SURVIVING SUCCESS, RECONCILING RESILIENCE:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE APPEARANCE OF STUDENT ‘MENTAL LIFE’
AT ONE CANADIAN UNIVERSITY

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the university student as a figure of mental health and illness. Drawing on the methods and theories of disability studies, interpretive sociology, critical, feminist and queer theory, as well as hermeneutically oriented phenomenology, my work explores the social production of this student figure or type – variously depicted as ‘invisible’, ‘maladjusted’, ‘stressed’, ‘difficult’, sensitive’, ‘resilient’, ‘narcissistic’, and extraordinarily ‘ordinary’. This figure is addressed as a means of revealing contradictory understandings of the relationship between success and survival, as this relationship appears in the ordinary daily life of the University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The social and historical significance of the contemporary University’s Student Life Programs and Services is analyzed with a view to reveal the Western cultural values and practices which organize consciousness of success as a necessary condition of contemporary existence. Special attention is paid to the cultural production of knowledge concerning university student ‘mental life’, the appearance of which is located at the interstices of colonialism, global health policy, institutional ‘best practices’, cultural mores and folkways, and embodied experiences. I dwell with this appearance as an occasion to engage the materiality of Western mythologies of resilience, and with them
the meaning of human agency under neoliberal governance. This engagement examines the productive power of the disciplinary and institutionalized ‘language of mental illness’ through a genealogy of the University of Toronto, a textual analyses of the University’s Student Life Programs and Services literature, and a discursive analysis of open-ended interviews with student services representatives which seeks both to understand and transgress conventional interpretations of the structure of Student Life. I demonstrate how University presentations of student bodies, minds and senses perceived to be lacking in ‘ordinary order’, can be reconceived as sites to reflect on the paramount presence of psychiatric knowledge in interpretations and responses to embodied difference within the university setting. Overall, this dissertation seeks to disrupt unexamined relations to the meaning of student types; and in the process, display how normative relations to the student as a figure of mental health and illness needs is currently and historically organized and socially achieved.
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down’ and ‘hang around’ a while, staying with the ideas and images that organize how
we know and feel the ways we do. My gratitude to Tanya and Rod reaches back 12 years.
In undergraduate Sociology courses at St. Francis Xavier University in my hometown of
Antigonish, Nova Scotia, they created spaces to dwell with the transformative
possibilities of imaginative relations to where and when and how we always already are,
as a means of entering into dialogue with the enigmatic character of ordinary everyday
life.

My committee member and professor, Dr. Kari Dehli, is another person who has
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sociology and phenomenology, it is really quite exciting. My supervisor, committee
members and external have served as exemplary role models. While this dissertation
takes up conceptual models and roles as a social phenomenon in need of question and a
‘closer look’, this is not done to discount the meaningfulness of either models or roles.
This work is, rather, an appeal to understanding their centrality in the sensible appearance of a meaningful life.

I am grateful to the participants in the study and the professional staff of the University of Toronto Student Life Programs and Services. Everyone I spoke with was so helpful, collecting preliminary information, recruitment and accessing public resources. I am also very grateful to the librarians at the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library at the University of Toronto and the libraries at Dalhousie University for their kind and careful assistance. A version of Chapter 2 has been published in *The Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal* under the title, “Disability Studies and the Language of Mental Illness” (Aubrecht, 2012), and I am thankful for the journal’s support and for providing copyright permission.

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models. While this dissertation takes up conceptual models and student roles as a social phenomenon in need of question and a ‘closer look’, this is not done to discount the meaningfulness of either models or roles. This work is, rather, an appeal to understanding their centrality in the sensible appearance of a meaningful life.

I am also grateful to Dr. George Dei, OISE/UT, for teaching me the necessity of situated historical analyses of colonial institutions, such as the university, and challenging me to confront my privilege and the engage the symbolic and material effects of a ‘taking responsibility for’ which does not recognize itself as implicated within contemporary forms of colonial governance and expansion. I have so much respect for my colleagues in the Department of Sociology and Equity Studies at the University of Toronto. Eliza Chandler, Anne Mcguire and Jijian Voronka have been steadfast and dear friends. Their friendship offered a sense of sanctuary as I completed this dissertation from off-campus. Their continued communication with me, and the spirit of welcome with which they always greeted my returns gave me a sense of community as something which both exceeds and disrupts reductive understandings of place and presence. I would also like to thank Chris Chapman for our brief but so very helpful discussions about writing and research, as well as Shaista Patel, Patty Douglas, Carrie Cox de los Santos, Jan MacDougall, Isaac Stein, Devi Dee Mucina, Energy Manyino and Samantha Walsh. These friends and their words were all with me as I wrote this dissertation.

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DEDICATION

To my mother, whose courage inspires me, my father and grandmother, whose spirits guide me, my partner, whose commitment moves me, sisters, whose love grounds me, colleagues, whose friendship compels me, and professors, whose poetry transforms me. All of you have anchored the meaning of being and doing student in a love of the world. This dissertation is for you.
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“Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it, and by the same token save it from that ruin which except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young, would be inevitable.”

-Arendt, 1961, p. 196
Chapter 1

Introduction: Surviving Success, Reconciling Resilience

Introduction

Drawing on the methods and theories of disability studies; interpretive sociology; critical, feminist and queer theory; as well as hermeneutically oriented phenomenology, this dissertation explores the social production of the student figure or type – variously depicted as ‘invisible’, ‘maladjusted’, ‘stressed’, ‘difficult’, sensitive’, ‘resilient’, ‘narcissistic’, and extraordinarily ‘ordinary’. This figure is addressed as a means of revealing contradictory understandings of the relationship between success and survival, as this relationship appears in the ordinary daily life of the University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The social and historical significance of contemporary student life programs and services within the University is analyzed with a view to reveal the Western cultural values and practices which organize consciousness of success as a necessary condition of contemporary existence. Thus, I am considering the organization of consciousness as this is accomplished in the ordinary order of University life.

Central to this analysis is an assumption of the relationship between the ‘ordinary’ and the positing of bodies, minds and senses out of ordinary order as vital to the production and interpretation of student mental life as something to worry about, and also as a place of freedom. Critical reflection on the organization of consciousness as it is accomplished in the ordinary order of University life offers a means of making sense of the lived experience of “alienated agency” (Ratner, 2000, p. 427), exemplified in, among other events, university student suicide. I examine how framing student life in biomedical terms provide a means of questioning meritocratic interpretations of (un)successful academic performance, while at the same time leaving the standards and meaning of “success” itself unquestioned. Further, I question how
representations of the significance of understanding the context and meaning of University life, and the normal, everyday ‘realities’ of university student life, are embedded in global projects and modern forms of cultural imperialism. Recognizing and analyzing the dominance of psy-disciplines in governing university students’ everyday lives, the dissertation also reflects on disability studies as a critical space within which the meaning of university student ‘mental life’ can be rethought, especially when disability studies is oriented by feminist and anti-colonialist theorists whose work help us understand the reproduction of human problems and the need to re-think them. I turn now to further explicate this approach.

The Interlocutors... Theory & Method

Each chapter takes up dominant medicalized interpretations of University of Toronto students. Conceptual risks are taken throughout this dissertation. I draw on theorists from diverse, conflictual and contradictory positions. However, this dissertation does not aim to present unified theoretical overviews and contrast and compare them, nor is it my intention to locate one true way of understanding the production of student ‘mental life.’ What is here referred to as student ‘mental life’ is treated as a site for situating the apparent emergence of student mental health and illness within and across traditions of thinking about difference, as a mediation of the relationship between responsibility and suffering. My use of different theoretical perspectives reflects a way to recognize the slippage within language, and the conceptual overlap which routinely occurs across multiple discourses and disciplines. Rather than a problem with the way something is understood and presented, or a ‘logical fallacy’ within the work, such slippages are treated as central to the production of a non-normative space within which the meaning of the University of Toronto student as a figure of mental health and illness needs can be rethought. “Reading and writing between the lines” (Weiss, 2008, p. 41) of texts
and interpretive traditions, I explore the multiple interpretive possibilities, perspectives and ways of situating ideas and images concerning the student condition and the types it produces as it is imagined at the University of Toronto.

It is precisely the many-ness of voices, the cacophony of disharmony, and the discordance between tradition, the canon, and radical contemporary thinking as embodied in feminist and anti-colonial studies, which this work aims to make present. The various thinkers and perspectives that are included reflect different takes and approaches on interpretive analysis. For instance, Max Weber (1978a) is known for his work in introducing interpretive understanding in sociology, which flows from Martin Heidegger’s assertion that, “The meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation” (2005, p. 37). I also draw on Homi K. Bhabha (1994), whose interpretive critique of culture is central in postcolonial thought. Bhabha’s interpretive poetics have made it possible to locate an anti-colonial agency between the lines, deinstitutionalizing discourse (Huddart, 2006, p. 101). Further, Judith Butler’s (1999) interpretive feminist philosophy advanced social critiques of the interpretive power of heterosexist discourse. My analysis relies heavily on the scholarship of Tanya Titchkosky (2011a; 2007; 2003) and Rod Michalko (2002; 1999; 1998), two scholars who have shaped the appearance of an interpretive disability studies in Canada. According to Catherine Kudlick (2003, para. 2), disability studies is, “an interdisciplinary field dating from the mid-1980s that invites scholars to think about disability not as an isolated, individual medical pathology but instead as a key defining social category on a par with race, class, and gender.” Within disability studies, interpretive analysis of disability knowledge is understood “as crucial for understanding how Western cultures determine hierarchies and maintain social order as well as how they define progress” (Kudlick, 2003, para. 3).
In making explicit how assumptions concerning student ‘types’ are presented as isolatable, unified totalities coordinated by the Western conception of the ‘ordinary’ subject, I endeavour to show that disability studies can bring its readers in touch with other ways to imagine disability, and with disability the student. Disability studies thus provides a unique view, not only of disability, but to the multiple ways concepts of culture and community can and are embodied in particular times and places, under particular forms of rule. As such, disability studies orients research and researcher to the ways concepts of culture and community are embodied in the University of Toronto representations of student mental health and illness. In general, my method is to engage theory so as to approach, encounter and think about the phenomenon of student mental health and illness in such as a way to draw out the meaning of types.

Disability studies provides an opportunity to bring the existence of alternative ways of thinking about mental illness to view while at the same time recognizing the power of these categories and how they position us in various ways within specific social relations by organizing our understanding of subjectivity. The hermeneutic foundations of the ‘new’ disability studies are engaged with how we construct our positions in relation to some ‘thing’. Such an approach provokes the reader to question the grounds of judgment which appear to emerge in relation to questions of student mental health and illness, disrupting the seemingly “natural” and habitual ways students have learned to think, read, and write the meaning of classification of self, other, and world within the specific context of the University setting. Classification organizes our lives and our critiques draw or and reinforce its power. How does a disability studies that aims to transgress the kind of normative thinking that excludes,
marginalizes and oppresses disabled people recognize and respond to the issue of classification? What can the institution learn from disability studies to do university life differently?

An “anachronistic reading method” is also adopted “to jar the reader out of settled, institutionalized ways of thinking” (Huddart, 2006, p. 101). My approach is oriented by a desire to “bring different horizons into play” (Weiss, 2008, p. 41). Thinking with Gail Weiss, “These multiple interpretations draw directly upon the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the text itself, that is, its ability to signify in more than one way and bring different horizons into play for respective readers” (2008, p. 41). I think with this multiplicity as a means of disrupting normative binaries and to demonstrate how contemporary Western ideas and images of success can be conceived as tools for reconciling privilege with consciousness of suffering. Implicit in this analysis is an exploration of the relationship between responsibility and suffering. To reconcile ourselves with suffering, to come “face-to-face with suffering” as Michalko (2002) says, is to encounter responsibility both as radical impossibility and self-evident solution to the problem of human suffering. This dissertation deconstructs this encounter as it is made to appear in representations of (un)disciplined relations to the ‘language of mental illness’, an archival analysis of the history of the University of Toronto, and contemporary Student Life Programs and Services literature (widely known as Student Life). More specifically, it considers how within the context of the University of Toronto, the meaning of responsibility is framed by images of student success and survival. Through these images, human suffering becomes recognizable as the unfortunate consequence of unsupervised deviations from cultural and biological norms.
The Relevance of the University of Toronto

Figure 1: Demolition of King’s College Residence, 1886. This figure illustrates the ‘original’ building of what is now referred to as the University Toronto. The building was completed in 1845 and demolished in 1886 following a period as an asylum.

The University of Toronto represents a system of relevancies. What makes the University of Toronto worthy of attention? One could say it is its position as a global cosmopolitan institution of higher education. The University’s website displays numerous potential rationales for choosing the University of Toronto as a site of research, such as its top tier researchers, excellent students, faculty, and staff, its publications, and its ranking on the world university report, all of which make it possible to argue a case for the University as ‘the best’, or at least, as good as it gets. But, as compelling as all of those reasons for choosing the University of Toronto may be, as effective they may be for supporting my decision, the truth is that I never chose the University. My ‘decision’ to study the University was not one which was wholly mine to make. One might even say that it is possible to think of the University choosing me. This is quite
literally the case once one considers my status as a current University of Toronto student. The University of Toronto included me. The University accepted my application. Once part of the University it organized how I thought and what I came in contact with, including its history.

A genealogy of the University illustrates one way to situate the University as a foundational moment in Canada's history as a nation, a moment which when recovered and thought with, could also provide a view to the relationship between colonial governance and institutions of higher education. Although Ottawa is the nation’s capital and the site of Parliament, Toronto is the biggest city in the country and the seat of trends changing in business, science, technology, culture, fashion and the arts. Toronto is a market. Toronto was the original site of Parliament, and interestingly, the first building of the University of Toronto, named University of King’s College, was the temporary home of Canada’s first government.

