


Reimagining Calibration Frameworks Through Crip Theory

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Abstract

The intersections between calibration, disability, and access in TRPGs remain understudied, although they can be integral to the play experience of players with conditions such as autism, anxiety, PTSD, or others. Not only can the tools scaffold an experience of informed and acceptable risk for everyone, they can also equip players to tackle topics in-game that they may not find entirely comfortable but still wish to engage with. Game designer Jeeyon Shim calls this Type 1 and Type 2 fun. Importantly, safety tools do not encourage a culture of pushing through unwanted topics and can, in fact, provide for more communalised gameplay, worldbuilding and clearer boundaries. These tools, and other safety tools that do not have formalised mechanics, are inherently adaptable to 'crip time', which can widen access for disabled players through using time as a resource that benefits the game rather than constrains it.

Keywords: accessibility, calibration, crip theory, safety tools, TRPG

要約


卓上ロールプレイングゲーム (TRPG) のキャリブレーション、障害、そしてアクセスの交差点は、十分に研究されていないが、自閉症、不安障害、PTSD などの状態を持つプレイヤーにとって、プレイ体験の重要な要素となり得る。これらのツールは、全てのプレイヤーにとって情報に基づいて受け入れ可能なリスクを伴う体験を支えるだけでなく、プレイヤーがゲーム内で完全に快適とは言えないが、依然として関わりたいと考えるテーマに取り組むことを可能にする。ゲームデザイナーのジーオン シムは、これを「タイプ1の楽しみ」と「タイプ2の楽しみ」と呼んでいる。特に、安全ツールは、望まれないトピックに無理に取り組む文化を助長するものではなく、むしろ、より共同的なゲームプレイや世界構築、そして明確な境界設定を提供することができる。これらのツールや、正式なメカニクスを持たない他の安全ツールは、本質的に「クリップ・タイム」に適応可能であり、時間をゲームに制約を与えるのではなく、ゲームに利益をもたらすリソースとして使うことで、障害のあるプレイヤーのアクセスを広げることができる。

キーワード: アクセシビリティ、キャリブレーション、クリップ・セオリー、安全ツール、TRPG

1. Introduction

The use of *safety tools* in tabletop role-playing games (TRPG) has been well-documented in recent years (Koljonen 2020; Reynolds and Germain 2019; White 2020). However, while there has been considerable attention paid to the representation of disability within game narratives (Jones 2018; Hassan 2024), the intersection between safety tool use and disability has not been widely explored. This paper takes a Crip-informed approach to safety tools, focusing on *interdependence* and *calibration* (Koljonen 2016). In analogue play, calibration refers to “the many explicit and implicit ways that players have [in order] to negotiate the style of play, its physical or psychological intensity, and sometimes things like genre, tone

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and pacing” (Koljonen 2020). I will not be referring to physical contact or physical intensity within the context of TRPGs, as while it is not unheard of, it is beyond the scope of this paper. While the TRPG community outside of larp largely focuses on the ethos of *safety*, the reframing from safety to *calibration* repositions the responsibility onto each individual member of the playgroup as part of a collective whole. This fosters a mutual understanding of how play is upheld through negotiation of levels of informed risk as to what is acceptable to players rather than trying to ensure the impossible state of zero risk whatsoever. There is a fundamental disconnect in the way safety is conceptualised in games where human agents interact with each other and where there is only one human agent (e.g. in digital games). While this paper does not concern digital games, it attempts to interrogate the potential of reimagining calibration frameworks and game-time in order to uphold accessibility and widen access to TRPGs in partnership with transformative play and strengthen player bonds.

I will be positioning the TRPG social contract (Chinn 2006) to be an upholding of interdependence, a key concept in Disability Studies and Crip Theory, which will be explained below. This paper explores the application of safety tools in TRPGs from a disability perspective, reimagining these tools and tabletop calibration more broadly through the lens of crip theory. It takes a disability-led approach to cultures of collaboration, calibration, safety, consent, comfort, and brave play in TRPG, and employs the framework of crip time, crip theory, and disability studies to think about widening access, with a view to use these frameworks to enrich storytelling as an area of future study. Calibration and safety tools can be integral to the play experience of autistic players, players with AD(H)D, and players with anxiety or PTSD, among others, which will be elaborated on below. I attempt to establish that a Crip studies framework has explanatory power for why calibration tools in TRPGs are effective, which in turn suggests a potential for TRPGs as a safer, braver or even utopian space for disabled players, and explains why and how calibration tools can work as such when they are used effectively. The paper primarily focuses on the practical interplay between calibration and disability, how commonly used TRPG calibration mechanics can be considered through the lens of Crip Theory, and what that can teach us about the social contract.

