Deaf Awareness Week’s* virality is through the ways in which it participates in and shores up the intersecting logics of postfeminism and ablenationalism. A postfeminist, ablenationalist imaginary creates the conditions of possibility for Poynter’s disabled young womanness to become valuable as she is called forward online or made luminous through her capacity to affect her ablebodied viewers in the *right* way.

Postfeminism, is a contradictory sensibility or perspective on “contemporary gender relations” (Kearney 2015: 265) that repudiates feminism as a mode of critique or framework while simultaneously taking the achievements of the feminist social and political movement for granted. Since postfeminist discourse asserts that feminism is no longer needed, girls are called to bear the burden of responsibility for their individualist endeavors, and the structures in place (racism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and so on) that inevitably guarantee the failure of some girls, more than others, are obscured. Within a postfeminist framework, a girl’s future success hinges on making the correct set of choices via the market. Thus, postfeminist discourse is inextricably bound up in the logic of neoliberalism.

Girls have been theorized as the privileged subjects of neoliberalism. “Future girls,” endowed with an imagined capacity for weathering the attendant crises of neoliberalism, are envisioned as flexible, resilient, adaptive, and ultimately successful in managing their own “choice biography” (Harris 2004: 8). As I have argued elsewhere, it is easy to mistakenly imagine this

ideal girl proto-citizen subject as always, already ablebodied (Todd 2016). However, disabled young women and girls like Poynter, who successfully manage their life and their future, and can fit into the intensified neoliberal parameters of normative young womanhood (white, heterosexual, normatively attractive, *and* entrepreneurial), become intelligible to the nation, similarly to their ablebodied peers, through this postfeminist fiction.

Within a postfeminist atmosphere, certain exceptional girls affectively circulate as “happiness objects,” accumulating value as social goods because of the ways in which they point neoliberal citizens toward the end promise of the good life (Ahmed 2010). For example, in response to Poynter’s video, *Why I’m Over the Beauty Community on Youtube*, Em roy comments, “Rikki, I am so happy that you have found something that makes you feel happy! I feel like this can open up so many doors for you and in the process touch many more peoples lives.” Poynter becomes a happiness means, or, as she takes up residence in Em Roy’s bodily horizon, she causes pleasure. Poynter’s “About Me” attests to the success of her circulation online.

Rikki Poynter is a twenty-four-year old Deaf vlogger on YouTube. After four years of being a beauty blogger and vlogger, she took a hiatus in October 2014 to focus on more lifestyle vlogs and vlogs about deafness and Deaf culture. Since making her first deaf related video on October 1st, 2014, Rikki has been on the Huffington Post, Mic News, Upworthy, ABC News, BBC Newsbeat, BBC Ouch, BBC See Her, and other news outlets in various countries. Also, she has been working on her new closed captioning campaign, #LIGHTSCAMERACAPTION, to try to get more YouTubers to [close] caption their videos. After hopefully one day taking over YouTube, she wants to work on the rest of the internet.

Although in several videos Poynter recalls the painful ways in which ableism has excluded her from the traditional job-market, through YouTube she has successfully leveraged this exclusionism. As a disabled future girl, Poynter has become re-capacitated through, and by way of, a new brand of disability entrepreneurialism.

However tempting it would be to dismiss all disabled bodies as surplus to capital, contemporary iterations of ablenationalism, a logic that undergirds the production of disability, work to recapacitate certain exceptional disabled bodies, like Poynter’s. These normatively disabled bodies, the able disabled, exist within a post-ADA atmosphere, where the state operationalizes, as Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell (2010) put it, “Open rhetorical claims of inclusion for people with disabilities.” One way that normatively disabled people are put to work is through their affective capacity, as “representational symbols” for “neoliberal inclusion efforts” (116). These inclusion efforts are defined through a paradoxical advancement of market

individualism—that has justified the dismantling of social services—as well as a steadfast commitment to “the integration of [the] most vulnerable ‘special’ citizens” (Koshy 2001: 3).