Within Canada the University of Toronto constitutes the material and symbolic presence of Britain’s ‘new’ North American empire within the ‘new world’. It is a living monument to the condition, survival and recovery of British European hegemony after the Seven Year’s War that ended in the Treaty of Paris in 1763 when the British were appointed “masters of what became the Dominion of Canada” (Sussman, 1998), the American Revolution, and Canadian federation in the British North American Act of 1867. Further, grasped from the roots, assumptions of the University as an ‘experiment’ in the secularization of higher learning can also be unearthed. The very “idea of the University” (Jaspers, 1960), as made manifest in the British colony of Upper Canada, can itself be conceived as an ‘experiment’ (Richardson, 1990), insofar as it can be understood as representing something ‘new’: a secular, non-denominational institution of higher education which was composed of multiple denominational colleges, each recognized as having a distinct personality and spirit.
Between 1829 and 1843 the University released funds and lands (the spoils of colonial conquest) for the University, including a Building reserved for ‘collegiate purposes’. In 1852, the construction of King’s College, well underway, was abruptly halted by Government House (Richardson, 1990, p. 44). The reason given for the suspension was revealed in two Parliamentary Acts passed in April and June of 1853 which gave the Crown complete control over the University and all of its assets, including, “[…] all the property of the university, and every right, title, claim or demand of the corporation of the University of Toronto, to any real or personal property, debts or sums of money”, in the form of a trust for the University (Special Committee of the Senate of the University of Toronto, 1895, p. 42). This trust which the Crown held for the University involved the expropriation and possession of any properties imparted to the University through Imperial endowments, as well as the eviction of the University of Toronto from the newly erected King’s College to make way for the creation of a Parliament building in Queen’s Park to be financed from funds from the University trust (Richardson, 1990, p. 44; Special Committee, 1895, p. 42). The Crown rationalized these moves as in the public’s best interest.

The once university, then government complex, was transformed yet again, but this time into a “Branch Lunatic Asylum” under the authority of the Department of Public Works in 1856 (Special Committee, 1895, p. 45). In correspondence between the Crown and the University concerning the redistribution of properties within the University trust dated 1860, then University Bursar David Buchan wrote the following to the Secretary of Public Works, “[…] I take it for granted that, under the Order in Council quoted [1858], the Lunatic Asylum portion [of University grounds] will fall into the hands of the University whenever the Lunatics are removed, which we all hope will be soon” (Special Committee, 1895, p. 53). In 1861, the
University Bursar continued to protest this on the grounds that the “occupation” of the University Building by the Asylum “withheld the University property from its legitimate use”. While efforts continued to dispossess the Crown of properties acceded to the University by Britain and remove the Asylum from the University Building, it was agreed in the interim that, at the very least, the University should receive some compensation in the form of rent and reparations (Special Committee, 1895, p. 47). The Asylum, which was designated the “Temporary Asylum for Female Lunatics”, but more generally known as the “University Asylum” (Richardson, 1990, p. 44), closed in 1869 at which time most of the “temporary” inhabitants of the University building were “vacated” and absorbed into the Provincial Lunatic Asylum (Burgess, 1898, p. 32); perhaps seeking to avoid a repetition of history.

The foundation stone for the University College was laid without fanfare or publicity or any of the grand ceremony that had accompanied the laying of the stone for the ill-fated King’s College. The Governor General was not there, and the stone itself was unmarked. As far as anyone knows, no documents or other objects were inserted in it. […] Wilson later remarked that ‘they laid the stone secretly as if engaged in a deed of shame, full of hope, but also full of fear. He then added, ‘Perhaps it was well and wisely done.’ (Friedland, 2002, p. 56)

The University’s repossession and reconstruction of the University Building involved the forced removal of bodies, perceived as only temporary inhabitants to begin with, to more ‘suitable’ and ‘permanent’ locales elsewhere. Through their removal the natural order could be restored. There was a sense that if the University could only move beyond its troubled past, and away from its roots, perhaps there was a possibility of starting over; using this experience as a referent of how not to proceed; and with that, a possibility of doing things differently, the right way. The University of Toronto’s colonial history and its early days as an asylum animated my interest in the University as a site for the exploration of student mental life.
A Word on Language

It is important to bear in mind that, “We are enabled to speak of certain subjects at certain times because certain discursive practices allow us the language and freedom to do so” (Ingram, 1991, p. 6). Throughout this dissertation I use the phrase “disabled person” with deliberation. In contemporary politics, the phrase “person with a disability” is often championed as a progressive, socially-inclusive and politically viable way to display shared recognition of disability. However, as Titchkosky asserts in “Disability: A Rose by Any Other Name? ‘People-First’ Language in Canadian Society”,

… people-first language has been ubiquitous for many years now, and still the United Nations (1996) reports that disability is a worldwide “silent crisis” leading to abysmal economic and social conditions for “people with disabilities.” People-first language has not led to a greater understanding of disability and subsequent reduced levels of discrimination, nor to reduced levels of planned exclusions (2001, p. 132).

What does this right way of relating to the wrongness of disability expressions do to the way we conceptualize disability identities? If people-first language, “has not led to a greater understanding of disability and subsequent reduced levels of discrimination, nor to reduced levels of planned exclusions” (2001, p. 132), what has it led to? In the encounter with the cultural imperative to use people-first language we must pause to consider the potentially alienating effects of this way of describing one’s relationship to disability. Even as this version of disability identity validates personhood, the inclusion of the word “with” frames disability as an add-on requiring a supplemental claim to personhood. The claim must be identified, reported, evaluated, and confirmed within a medical frame of reference in which disability is largely perceived as the result of personal or biological deficiency (Titchkosky, 2001, p. 129).

Since one of the fundamental aims of this dissertation is to question the role of language in organizing social relations, my description of myself as a disabled person reflects an interest in
reclaiming the living significance of disability in how I understand what it means to be recognized as a person within ablest social and cultural environments. I seek to “transgress” (Titchkosky, 2001, p. 137) the normative demand to remove and distance myself from disability through use of the word ‘with’ by identifying as a ‘disabled person’ and not as ‘a person with a disability.’ The materials analyzed in the dissertation are viewed as mediating knowledge of the conditions with which a type of person, the University of Toronto student, is figured, and with this figuring, figured-out. This makes it possible to conceive of student types, and from these ‘types’, generate knowledge of a student condition, as an exemplification of social progress. It also provokes questions concerning the University’s role in a psycho-social politics of ‘resilience’.

Within the context of this dissertation resilience is understood as the successful demonstration of knowledge of the desirability of living ‘with’ difference, and the undesirability of dwelling on the suffering experienced “with-in” normative conceptions of difference as a source of human suffering. I trace how these discourses become “‘dense transfer points’ of power relations, through which subjects are formed, and bodies – individual and social ones – are relegated and shaped” (Pratt, 1998, p. 285). Resilience, represented as the key to success and survival offers a way of sanitizing dominance and absolving contemporary institutions born of colonial governance, such as the University of Toronto, of responsibility. Mythologies of resilience are at work within current Ontario provincial public policy which promotes notions of good governance as involving the acknowledgement of past harms only insofar as this acknowledgement makes it possible for differences to be overcome and a more prosperous future for citizens secured (Aubrecht, 2009). I consider how poverty, trauma, exploitation and
oppression become opportunities for self-improvement, rather than socio-political configurations which must be protested.

I also consider how positive psychology shifts the focus from repairing to building and from pathology to health (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), while at the same time preserving the notion of the pathological individual, institution or community. According to one of the field’s most prominent thinkers, Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is nurturing what is best” (2000, p. 7). Through positive psychology, the transformative potential of psy-power and knowledge is constrained and redirected to the preservation of normalcy, as displayed in the following assertion: “This science and practice will also reorient psychology back to its two neglected missions – making normal people stronger and more productive and making high human potential actual” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 8). Instead of revolutionizing psychology, resilience offers a way for positive psychology to shift attention back to privileged bodies. Following the logic of resilience practice, this move demonstrates the resilience of psychology, i.e., its capacity to recover its bearings and return, and do so even after the global destruction witnessed in World War II (discussed in Chapter 3). Although knowledge of pathology is required to make positive psychology make sense, the social significance, meaning, and role of pathology are devalued and discounted.

**Responsible Speech**

In Chapter 2, I consider how disability studies invokes the language and practices of psychology within its domain. Starting this way creates space to resist a notion of alternatives which restricts difference within binary thinking, and reclaim relations to and through the body which oppressive disciplines provoke. Conceived as a political project, it guides toward a greater
awareness of the actuality of multiple, contradictory and interlocked cultural vocabularies and experiential realities, making the appearance of apparently personal difficulties and difficult situations meaningful and significant expressions of collectively embodied relationships with the world. When disability appears against the backdrop of the language of mental illness, however, it does make a difference and one which is instrumental to the constitution of the University as a living and ‘vibrant’ culture and community.

What I refer to as the “language of mental illness” in Chapter 2 produces the notion of a perspective that can offer a clear view on the meanings of ‘doings’, framed as behaviours and attitudes, with the understanding that scientifically validated knowledge concerning the self is a precondition of ‘seeing’ and ‘doing’ what ‘really’ needs to be done. Within this context, the reality of doings is contingent on a conceptualization of needs as ‘things’ which, like subjects, require recognition and resources. Informed by some of the research of governmentality studies, I am led to be oriented to historical and contemporary depictions of the university student as exemplifications of a “transformation in rationsales and programs of government” (original emphasis; 1998, p. 62). For Nikolas Rose this transformation is one aspect of “the techne of psychology” (1998, p. 62); its “mode of practicing or acting upon the world” (p. 62). In his elaboration Rose states that,

By government I refer not only to a particular set of political institutions, but a certain mode of thinking about political power and seeking to exercise it ... Over the course of the twentieth century, psychological norms, values, images and techniques have increasingly come to shape the ways in which various social authorities think of persons, their vices and virtues, their states of health and illness, their normalities and pathologies. Objectives construed in psychological terms – normality, adjustment, fulfillment – have been incorporated into programs, dreams, and schemes for the regulation of human conduct (1998, pp. 62-63).

A consideration of neoliberal governmentality, or “conduct of conduct” (Foucault, 1988, p. 221; 1991), is central within each chapter of the dissertation. I aim to show how, despite a
claim to “organize, simplify, and rationalize domains of human individuality and difference” (Rose, 1998, p. 62), the certain mode of thinking that characterizes psychology is itself neither internally consistent, nor wholly coherent, but is nonetheless productive of versions of the successful and resilient self both prized and expected within the ordinary orders of University life. Through reflections on disciplinary and resistant communities, histories, and constructions of physical and natural environments, and engagements with the contemporary professional ‘guides’ of the “university experience” (University of Toronto, 2009b), each chapter offers a view to the multiple ways in which the political power of psy-knowledge and practices has been imagined, appropriated, and put into play within the University context. Rose, Pat O’Malley and Mariana Valverde further suggest that, “An analysis of governmentalities then, is one that seeks to identify these different styles of thought, the conditions of their formation, the principles and knowledges that they borrow from and generate, the practices that they consist of, how they are carried out, their contestations and alliances with other arts of governing” (2006, p. 84). My examination of the production of types of students is situated within a context of capitalism and neoliberal values, and as such, traces how neoliberal subjects are constructed within the University of Toronto setting.

However, governmentality is only part of the story. As Titchkosky says, “Doing things or not doing things is not the only issue. Instead, doing ordinary things in ordinary ways and with ordinary conformity within the ordinary order of everyday life is what is at issue, and all of this ordinariness is laden with moral value. In the face of disability, the Good of ordinariness comes to the foreground” (emphasis added; Titchkosky, 2003, p. 22). Governmentality studies (Foucault, 1997; Rose, O’Malley & Valverde, 2006) are read as offering a critical conceptual

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1 This aspect of the research was developed in response to Kari Dehli’s (2009) invitation to consider “… how neo-liberal (and other) subjects are configured and made available (or not) through schooling, and on what terms and in what contexts students can or should access this subject position in the media education classroom” (2009, p. 70).
tool, and a reminder to and within disability studies, of the historical specificity of ordinary ‘doings’, and practices for situating the language of health and wellness within contemporary Western social, political and economic relations of power (Tremain, 2008). Practices like the genealogy discussed in Chapter 3, and drawn on in the textual analyses of resilience in Chapters 4 and 5. Rather than clarify the true reality of student mental health and illness, my work aims to expose some alternative ways of knowing embodiment that resist the certainty that accompanies implicit knowledge that “something is wrong”\(^2\).

All of the chapters implicitly address how University-sanctioned and circulated depictions of students can be read as mediations of a particular way of understanding of the relationship between human action and suffering. This mediation frames human action in terms of responsibility, and the “responsibilization” (Rose, 2007) of individuals who conduct their everyday lives within the University setting. In an examination of the appearance of the mental hygiene movement at the University of Toronto, Chapter 3 illustrates how this mediation is organized by a conception of human action as something which can be evaluated on the basis of measurable signs of prevention and/or the amelioration of suffering (Klein, 1944). The true meaning of action is formulated as something which can be guided by psychological principles and empirically validated through scientific knowledge.

Ways of relating to ‘student life’ are also temporialized through the production of knowledge concerning specific student populations, such as the ‘maladjusted student’, the ‘not-yet student’\(^3\) (the child), the ‘newcomer’, and the ‘never was student’ (the suicide, the drop-out, 

\(^2\) In *The Mystery of the Eye and the Shadow of Blindness*, Rod Michalko examines how the question, “what is wrong?” is the “first element in the experience of something wrong, which leads to the need for diagnosis (1998, 37). I orient to representations of student mental health and illness as organizers of the seemingly intuitive knowledge or experience that something is wrong in the University of Toronto culture, which is in need of diagnosis.

\(^3\) For a consideration of the temporality of disability as a “not-yet” in the university please refer to Tanya Titchkosky (2010).
the failure). An analysis of the way that the student is figured, and the concomitant appearance of student ‘mental life’, understood as the fundamental characteristics of the student condition common across its various types, creates space to reflect upon the cultural production of the student body as a site for the ritual (re)enactment of Western knowledge of a return to origins. Within this space, social assumptions concerning the possibilities and limits of returning to the place where student ‘life itself’ (Rose, 2007) first began, roll over, overlap, and unravel in psy-informed notions of repetition. The disappearance and reappearance of issues, practices, constructions, questions, difficulties, problems, crises and ‘common’ themes signify the possibility of starting over, and the potential of being reborn.

In locating the source of action within individuals, psychological reasoning disciplines how repetition can be perceived. Under psy-control and from its disciplined point of view, repetition is to be interpreted as a product and measurable sign of unfulfilled desires and objectives, what Mazzarino et al. refer to as a “never completed satisfaction” (2011, p. 1487). As such, the meaning and value of repetition is reduced to its observable capacity as a tool for (re)constructing the ‘ordinary’ as a subject proper to the psy-disciplines. Couched within professionalized psy-understandings of repetition, the ordinary represents a means of dividing the world along the lines of the normal and pathological (Canguilhem, 1991). Once positioned within this domain, and under its auspices, behaviours and attitudes conceived as ordinary can be read as occasions to demonstrate the superiority of psychiatric knowledge.