The definition of a safety tool used in this paper is “*any* [emphasis my own] mechanism that a play group puts in place to ensure that play continues with the informed consent of everyone present” (Reynolds and Germain 2019). In addition to this definition, this paper draws on the seminal work of Johanna Koljonen. In her 2020 invited paper in the JARPS 2020 issue on Emotional and Psychological Safety in TRPGs and Larp, Koljonen marks differences between safety, opting out, and playstyle calibration. Koljonen considers a “systematic approach to safety design” (2020, 3e) and notes that *safety* is the umbrella term she chooses to use to house playstyle calibration, opt-out mechanics, and community design holistically – all with the goal of enabling trust and co-creative experiences. Koljonen distinguishes between safety mechanics as “methods used to prevent or react to dangerous situations” and opt-out and calibration as mechanics to “give the participant control of their experience, what content to engage with, and in what way” (2020, 5e). With these definitions of safety and calibration, we will now turn to frame the place of disability in this paper before exploring the interplay.

2. Positioning Crip Theory and Time in TRPGs

Crip Studies is a burgeoning academic subfield born out of queer theory and critical disability studies, popularised by Robert McRuer and Carrie Sandahl. It explores (dis)ableist assumptions of the social world, social pressures and norms around ability, how ‘compulsory able-bodiedness’ “produces” disability and positions disability as other, much like how compulsory heterosexuality “produces” queerness. Essentially, crip theory is to disability studies what queer theory is to LGBT studies (Bennett 2007). crip theory is home to two key concepts, *interdependence* and *crip time*, that sustain my argument that a crip lens is inherently applicable to player calibration and, therefore to wider TRPG play, benefitting disabled people and nondisabled people alike.

Interdependence begins with an acceptance of dependence on others and a rejection of independence as a marker of competency. It refers to a community’s mutual support of other individuals in the community, and holistic support across that community. This can and does stretch globally, but in

the context of this paper refers to the community of practice of a TRPG playgroup. Interdependence is very closely linked with other crip concepts of *access intimacy* and *care webs*. Access intimacy, coined by activist Mia Mingus in Hamraie and Fritsch (2019, 14), describes access intimacy as a “crip relational practice [that is] produced when interdependence informs the making of access.” This speaks especially to players who, by virtue of their disabilities, must make their access needs known in order for the rest of the playgroup to be able to give that player access to the game – the players’ interdependence is the reason for someone being able to play at all. However, interdependence also informs care practices of support that are shared across every player at the table to be able to sustain the game in a healthy and safe manner, regardless of whether every player at the table considers themselves disabled. Thus, I maintain that interdependence is a core tenet of opening up a game world to every player at the table, regardless of discrepancies in their abilities, as interdependence will always be key to guiding player access within a collaborative game. The language of care webs reflects mutual, nurturing relationships across each player to their co-players, according to their fluctuating needs and abilities throughout time. I assert that this is essential to sustaining the game across sessions as an accessible space within the players’ lives outside the table.

One of the main frameworks this paper will use to reimagine safety tools through a Crip lens is the framework of *chrononormativity*, coined by Elizabeth Freeman (2010) in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Chrononormativity is the notion that everyone “should” follow the same or similar timelines within the same framework. This indicates that there is a “right time” for everything and that there is such thing as a right and wrong timeline to follow, in life itself and in other situations, such as the template of the hero’s journey in a TRPG and across other media. Most often, chrononormativity appears in the form of being expected to have a partner by a certain time, being expected to have a job by a certain time, being expected to be married and have children by a certain time, or working, eating, and sleeping at specific times in the day. Chrononormativity is, at its core, about the organisation of individual human bodies toward maximum productivity. In TRPGs and in the framework of play, this ethos encourages an ‘optimisation’ of play that is focused on the ‘efficiency’ of players and does not engage with the transformative potential of *cripping* time.