Ablenationalism is inextricable from the project and logic of American exceptionalism. Since the late eighteenth century, in countries experiencing industrialization or that are in the stages of post-industrialization, there has been “a key conflation of nation and ableism.” The coalescing of ableism and nation is characterized as “the degree to which treating people with disabilities as an exception valorizes ablebodied norms of inclusion as the naturalized qualifications for citizenship” (Snyder and Mitchell 2010: 113). Thus, ablenationalism, under the regime of racial capitalism,³ works to incorporate normatively disabled bodies as it insidiously works to dispose of individualized, pathologized bodies that are deemed “too impaired” to labor successfully. It can also be described as an aesthetic project, one that is narrowly defined through the nation’s alignment with a “narrow array of acceptable body types” (115).

Certain exceptional disabled young women and girls, then, like Poynter, are recapacitated and welcomed home as representational symbols. As harbingers of the benevolent and tolerant project of an America yet to come, exceptional disabled girls are disaggregated from their community. As Poynter remarks in her *Deaf Awareness: I’m on the Huffington Post!* video, “The only thing I wish could’ve been added to the article is the list of names that I mentioned when I said I was inspired by them to finally branch out.” If we consider postfeminism to function as a “moving spotlight, [that] softens and disguises the regulatory dynamics” of “neoliberal society” (McRobbie 2009: 45), then for Poynter, this individuation takes place under the intertwined spotlight of postfeminism and ablenationalism. This moving spotlight, or luminosity,⁴ has been specifically theorized as akin to “clouds of light [that] give young women a shimmering presence” (60). For Poynter, although we can envision YouTube as a literal spotlight, or a virtual space of attention, it is imperative that we also understand YouTube as it operates as an *affective* spotlight. As Jennifer Pybus (2015) points out, “affect is what allows our content to resonate beyond ourselves” (242). Poynter’s content resonates in an atmosphere of post-ADA disability exceptionalism, in part because she circulates as a happiness object, as a sign that points to the successful cultivation of able disabled proto-citizenship. This is based on neoliberal market logic that privileges entrepreneurialism as the exemplar of American subjecthood. Within digital spaces, such as Poynter’s channel, the shoring up of cripp normativity moves, and it moves *us* in this process.

“You Helped Me Understand”: Disability Educator as Rehabilitator

Poynter’s virality results from the affectivity that her channel generates. Virality can be conceptualized through movement, resonance, and reverberation. We can consider affect as a form of capital. Shaping the surface of bodies, “it does not reside positively in the sign or commodity but is produced as an effect of its circulation” (Ahmed 2004: 45–46). In this virtual space, Poynter’s disabled girl subjectivity circulates as a social good, not only because she has become a happiness cause, but also because she moves able-bodied folks in the *right* way.

Positive affects structure the contemporary production of disability (Fritsch 2013; Todd 2016). Kelly Fritsch (2013) notes, for example, how disability has been configured through the “demand to overcome shame and embody pride to the medically driven imperative to overcome suffering and embody an expression of hope” (144). Poynter, too, participates in this affective economy, through her capacity to reorient able-bodied viewers into tolerant neoliberal citizens. As Wendy Brown argues, “Although tolerance has been constructed as a transcendent virtue, it is instead a ‘historically protean ... vehicle for producing and organizing subjects’” (cited in Elman 2014: 91). Tolerance, as a dominant mode of US governmentality functions as a social good within the space of Poynter’s channel. For example, regarding Poynter’s Q&A, DeadEye87 comments,

You are an amazing person. Thank you for informing hearing people, like me, about what it is like to be deaf. You helped me understand some of the hurdles deaf people have to jump through in life. I am not a YouTuber, but if I ever start uploading videos I will be sure to Closed Caption them. Keep doing what you’re doing - you are helping make the world, and the Internet, a better place.

This comment calls attention to the ways in which Poynter has “helped” DeadEye87 come to recognize ableism, at a basic level, or “hurdles” that “deaf people have to jump through.” DeadEye87 also characterizes Poynter’s “amazing-ness” in terms of her ability to “help make the world, and the Internet, a better place.” This “amazing-ness,” or the quality of inspiring wonder in another, affects DeadEye87. Similarly, in reference to the dangerous lack of disability training for the police,⁵ Michael Sloan comments,

Damn, I had no idea about the police thing. Just goes to show what you don’t understand until you’ve been in someone else’s shoes. That’s so sad. And seeing you get choked up about it was hard to watch. I couldn’t imagine what it’d be like. You inspire me to want to take ASL [American Sign Language] classes.