The ordinary thus emerges as a sign of psy-times. The defining characteristic of psy-times is a ‘style of thinking’ (Vorderbrugge, 2008, p. 2) capable of reconciling the conflicts and contradictions of survival and success through expert knowledge concerning the reality of ‘positive’ departures, and the possibility of complete returns, embodied in the notion of
resilience. In directing public attention to the need for the prevention of failure and the improvement of performance, and with this need “the right to happiness” (Weber, 1978a, p. 491), hegemonic power relations are legitimized and insured against critique. In these times, expressions of grievance, distress and dissent are subject to interpersonal and administrative processes of individualization, depoliticization and pathologization, and produced as proof of the pitiable narcissism of a specific population: the “unfortunate ones” (Weber, 1978a, p. 491). Grief and distress are treated as private matters rather than collective issues, and signs which communicate and reference the “personal tragedy” (Oliver, 1996) of disabled embodiment. Because of this, I consider how disabled embodiment materializes as an “adjustment problem” (Oliver, 1996, p. 30) via the formative and formal languages of the University of Toronto. This problem is represented both as internal to the University, and ultimately beyond its control.

It is important to acknowledge that, however troubling, there is something revolutionary about these times. It is precisely this revolutionary element of a ‘now’ organized by psy-understandings of human action which begs close reading and critical attention. And it is also precisely this revolutionary element which makes the University of Toronto student a figure which should be figured-in to more macro-level discussions concerning social justice taking place within critical disability studies, sociology, women and gender studies, and phenomenology. A critical appropriation of the language of mental illness by those who are under its care could provide a way to disrupt the system from within. The possibilities for this are discussed below.

**Internal Disruptions**

Psy-understandings provide access to the existence of a conflict of interpretations about what constitutes lives worth living, and with that, an occasion to interrogate presentations of
what ‘really’ matters. Critical psychologist and counselor Roy Moodley’s notion of “speaking inside the sentence” (2009, p. 305) provides a way to think about the constitutive resistances which erupt from within institutions which shape the nature and culture of relations of knowledge and power. In conceptualizing the student body as a site for the ‘return of the return’, it becomes possible to think of the student body as a site of revolution, of social transformation, and interpret the work of returning as action which is oriented to the overturn of contemporary power relations. At the same time, the orders of biomedical language and neoliberal practices constrict the possibilities that revolutionary thought (i.e. action) makes present. Breaking-through the ‘return of the return’ from within requires the co-presence of multiple methods and perspectives, and a critical relation to (theoretical/methodological) tradition, even in situations where tradition is represented as alternative, critical and ‘new’. Moodley frames this process of “speaking inside the sentence” in politico-temporal terms as, “a political strategy of empowerment” and “a time to construct a new meaning of an old self, and an old meaning of a new self” (2009, p. 305).

To mind the map of the University of Toronto, I trace the relations between the land and buildings that ground its material ‘reality’, the politics that provide for its appearance, and the words and symbols which organize its meaning. This is done to disrupt the normalization of disruption, break through a taken-for granted relation to ‘breaks’, and to show how language is routinely re-appropriated and reinterpreted. According to Weiss,

> Whether the disruption of the ordinary is experienced as a curse or a blessing, it is evident that it is the permanent possibility of such disruption that defines the structure of human experience. If one takes seriously the ways in which class, race, gender, ethnicity, age, and ability no less than death and the body itself serve as overlapping, albeit indeterminate horizons of significance that collectively contextualize individual as well as group experiences, one can understand how the meaning of these experiences becomes overdetermined and thereby resistant to change (2008, p. 7).
The analysis moves from adjustment to resilience and, a more ‘flexible’ or far-reaching vocabulary, capable of translating the violence involved in adjustment (and the work of rehabilitation adjustment presupposes) to a question of the meaning of a life lived with decisions already made. That the authority of resilience is accomplished by way of an obvious focus on the routine accomplishment of ordinary disorders makes phenomenology, with its emphasis on making the obvious strange, a powerful tool for understanding the meaning of resilience.

Critical examination of the discursive reality of university student mental health and illness can yield new understanding of universities’ imagined futures and access to cultural representations of universities as institution and social ‘types’. The medical service model Erving Goffman (1961) describes in Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates provides one way to approach the question of how student mental health and illness is framed within the historically contingent University of Toronto setting. The medical service model, however, takes the individual as its focus, and as such it is necessarily limited and may even expose the researcher to the risk of reproducing individualizing epistemologies of disability. With that in mind, my analysis considers theories which offer a more explicit focus on the social and economic contexts of institutions and subjects. I now describe what is commonly recognized and referred to in disability studies as the “social model” (Crow, 1996; Mulvany, 2000; Oliver, 1983, 1990, 1996; Shakespeare & Watson, 2002), an alternative to the medical model, with the aim of mapping some of the different frames by which the “university experience” and “student life” (University of Toronto, 2009b) are made knowable, perceivable, objectively-given and subjectively real.
The Critical Limits of Educational ‘Models’

A good model can enable us to see something we don’t understand because in the model it can be seen from different viewpoints (not available to us in reality)… (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 5).

Beginning with the assumption that disability is a social, political, and cultural phenomenon, disability studies can produce unconventional responses to the institutionalized requirement to read difficult situations in terms of personal and highly individualized ‘problems’.

In a chapter of his book, Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice, titled, “The Social Model in Context”, Michael Oliver discusses his conceptualization of “disability models” (1996, p. 30). As “one of the originators of the discussions about disability models” (1996, p. 30), Oliver claims a responsibility to “clarify some of the issues [he] intended to raise” in his early writing on what he perceived as a “binary distinction” between “individual and social models of disability” (1996, p. 30). He situates his understanding of a “binary distinction” in his teaching of health professional and social work students (p. 30) in the search for a practical tool to help him “make sense of the world” for his students (p. 30). Oliver notes that his notion of disability models was derived from the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation’s (UPIAS) distinction between impairment and disability, as stated in its “Fundamental Principles” (1976, as cited in Oliver, 1996, pp. 30-31).

What is implicit within these first few pages of Oliver’s contextualization of a conceptual framework within disability studies which he had, at least to some extent, co-authored, is that Oliver oriented to his “disability models” as a way of teaching his students to “make sense of the world” of disability studies. Carol Thomas, however, decries the limited reach of contemporary understandings of the social model of disability and calls for a need to reach past the model toward the idea of “social relationality” (2004, p. 569), which she claims provided for its
appearance. This, since the model “does not provide an explanation of disability”, nor is it a theory (Finkelstein, 2002, pp. 1, 5).

The social and individual models offered a way of clarifying the principles of disability studies theory and activism to a group of people who may have no experience in the field. Perhaps most importantly, these models offered a way of making the field relevant to health professions and social work students on a more practical level. This is evident in the passage: “This [binary distinction] was no amazing new insight on my part dreamed up in some ivory tower but was really an attempt to enable me to make sense of the world for my social work students and other professionals whom I taught” (emphasis added; Oliver, 1996, p. 30). This notion of disability models as a way of enabling student discovery from a practice- and professions-based perspective is reiterated in the following paragraph when he says, “I wanted to put this distinction into a framework that could be understood by professionals with a limited though expanding knowledge of disability issues” (Oliver, 1996, p. 31).

Oliver is trying to make the world of disability studies digestable to a group of students who, for all practical purposes, will be expected and evaluated on how well they can demonstrate their knowledge of disability as a problem. My aim in pointing this out is not to confirm, contest, nor dispute Oliver’s motivations for contextualizing the ideas which have come to occupy such a pivotal role in communities built on the principles of disability activism and disability studies. It is, rather, to understand his decision as a situation. And, not just any situation, but an “important” situation, one which prompted him to return to, revive, and possibly even to reclaim “the issues” he “intended to raise” (1996, p. 30).

The difficulty with disability models is that they too are predicated on what Georgio Agamben (1998) refers to as a “biopolitical fracture” (1998, p. 178): a separation of the
individual from the social which invokes a notion of a life lived in the absence of medicine, a non-medicalized life, and with it, a non-medicalized language of health. The difference, according to Oliver, is one of location. The individual model defines disability as a problem which located within individuals, and originating in “functional limitations and psychological losses which are assumed to arise from disability” (emphasis added; Oliver, 1996, p. 32). This way of making sense of disability is exemplified in what he refers to as “‘the personal tragedy theory of disability’ which suggests that disability is some terrible chance event which occurs at random to unfortunate individuals” (Oliver, 1996, p. 32). In saying this, Oliver presents the individual model as a paradoxical negation of disability; a way of conceptualizing disability as an external problem, immanent to the individual, which ‘arises’ from itself. In contrast, the social model, “does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society” (Oliver, 1996, p. 32). The problem of disability imagined here is not in the limits impairment places on an individual’s capacity to realize success, and with success, his or her potential, but the discrimination disabled persons face in a world structured by able-bodied experiences and ideals.

Here, we have a version of disability, one pole in the UPIAS impairment-disability distinction, as something which ought to be perceived in dichotomous terms: as external to, or imminent in, society. However, for Linda Barclay, social remedy cannot be ensured by “recognition that social factors contribute to functional limitation and disadvantage” (2011, p. 282). This she attributes to the fact that, “many perspectives that have often been associated with the medical model can embrace the view that society is required, as a matter of justice, to ameliorate the disadvantages associated with impairments” (p. 282). According to Barclay, critiques of the medical model alone are insufficient given that, “Insofar as they offer a plausible characterization of disability, both the medical model and the social model are normatively
loaded. In making claims about how society should respond to disability, each of them implicitly presupposes a view about the social responsibilities of society that are rarely acknowledged let alone defended” (Barclay, 2011, p. 286).

**Learning to Cope (Make Do)**

Margaret Price’s (2011) *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability in Academic Life* offers a cogent interpretation of the various ways with which images of madness, mental illness, mental disability, and disorderly minds are presented and negotiated in the university environment. Price’s analysis of university rhetoric concerning what she refers to as “mental disability” is oriented to improvements in academic accommodations. In this way the book can be read as making a claim about how society should respond to disability. Like Price, my work draws on disability studies theory and activism, but it also departs from her work in several key ways. Where Price’s examination focuses on the “academic discourse” of U.S. higher education (2011, p. 5), I consider the different ways in which psy-discourses have both engendered and disciplined the appearance of university student types through the study of one Canadian university. However comparable, the distinct historical, political and economic structures of governance that have shaped social policy and university systems in these two countries should not be collapsed. Further, this dissertation treats images of “mental disability” (Price, 2011, p. 2) and/or a “disorderly mind” (p. 3) as political technologies and govern-mentalities which require questioning, not acceptance and accommodation. Although disability studies theory is central to my work, I draw from a range of other fields. I am intentionally “carnivalesque” in my approach. For Julia Kristeva, “Carnivalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging
official law” (as cited in Moi, 1986, p. 36). I pursue my inquiry with the aim of challenging taken-for-granted relations to the meaning of students, and the lived experience of student life, i.e., student subjectivity, by way of a critical analysis of the languages and laws which cement such normative relations. Quite apart from Price, my desire is not to “reconstruct ‘normal’ academic discourses to become more accessible for all” (Price, 2011, p. 8). It is, rather, to protest the processes of typification that support and legitimize inequitable and exploitative social systems. These are my intentions, and yet I recognize the risks in bringing a diverse body of theorists together in one conversation, on the same page.

One way that this dissertation embarks on this protest is through an examination of how the ‘mechanics’ of student life can be read as interlaced with ethical questions that reflect the cultural values of Western social institutions; values, such as discourses that are accessible for “all”. Within University of Toronto student and health services literature the resilience of Western social institutions emerges as a project which all individuals must take responsibility for, and the first ‘step’ to taking responsibility involves building resiliencies and learning to cope with the unfortunate reality of ‘less-than’ experiences. Interestingly, the form this taking responsibility takes is that of an “academic discourse,” one that claims to be “more accessible for all”, and one which I refer to throughout as the language of Student Life. I show how this language is embodied in the University of Toronto Student Life Programs and Services literature and how it is negotiated, affirmed and resisted by the staff members, for whom student life is not only a medical or professional matter, but a reflection of what they can do.

For Irving Zola (1977), the almost exclusive focus on doing is a marker of our time. As such, it carries with it the risk of reproducing current relations of power. Ignoring or refusing to acknowledge the power of the idea of “doing” over how we understand who we are neither
masters nor negates this power. The idea of doing, and assumptions about what we can or should do, organize how we think, what we value and what we treat as relevant.

Chapter 4 examines the University of Toronto “Health & Wellness” pamphlet (University of Toronto, 2009b) as a mediation of the “social responsibilities of society” (Barclay, 2011, p. 286) that come to the fore in depictions of University ‘student life’. Many of the conversations in the interviews with Student Life professionals discussed in Chapter 6 were replete with phrases from the University of Toronto Health Services “Health & Wellness” pamphlet, such as “the university experience” (University of Toronto, 2009b). There were also moments when the professionals presented information displayed in the pamphlets verbatim. This is not surprising, considering their role within the University system, and the fact that the questions I asked were designed to elicit responses given to students to help them navigate the University campus. In each and every discussion about the ‘ins-and-outs’ of University life, I was presented with the principles of health promotion embodied in the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and Achieving Health for All: A Framework for Health Promotion (Canadian Public Health Association, Health and Welfare Canada, & World Health Organization, 1986). These are described in the 1996 preamble to the Action Statement for Health Promotion in Canada as:

- affirming and sharing the vision and values of health promotion;
- emphasizing the creation of alliances across and between sectors;
- honing our knowledge, skills and capacity to improve health;
- emphasizing political commitment and the development of healthy public policies;
- strengthening our communities; and
- ensuring that health systems reform promotes health both inside and outside the health care system.

The discussions I had mirrored the pamphlet in other ways as well. Another pamphlet produced by Student Life titled, “Build on Your Strengths,” opens with the assertion that, “There is no health without mental health” (University of Toronto, 2012). The task of ‘building’
‘strengths’ involves learning to: “build resilience”, “build healthy relationships”, “cope with stress”, “understand depression” and “understand anxiety” (University of Toronto, 2012). The focus on learning how to cope as key to mental health, and health in general, reflects this statement. The description for building resilience illustrates how coping is constructed at the University as an academic task. Coping is represented as a “skill” that students can use to transcend the ‘overwhelming’ responsibilities of university life (University of Toronto, 2012). Conceived as such, learning to cope becomes part and parcel of learning to succeed (and in lieu of success, survive) and a strategy for ‘dealing with’ change. The distinction between coping and dealing with is qualified in temporal terms. While coping involves the struggle to deal with, come into contact with or confront, ‘dealing with’ indicates that the struggle has, in some respects, been transcended. At least insofar as contact has been made, making change something objective which can be confronted, and ‘doing’ a choice which can be made.