In what I am positioning in opposition to chrononormativity, the concept of crip time, which arises from disabled experience, addresses the ways in which disabled people experience time differently than non-disabled people and in which disabled people have a unique relationship to time. Crip time can be conceptualised as “[r]ather than bend[ing] disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, [it] bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds” (Kafer 2024, 27), viewing time more flexibly for disabled individuals. It is here that I am framing TRPGs, and especially safety tools and player calibration, as inherently adaptable to crip time and crip practice. I consider *Script Change* (Jágr Sheldon [2013] 2023) and the *Luxton Technique* tools (Jágr Sheldon 2019) to be a prime example of this. P.H. Lee, an RPG player who has PTSD, has written publicly about their experience with the X-Card as something that triggered them and the Luxton Technique as something that helped them. Lee’s testimony went on to inform Beau Jágr Sheldon’s future versions of *Script Change*.

To *crip* time, as a verb, means to challenge (dis)ableism and compulsory ablebodiedness in relation to time and to challenge the ways in which ‘normative’ time is undoubtedly shaped by ablebodiedness. By extension, to *crip* anything means to challenge the abled assumptions about it – you do not have to be disabled yourself in order to crip something or to engage in Crip practices. The tension between time passing ‘in-game’ and time passing ‘at the table’ can be a site of interrogation of the dual meanings of time in these places and of how time relates to player interdependence. In the context of TRPGs, I assert that to crip time is to consistently frame time in ways that serve to benefit players and the game as a unit – once again, bending the clock to meet people’s bodies and minds instead of bending people’s bodies and minds to meet the clock. In digital games, time is often used as a mechanic to give players constraints in regards to how much their characters are able or are permitted to do each day until a deadline, such as the time management system in *Persona 5 Royal*. Alison Kafer (2013), a Crip scholar and proponent of crip time, invites disabled and nondisabled people alike to make sure not to conceptualise crip time as simply “more time”, mobilising disabled people into (more) productivity but

instead to transform systems. She asserts that moving towards what crip time *does* or *can do*, rather than what crip time is, is the way forward.

3. The Interplay between Disability and Calibration

In this paper, I assert that safety tools all have crip elements to them, but that this hinges on the fact that safety tools all apply crip time practices as a focus for interdependence and autonomy. This interdependence is highlighted by the fact that members of the TRPG community occasionally refer to safety tools as *support tools* (Pettingill 2024; Shim 2019), although this language is uncommon. I assert that the language of support tools is arguably more productive than that of safety because the emphasis is reframed onto mutual support and interdependence rather than keeping players 'safe' *from what other players are doing* or may do, *which is a stance that positions co-players themselves* as a potential or imminent danger to other players. In recent years, the conversation around risk in role-playing has become more prominent (Friedner 2019; Svanevik and Brind 2018), but this conversation has heavily focused on larp, while the emphasis in TRPG has remained on player safety rather than on risk management and mutual understandings of informed, acceptable levels of risk. The interplay between calibration, disability, and access allows disabled players to gain a mutual understanding across the in-game space, a space that is being constantly renegotiated as play emerges, with the help of tools and protocols that they have agreed to use (an agreement which in itself can be renegotiated), and knowing that they will not be judged for their access needs, regardless of if these needs fluctuate or are uncommon. Below, I will evaluate a small number of codified safety tools, both proactive and reactive, and the calibration ethos of Jeeyon Shim's Six Principles of Support and of Natalie Pettingill's Support Principles. I will evaluate each tool according to how it is inherently adaptable to crip time and serves to promote other Crip practices.