Michael Sloan, similar to DeadEye87, feels moved to “take ASL classes” as a way to educate himself. Poynter moves both these commenters to perform individual acts of self-growth in the service of becoming more tolerant citizens.

Poynter’s channel participates in a project of ablebodied rehabilitation, wherein her ablebodied viewers are compelled forward through their entanglement in feelings of benevolence. For example, Bleed peroxide comments about how Poynter’s Q&A video *will* make them “pause before getting irritated” at their hard of hearing roommate for playing the television “really loud.” Similarly, Hexane and Heels says, “I would never intentionally be rude to a deaf or HOH [hard-of-hearing] person because I might not realize what I’m doing is wrong (I don’t think I’ve done anything wrong, I hope not). But I am glad I saw this video and can be more educated!” Similar to DeadEye87 and Michael Sloan, Poynter compels Bleed peroxide and Hexane and Heels to turn inward and re-evaluate how they are unproductively oriented away from disability.

As a disability educator, Poynter reorients her ablebodied viewers toward disability and moves them from a place of ignorance to a place of understanding. If neoliberal multiculturalism privileges those subjects who “learn to do good, to feed the poor, to uplift women, [and] learn to play their parts in the civilizing/disqualifying regimes that target populations disconnected from circuits of neoliberal wealth and value” (Melamed 2011: 45), then Poynter’s channel functions as an affective conduit for benevolence. Successful neoliberal citizenship hinges on the ability to weather crises flexibly, and, in this way, Poynter, by her very corporeality, is upheld as an example of the capacity to overcome and help others—both ablebodied and disabled—who are unable to help themselves. Thus, an exemplar of rehabilitative possibility, Poynter, perhaps unwittingly, works to teach her viewers how to overcome their attendant biases, discriminatory attitudes, and judgments. However, as Poynter is called forward, or disaggregated by way of her luminosity as exceptional, this movement forward works to neutralize the potential for radical collective disability critique.

Within the space of Poynter’s channel, affective reorientation relies on imagining a “future-oriented” version of tolerance wherein we all imagine “a good society yet to come” (Elman 2012: 91). This good society is not necessarily one in which ableism is eradicated, or disability is desirable, but rather where inclusionism hinges on the institutionalization of the goodwill of the ablebodied. For example, Skye clemente writes in response to Poynter’s Q&A,

I have only seen like 2 of your videos and I already love you. I’m taking ASL at my high school and it’s my favorite class. We learn a lot about deaf culture and

history and it's so interesting. I think I want to be an ASL teacher later in life. Anyways I first saw one of your videos because me teacher showed it and I loved it so I'm probably just going to watch a bunch of your vids instead of doing my homework lol.

Like Skye clemente, a number of Poynter's commenters self-identify as girls who are hearing but taking ASL in high school because of their future desire to become ASL teachers. Although I do not fault any of Poynter's ablebodied viewers and commenters for their wish to construct a more accessible world, the transformation from hearing viewer into tolerant ASL teacher is perceived as an individual act, not a collective response to the ableist, hostile, economic, social, and political conditions with which d/Deaf people must contend. The shrinking of Medicaid, the underfunding of schools, and the growth of the prison-industrial-complex, for example, is fueled, paradoxically, through the same individualizing impulse. Disability is at once fetishized and envisioned as a simple problem that can be taken care of by self-growth, personal reflection, and an enlightened career. If goodwill and benevolence are commodified and circulated as affectively normative, then critique is rendered unnecessary. We must be wary of neoliberal normativity's "tenacious will to sameness, by endless turning the Other into the image of itself" (Edelman 2004: 59). The celebration of individual acts of rehabilitation ultimately works to depoliticize disability. Through the entangled logics of postfeminism and ablenationalism, disability is contained and objectified as a tool to guide ablebodied people on the path to good multicultural citizenship.