However, the appearance of ‘change’ cannot necessarily be assumed to signal a transformation within the system. On the contrary, the interest in innovation, creativity and flexibility evident in the strategic objectives of universities throughout Canada and the U.S. (Rhoades & Torres, 2006) and across much of the Western world (de Bary, 2010), construct change as a measure that can be used to assess the success of neoliberal programs and policies. Within a market mentality, change is understood in reductive terms as a technology in the successful reproduction and hegemony of cultural systems. Difference is framed within a developmental schema as a mode of adaptation, and one which can be more or less successful given the particular historic and economic conditions of a specific socio-cultural locale. Could the University of Toronto’s stated interest in mental health promotion be perceived as oriented to something other than simply as a sign of the University’s good nature or progressiveness? Does
the current focus on resilience have any relation to the demand for a skilled, flexible, and productive labor force characteristic of capitalist economies under neoliberal governance?

For Rose Galvin, “Current health promotion perspectives are grounded in the belief that all people are at risk of becoming ill according to how they choose to think and behave. Within this structure of thought, the chronically ill are seen as those who have failed in the face of ‘known’ risk by making unwise or even culpable choices” (2002, p. 115). The biomedical frame in University of Toronto resilience literature such as the “Health & Wellness” and “Build on Your Strengths” pamphlets are explicit, but the areas and fields of experience they target and describe are not intuitively medical. Their presentation in the University of Toronto Health Services literature appeals to a notion of everyday experience as the proper subject of Western clinical and applied science and research. This is most visible in the University of Toronto Student Life quarterly publication, The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit, which includes articles on everything from personal relationships, familial estrangement and faith, to note-taking, intoxication, sexuality, and peer-pressure.

*Student Life* offers a way of regulating relations to the truth of the Health Services conception of “university experience”, so that students can ‘make the most of’ their situation. This form of regulation relies on a notion of the University’s vision as the truth, albeit one which can be revised to more strongly reflect changing landscapes and times. For Mary-Jane Rubenstein, “The problem with a point of view, however, is the internal possibility of its distortion. Taking something as something means that one can take it for something that it is not. The inauguration of judgment, in other words, is the inauguration of bad judgment” (2008, p. 41). Depictions of student mental life represent a means of accessing the truth of the student condition via the production of knowledge concerning false students. These “excludable types”
(Titchkosky, 2003, p. 518; 2007, pp. 149-150; 2011, p. 109) of students are reified through descriptions which assume that they are naturally invisible, maladjusted, pathological, lost, difficult, alone and unheard. Such typifications of student life are made to simultaneously represent knowledge of the ‘way’ or ‘path’ to the ‘true’ student and with it, a notion of suffering as a sign and symptom of a distorted relationship to the shared experience. The ‘mental’ in student mental life represents the inner possibility of the University; that is, that a “university experience” common and potentially available to all students is itself a distortion. Once perceived as distortion, depictions of the “university experience” can be conceived as the auguration, the auspices, of true and false judgment.

**Student Types and Truth Sayers**

Within the common student identity, “to be truly oneself” (Levinas, 1990, p. 69) one has to take responsibility for the health of the University ‘community’ through the preservation of the “university experience” as something positive. The accomplishment of this task is verified in the appearance of resilience, understood as “the capacity to ‘bounce back’ from difficult experiences” (Vorderbrugge, 2008, p. 2). The difficulty, however, concerns the capitalist developmental logic which underpins the way the return, no less than the notion of the self which provides for it, is understood. Returns should be profitable. The World Health Organization (WHO), the leading global authority on health, confirms this understanding of the meaning and purpose of the return in its depiction of mental health as a “state of well being” which produces people capable of contributing to the community. According to the WHO (2011), “Mental health is defined as a state of well being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of daily life, works productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to the community.” Within this understanding of mental health, responsibility
appears as a “state” whose constitution requires a notion of universality as the inherent ability of every individual to “contribute to the community” (WHO, 2011). In this state, the amelioration of suffering is a potential that can be realized by individuals; the nature of daily life is stress, stress is normal, work is “fruitful”, and individuals’ claims to identity and belonging can be (dis)qualified in terms of their measurable contributions, products or outputs.

Chapter 5 raises the question of who resilience is actually a resource for, given that students who have experienced adversity or are experiencing adversity are instantly excluded from those imagined to benefit from knowledge of such experiences in times to come. It considers how the ambiguity of the desires of Student Life as represented in The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit, organizes a conception of what students can do, and how they act, as a matter of personal preference. Within this text, the re-presentation of students’ questions concerning the sensuality and embodied experience of corporeal desire provide the material backdrop for definitions of sexuality and self-esteem. Paradoxically, the invocation of images of the materiality and potential messiness of bodies-in-relation provides for the purging of the socio-political structures, ‘physical’ conditions and sensuous experience of desire; and through this purging, the appearance of a transcendental entity: The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit.

Consciousness of relations between the body-sensible and body-sentient is organized by a notion of sensuous experience as providing an “opportunity to see, touch and feel” methods, instruments and models (Haworth, 2010, p. 3). Within The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit women students’ curiosities, ambivalences, and concerns related to sex and sexuality are used to contextualize the production of a ‘need’ for a “universal definition of sex” (Haworth, 2010, p. 3). On one level, women students’ questions are depicted as individually interesting and in need of
address. On another, ‘higher’ level, these questions are represented as proof of the need for one way of thinking about sex.

In its promotion of resilience, understood as a “style of thinking” (Vorderbrugge, 2008, p. 2) that makes it possible to “bounce back from difficult experiences,” the text rationalizes the appearance of corporeal desire and treats sexuality as a question which can be answered and an opportunity to engage in ‘good practice.’ At the same time, the text also produces an image of a ‘woman student’ population, a specific type within the University heterogeneously comprised of individual personalities with distinct personal histories, preferences and tastes.

According to Kari Dehli, “Any account of experience, whether it be in the first, second or third person, is a mediation, an interpretation employing narrative strategies and forms of theory in its telling” (1991, p. 51). The account of experience which the text provides reduces the social significance of women’s bodies and desires within the University environment to an affirmation of the positive implications of medicalized regulation and restraint. The disruptive power of women’s narratives is thus constrained to but another sign of the need to return to the universal subject. In the process, the contemporary “academic sexual politics” (McKillop, 1994, p. 134) of the institution, as well as the masculinist, patriarchal and heterosexist traditions which have shaped the University of Toronto are erased. For example, there is no mention in the text of the fact that “in the University of Toronto’s early days as University College, women were not permitted to attend lectures” (McKillop, 1994, p. 129), or that the University’s first President, anthropologist Daniel Wilson, publically denounced the presence of women in the University on the grounds that, however admirable, a woman’s participation in the University would “interfere with her divinely ordained domestic destiny” (McKillop, 1994, p. 129).
a universal definition of sex), suggest that while some women may be physically present in the University, their participation is still regarded as belonging to a different sphere of experience, one might even say a *mythic sphere*.

The public presentation of women students’ private lives does not ensure the politicization of their experiences. Although this sphere, partially private, partially public, is located within the University, the way it is situated within and by medical discourse makes it no less crucial to the reproduction of patriarchal ideals. For, the text produces a notion of the woman student as one who can take responsibility for pleasure (her own and her partner’s), sexual health and reproduction, but lacks the technical knowledge and professional skills required to make the kinds of positive choices and informed decisions that would make her experience, and others’ experiences of her, the most that they can be. The analysis of resilience builds on Chapter 4’s examination of the “university experience” as an experience that, however common to all students, is also viewed as of greater value to those that are in a position to make the most of it.

In *The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit*, marginality is framed as a difficult experience, but one which can be overcome given access to the ‘right’ resources. When it comes to difficult experiences, students are encouraged to ‘do their homework’, their due diligence, and ask lots of questions. Even, “the stupid questions,” as I was informed in my interviews with *Student Life* professionals. At the same time, students are also encouraged to be alert to the possibility of being seduced by their questions, and having those questions become difficult experiences in and of themselves. The possibility of the seduction and concomitant destruction made present in students’ search for answers concerning the meaning of university life was expressed in references to narcissism. Narcissism was defined as a ‘condition’ endemic in the “‘me-first culture’” (Vorderbrugge, 2010, p. 1) presumed to characterize contemporary North American
university students’ lives. As through the figure of woman student, the introduction of the narcissistic student set the stage for the tragic performance of student life as an occasion to witness and observe, yet again, the compelling nature of the myth of resilience. But, one question which Student Life neither asked nor answered was: What is to be made of this witnessing?

Why a Critical Analysis of Descriptions of Student Life Matters

All too often, disabled persons have born witness to the normative violence of definitions of resilience, while at the same time bearing the weight of an ableist world which refuses to acknowledge this witnessing. Disability studies has been subject to criticism for its attempts to create spaces in which the pain and anguish of ableist oppressions can be observed, analyzed and addressed; and within which collective resistance organized (Siebers, 2002). Tobin Siebers treats accusations of narcissism as offering a powerful expression of the “political psychology” applied to disability studies, and its efforts to organize consciousness of suffering and oppression as the product of ableist norms (2002, p. 42). In calling for discussions concerning how, “questions of identity and suffering contribute to the political as such,” Siebers offers a way to situate Western mythologies of resistance within a “metapsychology that represents acts of self-consciousness as negative by definition” (2002, p. 42). Following Siebers, the appearance of narcissism in The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit can be read as a conceptual tool for regulating relations to adversity as an experience which is not wholly negative; from the perspective of resilience, difficult experiences could even be conceived as positive in the type of behavior they can condition, as a resource that can be drawn on to guide future action. Difficult experiences could be beneficial. Not good in-and-of-themselves, but given the right attitude and the provision of proper guidance, anything is possible. That is, insofar as the experience can be perceived as a
potential source of knowledge; a resource which, once possessed, can be cultivated and exploited in times of duress.

Jenny Morris (2001) creates space for considering accusations of resilience in relation to a politics and poetics of resistance. Western mythologies of resilience are strategically deployed as a means to regulate relations within and between marginalized groups, deter resistance and discourage collective understanding and organizing against exploitative economies and oppressive social structures. Self-reflective relations to the ways marginalized individuals and groups have been named can reveal commonalities in treatment which make the wrongness of ‘doing right’ by non-disabled standards difficult to ignore. According to Morris, “To pay attention to the words we use is not to be ‘politically correct’ but to struggle for a language which describes the denial of our human rights, locates our experience of inequality as a civil rights issue, and, at the same time, creates a space to articulate our experience of our bodies” (2001, p. 2). Morris makes it possible to question how expressions of ‘political correctness’ can be thought otherwise, and invites her reader to pay attention to what is at stake in the “struggle for a language” (Morris, 2001, p. 2). Her words also draw attention to the paradox implicit in the “struggle for a language which describes denial” and the affirmation of a claim to human rights.

In Chapter 6, I pay attention to how the words and names in circulation in University student and health services literature are activated by those officially responsible for mediating its message. The text is in this case is neither a pamphlet nor newsletters, but orally-delivered stories acquired through an open-ended interview process that received ethical approval by the Office of Research Ethics, University of Toronto. The participants recruited for the interviews were representatives of the University of Toronto Student Life Programs and Services, St. George Campus. The mission of Student Life Programs and Services is publically available on
its website (http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/), and reads as follows: “The Division of Student Life brings coherence to complexity and creates opportunities to build skills, foster community and integrate learning. We connect life to learning” (2012). Someone is considered a representative who is employed in one of the eleven units of the Student Life Programs and Services division: Accessibility Services, Academic Success Centre, Career Centre, Centre for Community Partnerships, Centre for International Experience, Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS), First Nations House, Hart House, Health Services, Multifaith Centre for Spiritual Study and Practice, Student Housing Service. Student Life professionals were invited to participate in the study on the basis of their role in connecting life to learning, and because of their familiarity with the institutional organization of University of Toronto students’ lives and their daily interaction with students at the University.

In September and October 2010, I met with eight individuals working with Student Life Programs and Services in offices, common rooms reserved for students, restaurants and coffee shops. I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each participant to learn about their perspectives on the ordinary ways students navigate and negotiate the university environment. My sample is not representative of all of the eleven divisions of Student Life Programs and Services, and of the eight individuals I interviewed, seven were women. However, my aim was not to access and represent a Student Life Programs and Services perspective. My objective in doing the interviews was to identify some ordinary ways of describing students by those who occupy a role within a ‘division’ of the University system that is represented as responsible for mediating the needs and desires of students. This role and its responsibilities are described in a section of the Student Life Programs and Services website titled, “About Student Life” (emphasis added, 2012):
Dedicated to student success and development, the division of Student Life Programs & Services on the St. George Campus provides the supports, opportunities and resources students need to reach their full potential. The division consists of 11 distinct units dedicated to supporting a variety of personal and learning needs as well as a central team of program, communications, and information technology professionals who pull it all together.

The interview questions focused on the paths students are advised to follow to access programs and services related to student life and wellness. All participants were informed that their responses are strictly confidential, and that participation is completely voluntary. They could refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time without consequence, although no one did. With participants’ permission, I recorded the interviews with a digital audio and transcribed them myself, omitting any personal identifiers that emerged in the conversation. The transcriptions were then coded according to emergent themes and analyzed using an interpretive sociological approach. Participants were provided with a post-interview report and research intentions in the winter of 2011.

As I listened to, and thought with, their responses to questions about how students navigate the University environment, I was struck by a dynamic relationship between other texts in circulation within and without the University environment. Through the stories of University staff members, themes from the texts came to life as orders which objectify student life, as well as recollections of past experiences, images, intimacies, memories, desires, relationships. Speaking with staff, it became possible to re-discover the words used in University Student Life Programs and Services pamphlets and newsletters as expressions of cultural ambivalence regarding locations of power within normative regimes. One issue which kept re-emerging in the interviews concerned the probability of university student suicide as a fact which must be accommodated in professional relations with students. The cultural fascination with university student suicide provides a view of the role of a notion of student life in the social organization of
the workaday world at the University of Toronto. Through this notion, the student body was not only ‘addressed’ as a problem of, and for, University administration. It also offered an expression of the need for resilient minds capable of measuring up to “workaday existence” (Weber, 1991, p. 149). Student Life professionals described how they, and students too, have to learn how to keep going, even and especially when faced with the probability of student death. Those that do not, that cannot, and that will not, are ‘not really’ doing their job, and by virtue of that, should have never been invited in the first place.