John Stavropoulos' open-access X-Card document (2013) demonstrates a 'no questions asked' ethos and is fundamentally crip because it shifts agency to the affected person. The "no questions asked" is not about the restriction on asking how to help a player – this restriction is on debating if the X-Card 'actually needed' to be used. At the level of 'legitimacy', if a player 'throws the X-Card' or invokes another reactive safety tool, there is no hierarchy of harm or discomfort that dictates whether the invocation was 'valid' or not. This lack of hierarchy speaks to player autonomy across the table and trust in the other players. One player may have 'pathological' arachnophobia and use a safety tool, another may be uncomfortable with the way another player is describing slime and use the same safety tool. Each of these would ideally be accepted without question, and the first player would be under no obligation to attempt to 'justify' her choice by disclosing her arachnophobia. Safety tools were created to help uphold player comfort and informed engagement with the game. Therefore, it is part of the social contract that when tools such as the X-Card are introduced, players will trust each other to use them as tools to help sustain their own and others' engagement in good faith. This naturally means the potential to X-Card concepts that make them uncomfortable or uneasy if these concepts happen to occur in play. By playing the game, players ideally commit to not using these tools in bad faith (via the social contract), such as to railroad or to monopolise the game at the expense of other players' enjoyment or comfort. Using the X-Card fundamentally rewrites the fictional timeline and could therefore be read as criping time, as mentioned previously – using time as a vessel to reimagine the limits of play and opening new possibilities, rather than having the game's world and narrative be constrained by normative notions of time. Crip time invites us to understand not just that there is a difference between time *as it passes for players*, and in-game time, but it invites us to use this knowledge to subvert time to our advantage and shun chrononormativity where we can, especially in the realm of disability accommodation, player enjoyment, and narrative innovation.

Foils to the X-Card include the N-Card, developed by Myster Vander and Taylor Stokes, and the O-Card, developed by Kira Scott and Kira Magrann. These cards operate much the same as an X-Card – the N is held up or tapped when a player is wary that the narrative is moving in the direction in which they would want to use the X-Card. The O card is often printed on the back of an X-Card, and is used to signal enjoyment of the content. Jágr Sheldon (2013) (2013a) writes, "Having a tool like the X-card – particularly

one with the opposing O side – at the table creates a specific kind of mood [...]. It says ‘We’re here together. If you need to stop, we’ll stop. But if you want to keep going? Let’s do this.’ It encourages a style of gaming that I had not really pursued before – a knees-deep, heart-pounding headlong run into emotional risk, but the best kind.” This codification of the N and O cards encourages and enables everyone, but especially disabled players, to continue to evaluate their boundaries to themselves, and to stick by the lines that they know they are not willing to cross. The N in particular enables a slowing or reshuffling of time that can enable players to cope with something that they may have X-Carded had the N Card not been at their disposal, if they decide that they wish to engage with that content after the play group negotiates how to move forward after the use of the N card, prioritising the player(s) affected. The lines that players are and are not willing to cross can indeed fluctuate, but crip re(imaginings) of calibration assert that although there are different modes of fun within the TRPG space, these modes do not exist within a hierarchy.

TRPG designer Jeeyon Shim (2019) marks a difference between “Type I fun” and “Type II fun” in her document *The Six Principles of Support*, differences which she cites as being so named by outdoor educators. “Type I fun,” Shim writes, is “fun right in the moment”, and Type II fun is “[playing] games because they are challenging and hard and even with unpleasant themes they, the player, will feel better for the experience after play ends.” Montola (2010) has referred to Type II as the ‘Positive-Negative’ experience of role-playing and has written extensively about the discomfort players may feel when undergoing this experience, sometimes even to the point of crying. However, many of the players Montola interviewed expressed that they were glad for what their experience(s) of ‘positive-negative’ role-play had taught them. A Crip lens of interdependence and a care web can lend itself to understanding how player support and trust can allow us to have transformative experiences that a lack of trust and lack of interdependence would have broken. Mingus (2011) writes about the ‘myth of independence’ and how the use of ‘independence’ as a buzzword in the disability community shies away from “embracing need,” and erases the fact that “no-one does it on their own.” This is deeply true across all collaborative activities, but I assert that across collaborative play especially, the possibilities that lie in deliberately operating within Crip frameworks open up closer bonds between players, richer storytelling, and transformative experiences such as self-discovery and connection with others.

The Six Principles of Support that Shim outlines are *Stewardship, Courage, Joy, Be Brave, Be Kind, Give and Receive, and Take Notice*. These principles are arguably all an upholding of interdependence and by extension, crip time. Other than time that is imposed by wider society or by players’ commitments outside of the game, time in the game itself has no obligation to be linear. The popular indie tenet of “any and all players are more important than the game” can be reimagined as “the game itself does not exist without the prioritisation of player wellbeing,” since the game’s existence is contingent on the players and their symbiotic relationships to one another. Shim encourages players to “be considerate of each other, communicate proactively with each other, and make sure you look to yourself and your group for ways of ensuring everyone is as safe and nurturing as possible” (Shim 2019). Although proactive communication can be difficult for disabled and non-disabled people alike, including this in a support document positions proactive communication as an entity that every player is collectively responsible for and something that can be learned over time and supported. Interdependence speaks to the fact that calibration itself is something that some players will require support with but that having that knowledge is powerful and transformative.