Virtual (Dis)orientations: The Digital as Potentiality

As witnessed most literally through her 2015 sponsorship with AT&T, Poynter appears to be fully incorporable into neoliberal capitalism.⁶ As one of the privileged subjects of ablenationalism, or as one of the able disabled, she is called forward in order to fade back into the population. However, it would be misguided to proclaim that any form of capitalism can ever fully "contain alternative knowledge," or alternative "ways of being and knowing, unbeing and unknowing" (Halberstam cited in McRuer and Johnson 2014: 154). I would also argue that capitalism cannot ever fully contain ways of feeling, affecting, or being affected. For example, the crip affectivity that reverberates from Poynter's *#NoMoreVoicing* escapes containment and disorients ablebodied viewers. Through this video, and others in the series,

Poynter allows us to imagine a disability future “beyond straight composition” (McRuer 2010: 155). Responding to a call from Robert McRuer, I shift my gaze in the following section as a method to “remap the public sphere and reimagine and reshape the limited forms of embodiment and desire proffered by the systems” (2006: 31) that purport to contain everyone.

In *#NoMoreVoicing* Poynter sits casually outside on a porch. Wearing a Pokémon shirt and with her hair in a messy bun, she begins to sign. Although she usually captions all her videos, the captions for *#NoMoreVoicing* are conspicuously absent until about a minute into the video.

Who understood any of that? If you don't know ASL, you probably didn't understand any of that. That's why it's very important to caption videos. I like captions on voiced vlogs and ASL/SL vlogs in general. I support captions, so please remember to caption your videos. Thank you.

Although Poynter does have other ASL videos on her channel, such as *The Signing Community is Not the Only Deaf Community* and *Why Use ASL When You Can Talk?*, *#NoMoreVoicing* is the only video in which she intentionally forgoes captions. The lack of captions caught many of her viewers off guard. Riley Phillips said, “I thought the captions were broken for a second haha. But great way to bring awareness to this topic!” Spankeyfish replied to Riley Phillips, “I was frantically clicking on caption options, lol,” and Poynter commented back on the thread with a mischievous “teehee.” Many commenters admitted to being really confused and that the video made them pause, think, and step back for a minute. A user named “You tube” simply commented, “What?” Even hearing subscribers who are in the process of learning ASL admit to only “catching only bits and pieces,” as itsleviosaaa articulates. Unlike Poynter’s Q&A video, these commenters articulate feelings of anxiety and confusion. We might say that through this video, viewers experience a process of disorientation.

When bodies that seem out of place arrive in a space, a feeling of disorientation, or the feeling of “the body that loses its chair,” (Ahmed 2006: 135) can occur. Spankeyfish, Riley Philips, and You tube articulate this feeling of “losing a chair.” Because the familiar voicing and/or closed captioning “chair” is missing, hearing viewers are forced to encounter the inaccessibility of YouTube that is most often ubiquitous for their d/Deaf peers. Many hearing viewers believed that the video was actually broken, instead of, perhaps, created and uploaded without captions by Poynter. These feelings of anxiety, confusion, of “losing [your] chair” can actually be reimaged as generative. Ryan Parrey (2016) argues, “It is through disorienting encounters that existing meanings of disability are revealed and

new meanings generated” (para. 4). For example, forcing hearing viewers to reckon with not knowing, or failing to know, Poynter uncovers how compulsory ablebodiedness structures her viewers’ experience of disability. In *#NoMoreVoicing*, Poynter’s crip subjectivity works to bend the affective conduit of her channel, and this playfully twists the normative affective reverberations into weapons of crip destruction.

Unlike the feelings of anxiety and confusion articulated by Spankeyfish, Riley Philips, and You tube, Boskydoor, in offering a different response, said, “This vlog is so satisfying.” Radom Guy conveys a similar pleasurable feeling in commenting, “Lol when you know asl and don’t even notice you didn’t caption the first half.” These feelings of pleasure combined with the mischievous affect that compels Poynter’s “teehee,” produce a post-ADA disability atmosphere that is not built on positive or rehabilitative affects. Instead, this disability atmosphere is one in which disability is desirable, hilarious, a bit sarcastic, and, ultimately, nuanced.