At the University of Toronto, knowledge of student life is constrained by a conception of disability as a source and symptom of chronicity; through this, disability is made present in the student body as a ‘primal scene’ for the performance of cultural assumptions about how the work of starting over ought to get done. The conversations which occurred in-person and in-text in the Student Body, Mind, and Spirit literature discussed in Chapters 4, 5 & 6 reveal how the reality of student death, whether conceived in social terms as academic failure, physiological terms as the cessation of ‘life itself’, or spiritual terms as a lost sense of belonging, is “made into a decision which needs to be reviewed ‘once more’” (Garfinkel, 2003, p. 15). Along with death, marginality constituted another major theme within Student Life Programs and Services texts. Marginality was represented as a choice, and one which both reflected and determined the existence of particular lifestyles. In the next section I consider a different way of thinking about marginality, as a “political commitment” (Titchkosky, 2003, p. 235). This way of thinking about marginality grounds my analysis.

**Regarding Marginality**

Titchkosky frames marginality as potentially a “political commitment” (2003, p. 235) to seeking out significance, and more specifically, the “radical social significance of disability for
culture” (2003, p. 235). She affirms that, “[…] such a commitment requires that I regard myself as marginal even to the meaning and significance of disability itself” (2003, p. 235). The work of ‘regarding’, looking at, taking account of, and/or referencing is a social accomplishment, and one which involves “seeing” a need for more ‘full’, ‘complete’ perspectives. Thinking with Michalko (2002), regarding oneself as “marginal even to the meaning and significance of disability itself” involves a critical reflexive relation to the work involved in passing as ‘ordinary’, where the ordinary appears as an embodiment of able-bodied ideals.

For Michalko, blindness is essential to sight insofar as through it, sight is realized as something that is “interactionally achieved,” something which is learned. Learning to realize sight in this way involved a reflection on the activities of “watching sight and remembering what it was like to see” (Michalko, 2002, p. 45). Such reflection made it possible to frame the work of watching sight as a memory, the invocation of which made it possible to “pass” as “fully sighted” (Michalko, 2002, p. 45). Michalko thus provides for a way of conceiving passing as a site for reflecting on the interconnectedness of watching and remembering, and with it bearing witness to what Titchkosky refers to as the “hegemony of ordinary life” (2003, p. 23). He says,

Watching sight and remembering what it was like to see were the only ways that I could pass myself off as fully sighted. But as I was beginning to ‘look’ more closely at exactly how I interactionally achieved myself as sighted and, more important, I began to realize that sighted people also achieve themselves as sighted and did so in the same way I did (Michalko 1998). Blindness was not the opposite of sight, but an essential part of it (Michalko, 2002, p. 45).

What does passing, and moreover, passing oneself off “as fully sighted” mean? It was when Michalko began to “‘look’ more closely” (appear as) “at” (location) “exactly” (truth), to resemble the position of an ideal, that he “began to realize” that sightedness was something, a place, a home, a past, a history, through which the appearance of “myself” and “themselves” could be “interactionally achieved”, and “in the same way”, no less. In the momentary
bracketing of the being of blindness, the fiction of “fully sighted” can appear as a story of sightedness performed. We could read the beginning to “look more closely” as a transgression whose possibility is anchored in the necessity and desire of participating in a world shared in common with others.

Each of the theorists I invoke provides a position from which professional disability knowledge can be viewed as essential to the reproduction of the fiction of the complete self, and preservation of a world shared in common, as fully ordinary orders. The specific ways in which each addresses and reconciles the question of “What disability is” (Thomas, 2004, p. 569) simultaneously recreate and dislocate traditional assumptions of the body which reduce its appearance to a sign of all that is right or wrong with the world.

In placing Max Weber and Maurice Merleau-Ponty in conversation, I do not mean to suggest similitude in perspective or approach. It is, rather, to demonstrate the multiple ways with which any one issue can be interpreted, taken-up as a question, and re-figured. A central premise of this dissertation is that the work of refiguring is not something which can be achieved, or resolved, within any one perspective. There is great promise in beginning in-between perspectives, in the space of reconciliation. First and foremost, beginning this way makes thinking in opposites difficult to do. In making visible and explicit the constitutive resistances and conflicts within institutions, ideologies and epistemologies, beginning in-between fundamentally disrupts the hegemony of typological thinking. The aforementioned risks of drawing from divergent theoretical traditions concern the nature of this disruption.

The disruption is produced by performances, the meaning of which cannot be understood in isolation of the very institutions, ideologies and epistemologies which provide for its appearance. Further, given that any critique draws its power from the conventions and traditions
it engages, there is always the possibility that it too will become autocratic. This possibility is explicitly addressed in Chapter 6 via a discursive analysis of interviews conducted with *Student Life* professionals. Rather than refuse or accept the expertise or authority of a professional understanding of disability (as disclosed in narratives of a mental illness disclosure), expressions of professional disability knowledge are treated as constitutive resistances. In this pursuit I offer no apology for the health or social services professions. My interest is in understanding the workaday existence *Student Life* maintains and enforces as a provocation, and an occasion to reflect on how the meaning of oppression and exclusion is produced as a taken-for-granted reality at the University of Toronto.

How we know oppression and exclusion is enmeshed in normative understandings of what it takes to survive the ordinary everyday world of university student life. The radical possibilities for recognizing oppression are restricted once we begin with the assumption that all students are struggling to survive, no less than the departments, programs, services, divisions, and institutions through which the invention of university student life is sustained (at least as it is imagined at the University of Toronto, and specifically, its St. George campus). And yet, engaging with disability as a site of relationality (Weiss, 2010; Thomas, 2004), these containments can reappear as neither permanent nor impermeable. On the contrary, as described in Chapter 2 in relation to the language of mental illness, a critical disability studies analysis of containments, as they are known and as they are lived, can generate new ways of reading the social.

Let us now turn to Chapter 2, which reflects on the appearance of mental illness as a normative identity category within disability studies theorizing. In this chapter I establish the critical reflexive tone with which the meaning of student life was, and is, made material at the
University of Toronto. Chapter 2 considers how thinking of the social as transience (Corker, 2001, p. 40) can create critical space to reflect on our taken-for-granted understandings of a relationship between chronicity and disability, as exemplified in medical sociology (Thomas, 2004). In this chapter, a philosophical understanding of transience, *transeunt*, is implicitly invoked as a way to engage representations of disability as something which cannot be contained by static notions of the social. This critical move pivots on recognition of mental illness as the seat of potential disability identities which are nonetheless routinely posited as beyond normative disability. A commitment to the transformative potential of the work of making taken-for-granted relations to the existence of lives lived in the ‘beyond’ visible and explicit animates my analysis. It carries through the dissertation, and is directly addressed in the concluding Chapter 6.

Thinking with Bhabha, I consider what it might mean to *dwell in the beyond*, as it is made to appear within interviews with *Student Life* professionals as a question of where some students are, or should be, located.

Then, the following chapters trace concomitant stories of inception, conception, construction, destruction, *re*conception, and *re*construction, climaxing in a “grand narrative” (Lyotard, 1984) of student mental life as a site for reflecting on mythologies of *resilience*. Contextualizing the storied nature of university student life does not simply contribute to a more comprehensive, expansive and ‘informed’ analysis, although the presence of these qualities is important in its own right. In situating the appearance of something called student ‘mental life’ within knowledge of the University as a historical and contemporary setting (see Chapters 3 & 4), this dissertation seeks a way to *re*embody the subject. From the perspective of *re*embodiment, and one may even say, *re*incarnation, I *re*turn to the appearance of university student ‘types’ as a means of reconciling the meaning of success and survival (Chapters 5 & 6).
Chapter 2
Disability Studies and Psychiatric Knowledge

The language, similar to any skill or tool, becomes part of my bodily ‘I can’. (Leder, 1990, p. 121)

Introduction

Much has been written about the dangers of mental illness, both by psychiatry as an empirical reality and by anti-psychiatry as a cultural category (Szasz, 1960). Recent work in the field of disability studies has made visible how the language of mental illness has been used to justify the subjugation, oppression and exploitation of disabled people (Reaume, 2006). Given psychiatry’s history of violence and oppression (Voronka, 2008) against disabled people it may appear possible and, perhaps, desirable, to interpret a situation or a body in the contemporary Western world without any orientation to mental illness. In this chapter I am not interested in proving the danger of mental illness. Nor am I interested in taking sides in the debates regarding the true nature of its appearance. Rather, I am interested in examining how the language of mental illness, and the psychiatric practices which have made this language possible, have conditioned the development of a disability studies community, culture and identity.

My examination involves a critical analysis of writing in the field of disability studies which illustrates the complex interconnections and interdependencies between self-identifying as a disabled person and rediscovering the aspects of oneself that have been stolen or stamped out by the imposition of a language of mental illness. This chapter turns on a central question, “What does it do theoretically to say that disability studies does not adequately address issues of mental difference?” My interest in pursuing this question is born out of my recognition that there are noticeable divisions within disability studies, predicated on able-bodied norms, which have not

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been adequately addressed within the field (Corker, 2001, p. 35; McRuer, 2006a, 2006b; Mollow, 2004). In asking this question I am also trying to make sense of my desire to make mental disability something that can be viewed as “just-as-visible” as physical disability. This pursuit cannot be reduced to the task of making mental illness matter, or matter more. Nor is it a matter of giving recognition. It is, rather, a question of returning to the lived experience of desire, felt as an embodied awareness of something lost, as a moment with which to reflect on the meaning of what typically matters… and how. The difficulty that I face concerns how I can reconcile this desire, which I have come to mistake for my own, with the simultaneous recognition that a satisfactory answer to my question will necessarily reinforce conventional, Cartesian, biomedical understandings of the body. Even as I ache for a closer resemblance to and identification with the self I imagine inhabits the world of disability studies, I am reminded that the language that provided for my self-understanding as a disabled person still lingers bitterly on my tongue, as a taste for an objective truth that can be revealed through visibility.

I use this chapter as an occasion to begin to unpack the sense of fear that both underlies and accompanies the recognition that there is not adequate representation of mental diversity in disability studies. I do this with the hope that such an inquiry will provoke a more nuanced self-understanding for those of us who identify as disability studies scholars. In engaging the relationship between the field of disability studies and the absent presence of mental illness, I can unpack my understanding that a disability consciousness is, in part, made possible by the language of mental illness. I can also give voice to an even deeper understanding that once it is brought into being a disability consciousness speaks of other languages, thus preserving a place for the possibility of continuing to rediscover the world we live.

An examination of the theoretical work that is being done when it is said that disability studies does not adequately address issues of mental illness necessarily involves an engagement
with the language of mental illness as a meaningful occurrence. More specifically, such an examination involves an engagement with the political significance of a visible relationship between a claim to a name, and its embodiment. Of central importance to this work is an understanding of the assumptions which have conditioned the meaning of the relationship between disability studies projects and the discipline of psychiatry. Such an understanding demands that we ask what “it” is that is at issue in issues of mental illness. I suggest that what is at issue in issues of mental illness is our certainty of the meaning of our relations with the world.

In disability studies, in the midst of a “conflict of interpretations” (Ricoeur, 2004) about what disability is, there are a multiplicity of meanings ascribed to it. I will show that the specific experiences of madness have not been ignored, discarded, and forgotten.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes in *The World of Perception*, “The contact I make with myself is always mediated by a particular culture, or at least by a language that we have received from without and which guides us in our self-knowledge” (2008, p. 66). My lived experiences as someone whose body, mind and senses bare the mark of the mental health system have led me to wonder whether simply avoiding the language of mental health and illness may in fact help to justify the marginalization, if not outright removal of some people, bodies and experiences from reflective consideration within conversations in disability studies. My being named mentally ill led me to view myself as a problem, my histories and experiences as deficient, defective and the products of an unfortunate chain of events, and my perceptions as delusional. My being named this way also brought me to disability studies, which has in turn brought me to a more critical awareness of myself as an embodied being, and has helped me to realize that my experiences, histories and perceptions are both valid and valuable.

For Drew Leder, “One’s methodology of investigation is inevitably intertwined with one’s model of the real; a certain manner of questioning the world supports and solidifies a
particular worldview, just as worldview suggests the research strategies to be employed” (1990, p. 142). My analysis begins with a consideration of disability studies as a “methodology of investigation” and “worldview” (Leder, 1990, p. 142).

The ‘New’ Disability Studies and Its Methodological Approach

What is the theoretical work that is being done when it is said that disability studies does not adequately address issues of mental illness? Both my question and my response make use of interpretive methods in what Tanya Titchkosky (2000) has referred to as the “new” disability studies. According to Titchkosky, it is important to note that,

Whatever is deemed “new” about Disability Studies is not attached to a concrete historical moment of birth, and is not due to a single transformative movement in time. Instead, the new appears to mark a movement, a movement from a seamless unified concept of disability to disjunctive and multiple conceptions of disability (2000, p. 213).

The “new” disability studies begins with the assumption that disability is, as Rosemarie Garland Thomson says in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Ordinary Body*, “always an interpretive occasion” (1996, p. 1). Phenomenological methods play an important role in making the “disjunctive and multiple conceptions of disability” more explicit. According to Sara Ahmed, the significance of phenomenology is that, “Phenomenology asks us to be aware of the ‘what’ that is ‘around’” (Ahmed, 2007, p. 151). Thus, what makes the new disability studies “new,” in this instance, is its use of phenomenologically-informed methods. In making use of interpretive methods, the new disability studies has become more conscious of itself as a form of political education.

Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (1987) assert that a political education is not the kind of education that can happen overnight. Political education offers new ways of making life meaningful that celebrate, rather than dissect the living significance of bodies (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 33). Instead of merely taking time and effort, a political education requires new
understandings of the ordinary ways we have of relating to the meaning of time and effort. A political education is not the kind of education that can be communicated in summaries and charts (Freire & Macedo, 1987, pp. 33-4). Its relations refuse summarization, mechanical memorization, or memorialization (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 34). Such an education is founded on the recognition that, “Mechanically memorizing the description of an object does not constitute knowing the object” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 33). A political education rather involves an “a critical reading of reality, […] critical perception, interpretation, and rewriting of what is read” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 36). In producing new shared understandings about how it is “human practice or work that transforms the world,” such an education is “counterhegemonic” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 36). This is the kind of education that begins with the worlds we each inhabit, the worlds we live (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 30). It relies on our experiential knowledge of these worlds to develop new relations to the words that are our worlds meaning. It returns us to the worlds that first brought us to words, and the words that brought us to where we are today; the world re-invented and we re-born (Freire & Macedo, 1987). This is an education that makes time and gives effort to deliver. There is no guarantee how or when it will be received, or what will be made of it. This holds true with words such as “mental illness,” “mental difference,” and with worldly rejoinders to these interpretive phenomenon such as disability studies.