In *Courage*, Shim invites players to “go in with both eyes open about [their] limits and the game’s parameters”, in particularly because “no-one can guarantee the outcome of any experience, let alone an emotionally resonant role-playing game.” As much as players can plan scenes in advance, set boundaries and lines, and make plans for sessions, the nature of play is that the outcome is not guaranteed, particularly as players are building the story together. I interpret “*both* [emphasis my own] eyes open” as encouraging players to consider their boundaries and what they will accept, but to also be open to new experiences and new ways of thinking or playing. Shim’s prior experience as an outdoor educator speaks to a framing of differences between a comfort zone and a safe zone. When Shim uses the language of safety in their work, they are not referring to ‘cushioning’ a play experience to no longer

have thought-provoking elements, but to encourage players to prioritise their safety so that they will be able to have fun and thought-provoking experiences, which may or may not involve leaving their comfort zone and learning new things, while staying in a zone in which they feel safe – while outside of a comfort zone but still in a safe zone, they are in a growth zone.

Shim's affirms a right to autonomy for each player throughout the support principles, and this extends to conceptions of joy, their third principle. Here, they posit "Do not assume that your fun is in some way better than other people's fun" and that players are primarily there to share joy with each other. The principle of doing away with a *hierarchy* of fun (i.e. Type I fun as better than Type II fun, or vice versa). This speaks to a crux of interdependence as the sustaining factor of a game. However, the lack of hierarchy between Type I and II fun does not serve to encourage stagnancy, player boredom, or lack of inspiration. In fact, Shim's fourth Principle, *Be Brave, Be Kind*, directly encourages 'brave play' in regards to "[making] all your choices out of a place of *inspiration* [emphasis own], consideration, and kindness" and encourages novel experiences at the pace that players are willing to explore – which is what the language of 'transformative play' in analogue speaks to. Shim's encouragement for players to assume good faith of others underlies the truth that no player is perfect, as is the truth of human nature – players may misinterpret others or be misinterpreted in ways that cause distress. This centres their previous tenet of proactive communication *to the best of each player's ability*. I assert that understanding that each player will have different capacities and timeframes to engage with the game, the system, and the material at hand, is a fundamental tenet of Crip practice. The fact that Player A may have 'lower' capacity than Player B is not seen as a deficiency through a Crip lens, and instead, a Crip lens invites the game and system to be crippled in order to serve Player A, Player B, and other players.

Shim's final principles both concern looking out for fellow players, with a specific emphasis on time. *Give and Receive* calls for players to give space, time and attention to co-players. Here, I conceptualise space, time, and attention as very similar elements of interdependence with which to calibrate. Space speaks to players symbiotically, providing each other with the resources they need so that they can devote the amount of focus to the game that they are able to and that they can engage in play within the world of the game without undue constraint. *Give and Receive* also speaks to the symbiotic relationship of a care web, wherein the energy that a player intentionally devotes to the game at hand can be reflected back at them, with no one player carrying a mental load that is greater than what they are able or willing to take on. The sixth principle references giving "full attention" to the self, co-players, and the environment across play (before, throughout, and after). Although giving full attention can be difficult, especially for disabled people, the shared responsibility emphasises the importance of calibrating across a group and encourages players to practice calibration within their own bodies, such as staying hydrated, using the bathroom, and remembering your belongings after play/leaving them in a safe place. All of Shim's principles exist within game time and player time, and as an openly disabled and chronically ill designer, they promote "spaciousness and generosity" amongst players, as to be disabled in a world that was not designed for us means that the way through is to design the space for us.