Further, as a format that resists assimilation, Deaf Vlogs, or “D-Vlogs,” hold the radical potentiality inherent in collective disability experience. *#NoMoreVoicing*, as a D-Vlog, spins the genre of disability awareness vlogs, from one of a project of ablebodied rehabilitation, to one of collective reimagining. Because D-Vlogs, as Lennard Davis, a member of this digital roundtable, observed, “limit the viewership to those who know ASL, it denies the attempts to universalize experience, instead promoting in-house, in-group political discussion that leads to more public movements” (McRuer and Johnson 2014: 159). Disabled people are called to narrate their bodies, their experiences, and their feelings in ways that render disability intelligible, palatable, and sexy. *#NoMoreVoicing* and other D-Vlogs allow disabled people to remain unintelligible, and in so doing, allow for a rebuff of the hollow promises of ablenationalist inclusionism.

Conclusion: Affective Supercrips

As I have illustrated, Poynter, as an exceptional disabled young woman subject, is welcomed home through her representational and affective labor as a sign of the tolerant future to come. However, it is imperative to consider that her newly rehabilitated, fetishized disabled body is made intelligible through a containment, institutionalization, and regularization of disability knowledge. Poynter’s disabled young womanness becomes a site for an ableist leveraging of positive affects. As she circulates online as an affective

supercrip, she aids in the production of flexible, ablebodied citizens. Snyder and Mitchell caution against the uncritical celebration of “enhanced supercrips” who function as symbols of success for both “capitalist commodity cultures and communist governments” (2010: 117) because in the shadow of affective supercrips, like Poynter, are disabled girls whose disabled girlness does not function as an affective conduit that is valuable to the project of ablenationalism (117). In some ways, the plasticity of Poynter’s whiteness allows her to overcome her disability superficially and inspire others through her YouTube channel. However, disabled girls who circulate as objects of disgust, fear, or anxiety by way of their unincorporable corporeality, as trans, as black, as severely disabled, are further excluded from the promise of inclusion that ablenationalism purports to meet.



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Notes

1. I use d/Deaf to signify both Deaf people, those who identify with Deaf culture, as well as deaf people, or people who are hard of hearing. I understand disability through Alison Kafer’s (2013) political/relational model, which recasts disability not as an individual, medical fact of the body, nor an entirely socially constructed identity. Disability is conceptualized as a collective affinity, or an umbrella that holds all bodies that have been produced through ableism, which includes people who identify as d/Deaf.
2. Crip, like queer, has a variegated history. *To crip*, like *to queer*, is to work toward a destabilization of categories. Crip carries with it a painful history of violence, and many disabled people have reclaimed the term to describe an identity that is radically disabled, in “flamboyant excess” (McRuer 2018: 19), and in opposition to medical models of disability that are defined through impairment.
3. According to Lisa Lowe (2015), “Racial capitalism captures the sense that actually existing capitalism exploits through culturally and socially constructed differences such as race, gender, region, and nationality and is lived through these uneven formations” (149–150).

4. Rather than claiming that visibilities, or, “elements that are visible or more generally perceptible,” Deleuze argues that “visibilities are forms of luminosity, which are created by the light itself and allow a thing or object to exist only as a flash, sparkle or shimmer” (1986: 52).
5. Poynter is specifically discussing how the police are not trained to deal with interactions with d/Deaf people and more broadly the under-discussed issue of police brutality against disabled people.
6. In Poynter’s video, *#FEELTHEMUSIC for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Giveaway Winner!*, she discusses her sponsorship with AT&T (a multinational telecommunications corporation). Poynter’s subscribers had the opportunity to upload an ASL music video for “Show Your Colors.” AT&T provided a trip and tickets (worth over \$2,000.00) to a winner of Poynter’s choosing. To go full-time on YouTube, many creators rely on corporate sponsorships. So, in this case, AT&T directly paid Poynter to upload a video (and possibly other social media posts). This sponsorship was the first for Poynter, and it illustrates her full incorporation into neoliberal capitalism because of the ways in which it signals her value and profitability for a billion-dollar, multinational corporation.

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