The interest in the formulation of a political education which I suggest underpins the “new” disability studies shares a certain affinity with psychiatric knowledge, insofar as both the new disability studies and psychiatry share an interest in childhood. The new disability studies asks students to think back to their first encounters with disability and the images and assumptions these encounters engendered. In re-establishing our connections with the words that first gave us disability we can occasion new points of contact with and in the world that makes
the phenomenal event of disability a reality. Thus making disability matter differently (Michalko, 2002). Disability is not a problem, but a social and political project (Michalko, 2002; Linton, 2007, 1998; Mitchell & Snyder, 2006; Titchkosky, 2007). As Freire says (1983, p. 7),

In the effort at recapturing distant childhood, trying to understand my act of reading the particular world in which I moved, permit me to say again, I re-created, re-lived in the text I was writing the experience I lived at a time when I did not yet read words. And something emerged which seems relevant to the general context of these reflections. I refer to my fear of ghosts. The presence of ghosts among us was a permanent topic of grown-up conversations in the time of my childhood... As I became familiar with my world, however, as I perceived and understood it better by reading it, my terrors diminished.

Psychiatry, however, has a different way of relating to the child and childhood and the words we find there: psychiatry serves as a means of objectifying disability as a negative value and locating it in the individual. As a practice, psychiatry recovers the terror. But, rather than reading terror as an expression of particular ways of relating to and in the world, psychiatry treats the appearance of terror as a sign or symptom of our separation from the world. Michel Foucault has written extensively on psychiatry and its role in the constitution of the individual through notions of mental illness (Foucault, 1973; Mills, 2008, p. 97). In *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France 1973-1974*, Foucault (2006) writes of how psychiatry orients to the child and childhood in terms of a means of expanding its domain, enlarging its resources and reproducing its authority. According to Foucault, “childhood becomes the center, the target of psychiatric intervention indirectly, insofar as what one asks the mad adult is precisely, his childhood: let your childhood memories come, and through this you will be psychiatrized” (2006, p. 125). Rather than reading representations of childhood as an expression of our current relationships with the world, the psychological perspective orients us to our memories of our initial encounters with the world as a way to explain, and thus contain, the origins of our present difficulties.
Psychiatric practices have the effect of securing as the only valid perception the view that the present is itself a difficulty that must be overcome. At best, we can learn to tolerate – or live with – our difficulties in healthy ways. Learning to tolerate our difficulties involves identifying them as problems and engaging in practices that help us put these problems behind us. Our capacity to learn and teach tolerance of ourselves, others and the world is thus contingent on our capacity to uncover the true origins of the appearance of problems. Then we can commit to projects that we can expect will mitigate the likelihood of their re-appearance. In this context, disability is something that we can either learn to cope with or work to eradicate (Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2009).

In treating childhood as no more than a question that can confirm or dispute the reality of one’s perception of self, others and the world, psychiatry insulates and protects itself against any alternative or oppositional interpretations of disability. In relegating our relations to the languages we learned as children as proof of any and all present disadvantage, psychiatry teaches us with subtle precision that we are better off leaving childhood behind. Only in learning to forget our differences, and put our pasts behind us, can we secure our positions as normal, healthy individuals and communities. For psychiatry, the expressed desire to return to childhood, to the when and where one first made contact with the words which have shaped how and what one can now do, is akin to a declaration of madness (Foucault, 2006, p. 125).

Understanding the importance of the act of engaging a notion of disability studies as political education, and shifting the attention from “people with disabilities” to the social and political contexts within which disability is made to appear as an individual problem of personal or biologically deficiency involves what Dorothy Smith (1999) has referred to as “writing the social”. According to Smith, “Writing the social profits from the dialogue between what we mean to say and what we discover we have said, and of course, the work of rewriting to embrace
what we find we have said that is beyond or other than our intentions” (1999, p. 9). The “discovery” so central to writing the social and embracing that which lies “beyond” our intentions necessarily involves the act of reading the social and more particularly, the social phenomenon of disability, differently (Titchkosky, 2007). I take as my starting point the relationship between disability studies and psychiatry as I have lived it as a disability studies student and someone whose identity has been conditioned by the language of mental illness. In the act of re-reading and rewriting this relationship we can discover new ways of relating to ourselves, the disability community and the “new” tradition of disability studies which our work is helping to realize.

Take, for instance, Rod Michalko’s (1998) depiction of his relation to his discovery of blindness at nine years old and how it brought him to a notion of trust in The Mystery of the Eye and the Shadow of Blindness. Michalko describes how one day he lay crying on his bed after he overhears his mother and grandmother talking in “their first language” about how his grandmother could not see or hear well and soon would die. He realized that he could not see the blackboard at school for a few days now and had been hit in the cheek after losing sight of the line-drive, which led him to think that he too must be dying (1998, p. 36). After that day he says he, “spent the next few days testing my hearing to make sure that it was holding up” (1998, p. 36). Michalko writes of his relation to this recollection (1998, p. 37),

This is a story about going blind. This is my story. This is what I remember. This is a story of something gone wrong and a story of how wrongness is given life through the recognition that a life must be lived within the paradoxical awareness of the necessity and desire for life itself. It is the story of the necessity of diagnosis (what is wrong) and the desire for discovery (being wrong).

Michalko’s “story about going blind” shows us how the practice of returning to and beginning with the lived experience of disability can provoke a rediscovery of oneself and the world which makes this self possible. In storying how blindness had become significant as
“something gone wrong,” Michalko depicts how a return to the language that gives life to blindness puts us in touch with how we value life and give life value. Rather than an object for psychiatric intervention, some stories of a return to childhood in disability studies can represent identity claims. They are stories of reclamation, and they are at the core of the disability studies community’s strength; as a way to re-read the words that give our lives meaning in terms of “something gone wrong,” reclamation stories offer new possibilities for resistance and rebellion.

It is in the spirit of resistance and rebellion, made possible by a practice of beginning with disability and privileging the disability experience that I have come to my question. My aim is not to fix disability studies. I do not aim to rehabilitate its body, nor do I hope to restore it to a more complete version of itself. To do so would be to invoke the significance of the new disability studies practice of beginning in-and-with the body (Michalko, 1998) in name only. On the contrary, I have come to my question by engaging in the very practice that I think makes the new disability studies what it is, new. That is, relevant; a living language of the present time.

In the remainder of this chapter I trace out how I have come to think of the articulation of the experience of “something wrong” that has typically belonged to the realm of psychiatry can now serve as a reminder that there are always many more other ways of thinking and making sense of the worlds we live than we could ever hope to capture. Disability studies is one such way and it too has its limits and possibilities. Other ways of thinking which speak using words that read and write, as Smith says, “beyond or other than our intentions” (1999, p. 9).

A Phenomenology of Survival

A phenomenological approach can render our tacit knowledge about racial embodiment explicit. (Alcoff, 2001, p. 272)

If, as Ahmed (2007) suggests in “A Phenomenology of Whiteness,” one of the features of whiteness is that it is invisible, what does it do to describe the bodies that get identified as
disabled through the language of mental illness as “invisible”? Given that we have constructed as
natural certain features or characteristics as invisible and associated invisibility as a sign of
hegemony or dominance, what are we to make of the fact that within disability studies what the
medical establishment designates as ‘mental illnesses’ are often referred to as “invisible
disabilities”?5 “Invisible” seems to suggest that there is something ephemeral or not exactly real
about our disability, and that people who are in the know about what is really disability can see
right through us. As someone with what I have been told is an invisible disability, I have always
felt like a bit of a fraud. As though I am somehow “transparent”, even if my intentions are not in
any way clear to me. That I do not immediately appear as disabled carries with it the requirement
that I “come out” (Titchkosky, 2001) as disabled. Even when I do explicitly claim a disability
identity, it is usually accompanied with a “look” of suspicion. Inspired by Ahmed’s (2004) work
on fear in The Cultural Politics of Emotion, I ask the following question: what cultural
assumptions ground the fear of explicitly naming the mental in disability studies? What is the
relationship between this fear and the lingering presence of normate culture in disability studies?
Rosemarie Garland Thomson asserts that, “The term normate usefully designates the social
figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings” (1997, p. 8).
Is the act of first naming the mental and then leaving it behind a way of simultaneously
acknowledging and resisting normate culture’s conceptions of reality? How does this way of
recognizing and responding to normate culture both privilege and disrupt a disembodied
rationality?

What is also troublesome is the ease with which disembodied understandings of Cartesian
dualism and the existence of a mind/body split are deployed as a way to rationalize the
contradictory appearance of what is commonly described as mental difference or invisible

5 For instance, Otto Wahl says, “…mental illness is an invisible disability – that is, one that is not outwardly
apparent like many physical disabilities” (1999, p. 52).
disability in disability studies. How have expressions of the mind/body split acquired such an abstract quality and absolute character in our everyday conversations within the context of higher education? What is this “split” which continues to elude our commonsense understandings, which disrupts our faith in our descriptive capacities, and which seems better left to experts of philosophy? What is “it”, but the divide between theory and practice? As JoAnne Brown (1984) suggests, “it”, this “split” which we have attributed to or located in the body of Descartes, neither began nor ended with Descartes. “It” rather provided for his appearance and his continued relevance in Western cultural understandings of the body. “It” is an essential part of the cultural vocabulary of scholarly discourse and professional practice. “It” is the “dichotomy between words and deeds [so] profoundly embedded in Western cultural tradition, and in English scholarly discourse” (Brown, 1986, p. 41).

In *The Absent Body*, Leder describes how Descartes’ belief in a singular reality and an absolute truth grounded his desire to transcend what he viewed as the probable misgivings of the body, thus increasing his chances of escaping, or at least postponing, a certain death. Treating the existence of Cartesian dualism as a way to account for a divide in disability studies between the mental and the physical, the visible and the invisible, reinforces a sense of the naturalness of these divisions. How can attempts to distance ourselves from the tradition of psychiatric knowledge reproduce its assumptions in new forms? Disability studies’ relation to psychiatric knowledge is now considered in relation to what Leder says of Descartes (1990, p. 143):

Descartes … defies custom by locating the principle of life directly in the body, not the soul. Yet, what appears as a reversal of tradition is in fact but a transmutation. For this concession of life to the body is only made possible by a deeper concession to death…The body can constitute the place of life only because life itself has been fundamentally reconceived according to the lifeless.

It is significant that Leder identifies Descartes as one who “defies custom” (1990, p. 143). However, Descartes gives life and significance to the body only by first taking life and
significance from life itself, re-conceiving life in the development of objective knowledge about death. In Descartes, the body can have meaning only in the apparent absence of the meaning of life. How has disability studies been influenced by this way of proceeding?

**Disability Studies and Psychiatric Survivors**

In his article, “What Have Madness and Psychiatric System Survivors Got to Do with Disability and Disability Studies?”, Peter Beresford (2000) asks an important question: “what have psychiatric system survivors, madness and distress got to do with disability, the disabled people’s movement and, indeed, with disability studies and this journal, *Disability & Society*?” (2000, p. 167). Beresford says that if thought differently, the very things that appear to be barriers to a relationship between psychiatric survivors, people who have survived psychiatric diagnoses and treatments, and the disabled people’s movement may actually provide for a “common ground” (2000, p. 167). More specifically, Beresford understands “impairment”, a notion which he says once created a divide between psychiatric survivors and the “disabled people’s movement” opening up new discussions in which we can “advance our understandings of each other, exchange our experience, knowledge and learning, and foster links, alliances and solidarity” (2000, p. 171). Beresford notices that despite progress made by the disabled people’s movement, “The situation for psychiatric survivors, however, has unambiguously worsened” (2000, p. 168). He is most troubled by what he perceives as the political perception of the failure of community care, and the trend towards “compulsion” coupled with a “renewed commitment to institutionalized provision” (2000, p. 168).

According to Beresford, what little attention is paid to psychiatric survivors in disability studies has the effect of obscuring rather than enlivening the relations between disabled persons and psychiatric survivors. He also notes that while some disability studies scholars have worked to include a consideration of psychiatric survivors in their conversations, their ways of
representing the mad, distressed or psychiatric survivor experience seem to “accept a medicalised individual model of ‘mental illness’, where there would be little likelihood of them doing the same with impairment and disability” (Gabel, 1999; as cited in Beresford, 2000, p. 168). Ignoring questions that point to conflicts in the relationship between psychiatric survivors, madness, distress and disability will have serious consequences for both psychiatric survivors and people who have been disabled by society’s inability to accommodate bodily, cognitive, emotional and sensorial difference. Beresford says this is not only because there are “significant overlaps between the two populations”, but because “however, we as disabled people or psychiatric system survivors may think of ourselves, we are still lumped together within the same externally imposed definitions, administrative categories and statistics,” and “we are both subject to discrimination and oppression” (original emphasis; 2000, p. 169). Here, Beresford raises an important point about one of the dominant ways we come into contact with disability identities – through the language and institutions of psychiatric knowledge. Thus, Beresford’s work shows that the words used in the world of disability studies has not allowed for a reading of mental health, illness, or mental difference that fully grapples with the distinctiveness of this way of being outside of medicalized notions of impairment. Let us explore this further.

Simi Linton is a prominent disability studies scholar whose work has profoundly influenced the field of disability studies and disability activism. In her memoir, My Body Politic: A Memoir, Linton (2007) describes how she spent time in rehabilitation after she was in a car accident paralyzing her legs. She writes that during her time in rehabilitation she noticed discrepancies between the psychological counseling she received from mostly non-disabled staff and her perceptions and lived experiences as a disabled woman. She also tells of how, while in rehabilitation, she decided to go back to college to get her degree in psychology (Linton, 2007, p. 14). Linton makes visible a commonsense conception in Western culture that training in
psychology can better help us understand our positions and the positions of others. Within a therapeutic relation, this expression of the desire to make a difference represents an understanding of difference as an object whose value can be measured in relation to a norm. Linton says, “The fact that disability is inextricably linked to pathology is problematic, but even more fundamental is psychology’s endorsement of ‘normalcy,’ which centers and privileges certain types of behavior, functioning and appearance” (1998, p. 6). Understanding difference as a therapeutic object has the effect of reconstituting “our love of the same” (Stiker, 1999, p. 10). How can we read the desire for difference differently, in a way that resists asking the question: “Is there a remedy for this?” (Stiker, 1999, p. 10)?