In evaluating the interplay between design and support tools, designer Natalie Pettingill (2024) asks and replies to the questions "[What] is important in doing support? What do you need to know to support your friends effectively?" and "[What] happens when tools fail you? How can you build new tools or move past them?" She explores how support teaches skills that players can use outside of the table in other situations and that designers can design support into their games to flow, especially since support is not reserved for when a player is in crisis and cannot play – it is ongoing. The framing of safety tools as support tools, as previously mentioned, is Crip in the sense that all players can thrive within the game because of mutual support according to their own abilities and capacities, not because they are 'kept safe.' Pettingill also emphasises that support and support protocols widen access to games, especially when designers themselves help players of their games to do the work of supporting. However, Pettingill emphasises that support tools can be very contextual to the game being played and that some games' mechanics will run counter to some support tools. Pettingill echoes Shim in emphasising proactive communication, especially communicating when you, as a player, are *not* able to help someone at that

moment. She notes differences between tools designed for personal use, communal use, and tools to use when a player is *in crisis* and unable to continue play. Some of Pettingill's support tools include codified versions of affirmative language, which she terms as 'Play Affirmations.' Ultimately, Pettingill encourages players to build tools "from the bones of the old" if the tools fail them or to "build [yourself] away from the tools" and rely on "commitment to care." Ultimately, calibration, safety tools, and support tools are the manifestation of a care web to support individuals in sustaining themselves and sustaining a collective. Each tool does not always work for each person, as the case study below will evaluate.

4. Calibration in Practice

To return to P.H. Lee and their experience with the X-Card as someone living with PTSD, the prioritisation of normative time by their co-players was one of the ways that meant that they could not be properly supported within the framework of the X-Card. Lee writes "Both the X-Card and The Veil (as practised in the PNW [Pacific North-West] at that time) have as their core concept that the correct default way to handle triggering material in a role-playing game is to excise the material from the fictional timeline and thereafter to continue play. This is a commonplace understanding of how triggers work – remove the trigger, problem now solved. This is, for me, a disaster, because it replicates the environment of denial and powerlessness that caused my PTSD in the first place" (Lee in [Jágr Sheldon 2019](#)).

Lee goes on to say that techniques that centre this approach of "pretending it never happened" cannot be functional as an accommodation; which means that any game or community that uses a technique that centres this approach is necessarily inaccessible to them, since an environment that centres denial as a coping strategy for triggering material, is in and of itself, a traumatic trigger for them ([Jágr Sheldon 2019](#)). They fundamentally assert that meta-techniques like the X-Card centre the status quo instead of centring healing, since the goal of the X-Card is to "deal with" the triggering event, or the triggered person, as soon as possible, and then return to regular play as if the interruption had never happened. They submit that, due to the nature of PTSD, this approach is fundamentally flawed – denial and social pressure to "return to normal" are damaging experiences, while acknowledgement, empowerment, and story-building are healing experiences (Lee in [Jágr Sheldon 2019](#)).

In this same article, Lee writes that in 2016 they played in a role-playing game at AmberCon NW [North West] that was specifically focused on traumatic experience and, particularly, centring the trauma of the players in the story they made. In that game, they used a particular technique – which Lee names as the Luxton Technique after AJ Luxton, the GM of the game – which they found to be empowering, healing, and accessible to them. The Luxton technique fundamentally includes:

- An honest discussion of potential traumatic triggers prior to play, in a supportive environment, with the understanding that there is no possible way to identify or discuss every conceivable trigger or trauma, and with no social pressure to disclose particulars of individual trauma.
- When, in play, a player encounters triggering material, they can, if they choose, talk about that to the other players. When they do this, the other players listen.
- As part of talking about it – and possibly the only thing that they need say – the player is given absolute fiat power over that material, expressed as a want or a need. For instance "I'd like to play [character name] for this scene" or "I need this to have a happy ending" or "I want this character to not be hurt right now" or "I need this character to not get away with this" or "By the end of play, this should not be a secret" or "I need to stop play and get a drink of water" or "I don't have a specific request, I just wanted you to know."
- A player does not need to use their traumatic experience to justify any requests or demands. We just do it.
- A player does not need to be the one to speak first. We keep an eye on each other and we are watchful for people who seem withdrawn or unfocused or upset. If we are worried about someone, we ask.
- We play towards accommodating that player's requests.