Claiming disability provides a way to reclaim our relationships with the words that make our world meaningful. It makes it possible for disabled people to perceive ourselves in more agentive terms. A claim to a disability identity represents a decision to realize ourselves in the face of our own negation. Negation can then be used to turn the question back on the questioner. Claiming disability thus involves a practice of bending language backwards (Davis, 2002). But, as Titchkosky reminds us, “Claiming disability is not enough, “Coming out” is entering into a space of questions” (2001). Entering into a space of questions has led to the appearance of “Crip Culture” (McRuer, 2006a; Davis, 2002). The difficulty, however, in entering a space of questions resides in fact that the language and the culture this language references must first be incorporated for an inversion to make sense, and for the resistance to have meaning. There is always the possibility that the words we use will be interpreted differently. There may be confusion, or they may be taken up and re-circulated in ways we in the disability studies community have not anticipated, or in ways that prove contrary to our intentions. Rather than get caught up in all these possibilities, we can reflect on the fact that, “for any word on disability to make sense it needs to gesture at a whole world that allows for such sensibility” (Titchkosky,
2007, p. 21). How we relate to our difficulties in entering a space of questions is one of the
greatest strengths of a disability studies approach. Keeping this difficulty forefront in our
conversations reminds us that the words we use are not ours to own, and that words live lives
beyond one’s intentions (Smith, 1999; Titchkosky, 2007).

**Integration and Invisibility**

Being either visibly outside the normal orders that structure everyday life or being
mistaken as an instance of such orders, are experiences that belong to the realm of
that which needs to be understood and not simply enunciated. (Titchkosky, 2001, p. 15)

That mental illness is perceived as in need of a visibly adequate response from and within
disability studies suggests that mental illness is already or should be a problem for disability
studies. Henri Jacques Stiker (1999) reminds us that before we rush to find solutions we may
want to ask ourselves whether our questions will advance understanding. For instance, rather
than answer the question of the social exclusion of disabled people he asks, “why does society
try to integrate the disabled? What is behind this intention? And more exactly, why does society
want to integrate in the way it does?” (Stiker, 1999, p. 15). I orient to Stiker’s question as
offering a new way to read the question this chapter takes up. The question, “What does it do
theoretically to say that disability studies does not adequately respond to issues of mental
illness?” cannot be reduced to a question of exclusion. It is also a question of integration. The
word “adequately” points to a recognition of mental illness and a recognition that integration is
visibly incomplete, and therefore unsatisfactory. Is there a way to think about integration that
does not rely on a notion of a visible totality?

In relying on a notion of a visible totality, a whole person, a *holistic* approach or a
*complete* society it seems intuitive that an ‘adequate’ response to mental illness includes an
explicit assertion of a *need* for a more integrative, inclusive and caring system of representation
for mentally ill members of the disability community. New methodological approaches in
disability studies, however, ask us to bracket this cultural demand for systematic reform and
redesign. Rather than treat absence as a sign or symptom of inadequacy, a disability studies
perspective begins with a reflexive relation to how we interpret the world (Michalko, 1998;
Titchkosky, 2007). When we adopt an interpretive approach we are oriented to the appearance of
absence as a presence which happens in the world and that gives meaning to the world. Once we
are oriented to representations of absence as important occasions for making meaning out of
meaning making, dominant assumptions about what constitutes a socially acceptable way of
thinking about the world become more visible. This places us in a position from which the social
and cultural values which dominant assumptions depict can be re-narrated from the disabled
perspective: in terms of mediation (Michalko, 1998), desire (Manning, 2003), social exclusion

Transient Interpretations and Identity Shifts

… our togetherness, our relations are always made on uncertain ground. Therefore,
we are always caught between possibilities, always moving in the mysterious
shadows of uncertainty (Mcguire & Michalko, 2009).

In *Deaf Transitions: Images and Origins of Deaf Families, Deaf Communities and Deaf
Identities*, Mairian Corker (1996) writes about her experience of finding herself in-between deaf
and Deaf culture. Even though she was not born deaf and British Sign Language (BSL) was not
her first language, Corker nonetheless identified with the Deaf community. The Deaf community
does not understand itself as a medical problem, but a culture with a language. Corker describes
how needing an interpreter and being recognized as a hearing person by the Deaf world was a
difficult situation to negotiate. Corker writes, “It can be very difficult to face oppression from
both hearing and Deaf people, but it is more difficult and more painful to cope with when it
comes from Deaf people” (Corker, 1996, p. 165). There are many people within the disability
community who do not necessarily appear disabled in the conventional sense of what is “normally” or immediately recognized as disability. Corker’s words reminded me of occasions in my own life when I have experienced and witnessed the refutation of a claim to a disability identity by other disabled persons. It is not always enough that people assert a disability identity; they do not have a secure place or a voice in disability studies until they can show that they have fully incorporated its language and practices.

The language of mental illness is a language made possible by psychiatric knowledge and practices. Psychiatric knowledge instructs us to interpret disability as a disadvantage suffered by individual persons to varying degrees depending on their distance from what Western culture has informed us is a normal healthy life (Foucault, 2003). Accepting the authority of this knowledge and using it as a standard against which realities can be said to be more or less true makes us complicit in the ongoing subjugation of already marginalized and oppressed peoples. Simi Linton asserts that in the disability studies community (added emphasis; Linton, 1998, p. 12),

The question of who “qualifies” as disabled is as answerable or as confounding as questions about any identity status. One simple response might be that you are disabled if you say you are. Although that declaration won’t satisfy a worker’s compensation board, it has a certain credibility with the disabled community.

In disability studies, Linton suggests, saying you are disabled has “credibility.” If this is so, what provides for my initial questions? Perhaps it is not just “that” we say we are disabled, but that we say it in a certain way. What specific practices, what dialects, and what words, shape how a claim to disability is received and received as having just been said? Leaving such questions unasked, we risk negating the significance of the social and political processes that organize our relations to ourselves and one another.

“Person-first language” has provided a powerful mode of articulation, the use of which displays knowledge of how relationships to disability identities ought to be expressed. I do not want to dismiss the significance of this form of identification as it is lived and experienced by
some people. However, person-first language is a way of knowing disability that has been challenged by disability scholars and activists (Titchkosky, 2001) on the grounds that it locates disability in individual people. In placing people first, disability becomes a problem that individual people have. The power of person-first language lies in its capacity to transcend embodied difference. According to Titchkosky, “Separating the person from his or her disability is the aim of people-first language, an aim that does not acknowledge that the social consequence is the alienation of persons from a political understanding of disability” (2001, p. 133). The suggestion that this one way of articulating disability identity is the one and only correct form of address guide us away from questions concerning the societal and environmental barriers to equal access and full participation which disable people. What discussions and debates about the appropriate way to describe and, therefore, define disability identity can teach us, is that it is vitally important to think about the social and political contexts in which language is used. Disability words serve as a reminder, not only of the highly contested nature of disability identity, but the importance of paying attention to the power of language in organizing perceptions of disability.

The language of mental illness provides a means of collecting experiences which exceed the unified structure of Western culture’s overtly medicalized way of perceiving and making sense of the world. In Disability, Self, and Society (2003), Titchkosky describes an experience of being caught up in this language and how it created barriers to self-understanding. Not yet diagnosed with dyslexia, she had come to believe that she had “a kind of mental illness” (p. 33):

Since about the age of thirteen, I went to garage sales and bought every introductory psychology textbook I could find, and I spent many weekends in a downtown public library also looking for a definition of my problem. I was searching for a name, which I never found, for my symptoms. What I conceived as mental illness took shape in strange ways: at times, I would have a terrible anxiety, hear a voice that said, ‘You can’t do that,’ and begin to imagine a garbage-dumping ground standing between me and the visible world, especially the world of print.
Reading Titchkosky’s account, a number of questions arise: What provides for the immediacy with which we turn to psychology for a way to account for the problem and secure its solution? How is it that when we experience difficulty we know that we can and must educate ourselves in psychology; to the point where, like Linton, we aspire to become its teachers? What provides for the desire to stand out against, or stand over and above, the garbage-dumping grounds that stand in our way and keep us at a distance from the “visible world”? In her narrative Titchkosky opens a space for questioning how the requirements of the visible world are made visible. Is all that disability is, anything that is totally visible or invisible? Is disability only either in our way of belonging to normate culture or our only way out? Corker asserts (2001, p. 47),

If disability is indeed “any departure from an unstated physical and functional norm,” binary thought leads us to the conclusion that disability is the transient yet ever-present embodiment of dis-value – a category of “other” designated as a dumping ground for anything that cannot be valued.

In “We Were Never Identified,” McRuer (2006b) asks what we, as disability studies scholars and activists, are to make of those of us who never make it to diagnosis and discovery, or to those of us whose arrival we have not anticipated. Asking this question disrupts a common practice in the language and culture of disability studies. It draws attention to the need to think about what established assumptions and accepted practices condition the cultural resonance of a disability story that starts with madness and ends with a name. A story that starts with the kind of thinking which can be perceived by the thinker as “out of order” and ends in a legitimization of this thinking that takes the form of a “qualified” disability.

The question, however, also limits our inquiry by relegating the ways we have of thinking about madness to unfinished beginnings or premature endings, both of which are represented as so horrifying, it would have been preferable to never have been born. Such thinking is embodied in Lynn Manning’s (2003) story of his re-birth in Weights:
I slowly become aware that something’s not right. There’s this nebulous fog of colors swirling before my eyes. Whenever someone enters the room, a reddish silhouette appears amidst a fog, and more people enter, more silhouettes appear. No matter what the people in the room are doing, these silhouettes stand stark still. If I lie back in bed, they remain before my eyes. If I squeeze my eyes shut, the apparitions are still visible. It’s not until the last person leaves the room that they slowly dissolve into the fog. I’m both fascinated and terrified by these visions, but I don’t tell a soul about them. After the surgery comes the medicine. Alone in my hospital room and cruising on painkillers, I discover that I can manipulate the colors on my mental canvas. I quickly progress from childlike finger paintings and primary colors to near photographic renderings of places and faces. It’s a pleasurable distraction, but is this blindness? Or madness?

In *Weights*, Manning describes how “something akin to joy surges through me” when the doctor tells him that he is blind. He says the doctor asks him if he understands what he has just heard. Manning responds, “I understand. I’m blind, I’ll probably be blind the rest of my life. As long as I’m not doing it to myself I think I can handle it.” Here, Manning illustrates his knowledge that to be mad is a fate worse than blindness. This, even though, as he informs the audience earlier in the performance, he is a firm believer in “Murphy’s Law” and as an adolescent he tried to imagine the worst thing that could happen to him and decided that would be blindness. Manning shares that after he decided blindness would be the worst thing that could happen to him, he secretly prepared for blindness. He did this by walking around with his eyes closed.

And then he is blind. After learning he was blinded by a gunshot wound to the head, Manning says he could “handle” blindness over madness. He had, after all, prepared for blindness. But he was not prepared for madness. However, he also says that prior to what he describes as the “medical verdict” of blindness, he seemed more ready to believe that the experiences he was having were the result of “madness.” In his performance, he shares his familiarity with the language of mental illness. He even knew the “symptoms,” which for him appeared with the awareness that “something’s not right.” After a while, he starts to manipulate his newly present sensibilities, orienting to them as a “pleasurable distraction.” But, for whom is
madness, or blindness, a “pleasurable distraction”? From what perspective is such a statement based – the actual experience of living in and with the difference that disability makes, or what Hannah Arendt refers to as “the experience of the thinking ego” (1978, p. 33)? He is also a man waiting for a/his verdict distracted by the very stuff others will name and proclaim some nameable problem.

As students, teachers, researchers, artists and activists in disability studies, we have a collective responsibility to recognize that we have inherited some of the established traditions of our community and culture from ableist assumptions about how people are supposed to look, think and feel. In our examinations of how disabled people have been constituted as a marginalized and excluded group, let us also ask what power and privileges the field of disability studies has gained as a result of its intimate relationship with psychiatric knowledge and practice. As things “stand,” we are proceeding as though the experience of madness, while providing for new understandings and revaluations of disability, is best understood as a tool for pinpointing the “reflective origins” (Canguilhem, 1991) of normate able-bodied culture.

The use of the word “stand” is important, for it tells us something about how we have positioned ourselves, in an upright position; sanctioned and supported by the authority of a psychiatric worldview which treats our thoughts and ideas of the world as always potentially separable from the experiences the world gives us and the words we’ve used to make the world. Ahmed writes, “Bodies stand out when they are out of place” (Ahmed, 2007, p. 159). What, then, is providing for the persistent reappearance and disappearance of the language of mental illness in personal narratives of being given disability as a name? Does this apparent “disappearing act” point to a need to rethink my relation to this paper’s question? Does it signal that the real issue in the call for more adequate representations of the lived experience of mental illness is a matter of proper placement? Is the body of knowledge that is represented in the
language of mental illness *out of place* in disability studies? How do these questions both reinforce and disrupt conventional understandings of disability?

**Making the Language of Mental Illness ‘Worldly’**

In *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory and Investigation* Dorothy Smith writes, “Writing the social is always from where people are” (1999, p. 8). I would like to add that writing the social, and disability as a social phenomenon (Titchkosky, 2003) is also always from *when* people are. As Simi Linton reminds us, we are now at a critical juncture: “scholars and activists have demonstrated that disability is socially constructed to serve certain ends, but now it behooves us to demonstrate how knowledge of disability is socially produced to uphold existing practices” (1998, p. 4; cited in Titchkosky, 2008, p. 213). In some ways this statement is true, but there are other sides to this story which are not necessarily less true or real. Yes, we have to “demonstrate how knowledge of disability is socially produced to uphold existing practices.” Knowledge of disability is produced to confirm the validity of assumptions about a disconnection between the mind and the body, and the social and the individual produced by the dividing and spatializing practices that have reinforced the authority of psychiatric knowledge. It is also true that there are forms of disability, and an array of disabled embodiments, that are not so easily recognized as socially constructed. Just as true is the fact that there are even others still which have been recognized and represented as no more than social constructions. In “Clenched Subjectivity: Disability, Women and Medical Discourse” Titchkosky writes, “Disability here is that alternative self-reflective space where we confront not the ‘true nature’ of embodiment but the ‘true character’ of all that our culture can make of embodiment” (2005, p. 11).

The medical diagnosis provides a name that can direct people to the disability community, but there is a fundamental difference between residing in a community and being fluent in its culture. Medicalized and psychiatrized understandings of disability secure a position
for disabled persons within the community, but they do so primarily from a nondisabled perspective, and within an institutional framework that has its historical origins in the devaluation of corporeal difference.