The fact that the Luxton technique originated at a convention in a game *about trauma* merits further discussion. When a player is at a convention and is playing a one-shot with strangers, there is arguably a much greater deal of vulnerability that comes with outlining exactly what distresses and disturbs them. As mentioned previously, the X-Card was created with a “no questions asked” mentality. This is replicated within the Luxton technique, as players have no obligation to disclose a traumatic experience or mental health condition in order to justify or legitimise what they need to feel safe and able to participate, in accessing the game table. I essentially see the Luxton Technique as a cross between elements of proactive tools like Lines and Veils, and reactive tools like the X-Card. Safety tools have been evolving for as long as they have existed – by players deciding that the way a certain tool or measure operates is no longer serving them well and iterating on it so that it can serve them and their group. This is why many proponents of safety tools continue to reiterate that the tools are not ‘one size fits all’ as a tenet of safety tools use.

The Luxton technique is a productive way to codify the needed level of control — narrative or otherwise — to ensure personal safety and well-being and make sure that a player is no more uncomfortable *than they are willing to explore*. Evaluating what it means for players to have specific levels of control in the game can introduce a level of collaborative worldbuilding, which arguably makes for more satisfying, engaging, and community-based play. When a GM has complete control of a narrative arc or has a vision in their head of exactly how they want the story to go, players can feel like they and their characters’ desires are not being listened to, or that the specific actions of their characters do not have real consequences in-game. When they understand that they truly have a say in the world of the game and its evolution, they are more likely to engage and have transformative experiences that invite them to question and evaluate their lives outside of the table. Most importantly, the safety and well-being of players being consistently prioritised above the gameplay can make for braver and more satisfying gameplay that has the potential to form strong bonds. While potential impacts on game worlds are worthy of further study, this is beyond the scope of this paper.

Script Change, the tool by Beau Jágr Sheldon (2013b; [2013] 2023), final versions of which were informed by P.H Lee, is a prime example of player calibration through crip time. It invokes chronological elements such as fast-forwarding through a scene, pausing, rewinding, and replaying. Fade to Black, a commonly used metatechnique for sex scenes both in TRPGs and digital media, is another of these chronological elements, as it implies a scene takes place ‘offscreen’ but does not narrate or outright show a scene. Fade to Black could take the form of players agreeing “Character X is tortured by Character Y” or “Character X and Character Y have sex” or even “Character X and Character Y discuss in detail how to kill the dragon, and they decide to try to poison it.” There is no inherent reason that tabletop role-playing games are required to follow linear time, and hence, linear narrative. In fact, a lot of the fun of TRPGs is that they were made to *not* necessarily follow linear time, and that meta-gaming using time can be used for accessibility and clarity purposes. This is detailed in *Script Change*, and players can opt to “Play Frame by Frame” to talk through a scene either out of character, or in-character in slow-motion. Although at the time of writing I have never deliberately used *Script Change* in any games I have participated in, I have been using all of *Script Change*’s elements as uncodified calibration tools in games nonetheless. If something has happened in-game and a player does not understand how it has come to pass, why it is important, what the consequences might be, they may opt to ask about this out of character. Some TRPG players may frown upon this as a type of metagaming, but I maintain that finding and using ways to sustain player knowledge is essential to players being able to participate as much as they would like. For instance, players with speech impediments may be used to clarifying whether a repetition or hesitation was in or out of character, which prioritises player access and engagement over the efficiency of the game, continuing to challenge normative notions of how time ‘should’ or ‘should not’ work in TRPGs.

5. Conclusion

Reimagining calibration frameworks and using time in TRPGs through a Crip lens open up ways of playing that allow players, disabled or nondisabled, to use the sandbox of TRPGs without having to navigate the

compulsory ablebodiedness. Arguably, time is the most major constraint on humans. While it would be very impractical to suggest that we do away with time as a construct to structure games, the way in which TRPGs are inherently adaptable to crip time opens up ways of playing and connecting that are not permitted when abiding by chrononormativity, or abiding by independence to the detriment of interdependence. Crip reimaginings of calibration frameworks are about using the constraints of the real world and the game world to the advantage of the player, and subverting frameworks like chrononormativity through the playing of the game, as far as it benefits the players. Ultimately, the game is sustained by the relationships between players and the ways in which they can be supported to, in turn, support one another. It is my hope that viewing calibration frameworks through the lens of crip theory and time will be helpful for players to see TRPGs as worlds in which disabled people do not only exist but in which disabled ways of living and being are possible and are celebrated.

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