Naming the figure of the normate is one conceptual strategy that will allow us to press our analysis beyond the simple dichotomies of male/female, white/black, straight/gay, or able-bodied/disabled so that we can examine the subtle interrelations among social identities that are anchored to physical differences. (Garland Thomson, 1997, p. 8)

In the above passage, Garland Thomson offers an interesting counter to McRuer (2006b). Rather than treating our not having been named as a deficiency or a loss, perhaps we need to rethink our relations to being named and naming, and name the namer in an effort to make visible both theirs and our advantage. Such a move represents what Titchkosky has referred to as a “politics of wonder” (2011; 2008b). This offers a new perspective from which we can reflect on how we have been positioned without normate culture. Here, I use the word “without” in two ways: as an expression of being outside of normate culture, and as though we do not have our own normate culture, like a “dump” for whatever it is that normate culture is not (Titchkosky, 2008b). No longer are we objects that have been named, left unnamed or treated as forgotten, but social beings who can name, and who have named our worlds in ways that resist any easy explanation, summary or diagram, using our first languages.

As Freire (1983) tells us, our first languages are the languages we create in our initial encounters with the world we had yet to experience through the word, before we learned to separate our words from worlds and ourselves from both. My question brings me to why we need social theory and social theory that is grounded in a self-reflective, phenomenological approach. Thinking of mental illness as a name that can either be adequate or inadequate, right or wrong, and a claim whose legitimacy can be measured by its distance from dominant cultural conceptions of disability secures disabled people in preconceived notions of disability. It teaches
us that the disability we live with is all in our heads. It teaches us that, as alluded to by Manning (2003), unless we claim disability as a name, unless we can qualify our claim, and unless we can relegate our experience of disability to one of disadvantage, we will never escape the question: Are we just doing it to ourselves?

In *The History of Disability* (1999), Henri Jacques Stiker writes, “But the fear I fear is an ancestral one, for in the end it is the fear of fault. Somewhere in me there lies a culpability, and I am made to feel it acutely” (1999, p. 4). What do the questions, “Am I just doing it to myself?” or “Are we just doing it to ourselves?” speak to, politically? Are they just a representation of a delusional personal culpability, and the consequences of the dominance of the medical model? Could such questions also be read as the site of a struggle to negotiate the meaning of collective responsibility in a world that values individualism? Rather than a symptom of the hegemony of medicalised thinking, could such questions be a space for re-politization? For Hannah Arendt, collective responsibility is always political (2003, p. 149). However, Arendt says that there are two conditions which have to be present for collective responsibility (2003, p. 149),

I must be held responsible for something I have not done, and the reason for my responsibility must be my membership in a group (a collective) which no voluntary act of mine can dissolve, that is, a membership which is utterly unlike a business partnership which I can dissolve at will.

The culpability Stiker (1999) writes of, and the constant anxiety that finds form in the question, “Am I doing it to myself?” could and have been read as further proof of the existence of an individual, medicalised model of thinking of disability as a personal tragedy, imposed on disabled people by able-bodied perspectives in neoliberal societies. These expressions, which tend to appear in the presence of a disjuncture (Pollner, 1975), could also be read as attempts to make sense of our membership in a group which as Arendt says, “no voluntary act can dissolve” (Arendt, 2003, p. 149). In recognizing that we have learned in Western culture to orient to the
question, “Am I doing it to myself?” as a symptom of mental disorder, we can begin to trouble the usual ways we have of representing our sensibility of disability.

This question could also be read as an expression of a personal recognition of membership in a community, and of oneself as a participant in this community’s realization - an individual embodiment of collective responsibility. Answering the question, “Am I just doing this to myself?” in a definitive way separates disabled people from their capacity to participate in discussions about mental illness. It also reinforces the belief that as disabled rather than mentally ill people, or ordinary people who happen to have disabilities, they do not have the authority to comment. As Goffman says in *Asylums* (1961, p. 364),

> To have one’s behavior defined as involuntary, non-responsible, and non-culpable may be helpful in some cases, but this none the less involves a technical schema, not a social one, and ideally ought to disqualify the patient from any participation in the service relation even while qualifying him as an object of service.

To re-turn to the question orienting this chapter, perhaps what is at issue cannot be reduced to an observation that the disability community discriminates against psychiatric survivors, consumers, and mad people. Perhaps it is rather the systematic separation of disabled people from their capacity to speak back to the presence of the language of mental illness in their own lives; a process facilitated by psychiatric knowledge and practice. Do not worry. You are disabled, not crazy. The doctor tells Manning he is blind, and he can live with that. He can manage that. But madness, well, only the experts can manage that.

Reclamation stories provide a politically significant way to reunite disabled people with their capacity to speak back to language. This is because reclamation stories draw on a commonsense of the body to speak their relationships with the world. Such stories provide a clue as to how we understand our positions in the world as given to us by the world. That each story reveals a perceived barrier, whether in the form of another language, “strange silhouettes of red” (Manning, 2003), or psychology textbooks (Titchkosky, 2003), tells the reader something about
how this position is being negotiated by the one who recounts the story. That is, as a relationship to the limits our culture gives us knowledge of. For, as Hans-George Gadamer writes in *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age*, “… there are limits to what we can do, limits which are taught to us by illness and death” (1996, p. ix).

Representations of mental illness thus teach us about how Western culture understands itself and recognizes and relates to its limits. As I have tried to show, the question, “Am I doing it to myself?” reflects the value of individualism in Western cultural knowledge. More importantly, it reveals its underlying anxiety: as long as we are doing it to ourselves, there is something we can do about it. At the very least, we can learn to control our environments and manage situations, mitigating the effects of stress. In this context, in the visibility of the assumption that we can do anything if we put our minds to it, there is a growing recognition that the definition of the problem and its solution are given to us by environments. What should be of concern to us is that in contemporary times these environments are becoming more and more institutionalized.

Titchkosky says, “The point is not that stories change, but that people change in the telling and retelling of stories” (Titchkosky, 2003, p. 36). Manning’s depiction represents a self-reflective relation to the cultural worlds he moves through. In our day-to-day lives, we are often told that we have no time, or that there is no use and no point in asking what assumptions and inversions made this new life possible. We are encouraged to overcome difficulties and welcome the “advances” and “improvements” which will allow us to do so. Even if the new understandings they give us are the result of dissecting dead bodies, or walking around with our eyes shut. Manning explicitly names his name, giving it a life. He does so not once but twice: “Is this blindness or is it madness?” Given a choice between blindness and madness, Manning says he is relieved to be able to choose blindness, but only after this name has been conferred on him;
only once madness is no longer a choice. The doctor tells him he is blind. The reality of the experience of madness disappears; and with that, sweet relief. The doctor’s diagnosis confirms it; whatever it is that is happening to him, he is not doing it to himself. He has a name, and with that name, the power of knowing what it is that is wrong.

Are those of us who get labeled mentally ill by the medical establishment just doing it to ourselves? The body, says Simone de Beauvoir, “…expresses our relationship to the world, and that is why it is an object of sympathy or repulsion” (1948, p. 41). If the body expresses our relationship to the world, and subjectivity signifies separation from that world, what are we to make of a disability subjectivity which even self-identified disabled people view as delusional? Further, what does the cultural interest in disability subjectivity, as represented by the prevalence and proliferation of psychiatric knowledge, tell us about a normative relation to the limits of the body? de Beauvoir (1948, p. 105) asserts that since Descartes the appearance of subjectivity is taken to signify a separation from the world: “After Descartes how can we ignore the fact that subjectivity radically signifies separation?” Conceptions of subjectivity and disability are intertwined and mutually constitutive. They were made for each other. Within the rubric of psychiatric knowledge, disability is constructed as a way to represent this separation as simultaneously natural and inescapably negative. Subjectivity is made to appear as the quintessential impairment. I now consider the relationship between disability identity and impairment.

**Disability Identity and Impairment**

A disability’s degree of visibility … affects social relations. An invisible disability much like a homosexual identity always presents the dilemma of whether or when to come out or pass. One must always anticipate the risk of tainting a new relationship by announcing an invisible impairment or the equal hazard of surprising someone by revealing a previously undisclosed disability. (Garland Thomson, 1997, p. 70)
What do we mean when we talk about impairment in disability studies? According to Lennard Davis, “Impairment is the physical fact of lacking an arm or leg. Disability is the social process that turns an impairment into a negative by creating barriers to access” (2002, p. 12). Davis then draws on a much used example in disability studies, which he refers to as the “clearest example” of the distinction between impairment and disability: “The clearest example of this distinction is seen in the case of wheelchair users. They have impairments that limit mobility, but are not disabled unless they are in environments without ramps, lifts and automatic doors” (2002, p. 12). Despite saying this, Davis shares his recognition that this “example”, albeit the “clearest” one, leaves something to be desired for it produces a sense of a disability identity that comes dangerously close to essentialism, locating the source of the truth of the disability identity in the disabled body (added emphasis; 2002, p. 13). How is it that this situation offers the “clearest example”? What is it about this situation that goes without saying? And what does it tell us of the less clear cases it invokes; cases where not only the impairment, but its possession and the environment in which one is situated, are not as easily seen? Davis asks us to attend to how, in making a case for disability we tend to rely on knowledge that makes a case of disability, thus representing disability as something that can be perceived to be separate from impairment, as in cases of people who use wheelchairs. We learn from Davis that distinctions can be seen in cases of use, that impairments can be had by people, and that it is the impairment that limits rather than extends their movement. If wheelchair users are in certain environments, like ones without ramps, they are disabled.

As Garland Thomson writes in Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature (1997, p. 13), “The physical impairments that render someone “disabled” are almost never absolute or static; they are dynamic, contingent conditions affected by many external factors and usually fluctuate over time.” What does this assertion mean when
read against Mike Oliver’s claim that, “Impairment is, in fact, nothing less than a description of the physical body” (1996, p. 35)? Does the act of naming an impairment “physical” not negate the physicality of impairment? What provides for the apparent need to make this distinction? Are we to understand that there is such a thing as a “mental impairment,” and that whatever “mental impairment” is, as an alter to “physical impairment,” it represents more static, individual, internal and objective conditions? Are we to understand that mental impairment, unlike physical impairment, represents a subjective state of the individual person?

For Bill Hughes and Kevin Paterson, “The distinction between disability and impairment de-medicalises disability, but simultaneously leaves the impaired body in the exclusive jurisdiction of medical hermeneutics” (1997, p. 330). Foucault shows that much like disability studies is new, the medicalisation of madness is also recent (Foucault, 1973; Mills, 2008, p. 101). In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault (1973) provides a method for thinking about how representations of mental illness are deployed as a means of making madness visible in a legitimate way. Mental illness thus provides a political technology for making meaning out of what had dominantly been perceived as an absence of meaning, or a loss of sensibility. According to Mairian Corker (2001, p. 36), a “sensibility of disability” takes biological and socio-cultural difference to be “mutually constituted,” thus troubling the “impairment/disability binary.” A sensibility of disability is found in the article, “‘Listen to My Madness’: Understanding the Experiences of People with Serious Mental Illness” (Lester & Tritter, 2005). In this article Helen Lester and Jonathan Tritter share their understanding that impairment is “embodied irrationality,” and that impairment “can, in itself, be oppressive” (Lester & Tritter, 2005, p. 649). While this assertion presupposes the liberatory function of rationality, it also disrupts the dominant understanding in disability studies that impairment is objectively or biologically given. Given the many different meanings implicit in the ways we use the word
“impairment,” we need to be attentive to whether our invocation of the word “impairment” can reference both an institutionalized discrimination, as well as a readily identifiable biological condition (Sheldon, 2005, p. 52).

Not saying the words doesn’t make them go away. In the absence of words once used meanings often remain in the form of traces - of other meanings and contexts; similar to the red silhouettes which Manning says remained even after everyone had left the room. It is imperative that work in disability studies acknowledge how collective understandings of self, ‘others’, and the worlds between are made possible by the existence of psychiatric knowledge and practice. For, as Stiker says, “The dilemma, exclude or include, hides a whole series of exclusions that are not commensurate” (Stiker, 1999, p. 16). As long as we restrict our understanding of disability to notions of exclusion, we restrict our understanding of the social to one of cause or consequence – from an embodiment, to a “social determinant.” Within medicalized “social determinants of health” models, the word social is used to represent a variable to be considered when determining the nature of the appearance of disease, so that one can plan for, develop and implement ‘appropriate’ interventions. According to the World Health Organization (2012),

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy choices. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries.

The social movement in disability studies is paralleled by an epistemological movement in medical thinking which uses psychiatric practices to determine the social determinants of healthy or normal living, and do so at global, national and local levels. Here are two different paradigms of thinking about the social, both presumed liberatory, one of which leads to a re-politicization of disability issues, while the other locates responsibility in the “conditions in which people are born, live, work and age”, and frames inequities as “unfair and avoidable
differences in status” (WHO, 2012). However, in the medicalized understanding of the social (Canguilhem, 1991) which treats the social as a variable which can influence human action, a kind of socio-biology emerges. Here, the word “social” is used to signify a set of accepted assumptions about what “context” means, i.e., a matter of “conditions”; thus reducing the complexity of the multiple meanings that make up a shared understanding of something called “context.” The medical model empties the word “social” of its living significance through a process of abbreviation, de-contextualizing the context and separating this word from the world which conditioned its emergence. Treated as an abbreviation, the word “social” is thus put into the service of medicine. What is lost in this translation is any explicit reference to the relationship between the describer and the described (Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2009).

For Corker (2001), the difficulty in representing disability as a social phenomenon has to do with the fact that, “Social languages are not parceled out in rationally consistent conceptual schemas: they overlap, interact, fuse, form and are deformed. The social is transience” (2001, p. 40). In saying “the social is transience,” Corker invites the reader to reflect on how conventional ways of representing disability in disability theory in terms of anything other than the norm, anything deviant or disvalued, may in fact be under theorized. The last thing I want to do is to make the language of mental illness more “legitimate” or “acceptable.” On the contrary, my project aims to show how even a disability studies perspective that defines itself in opposition to a “medical model” of thinking about disability is neither free nor exempt from the powerful reach of medicalising language and practices.

The statement, “the social is transience” also invites the reader to consider how attentive we are being to how we represent the complexity of our relationships with existing knowledge of disability as a social category, disability as a social identity and the world within which something called disability is possible. Unless we start paying attention to how we are paying
attention (Titchkosky, 2007, p. 3), we are complicit in projects that rob the social of its meaning and kill its living significance. Projects such as those we have become accustomed to associating with the “medical model”. If we orient to “the social” as a word we can use to reference a model for thinking about disability which locates the cause of disability “out there”\(^6\) (Finkelstein, 1972, p. 17) in the social environment, we close off the most radical possibilities for difference that theories that are informed by the social model can make. For then, we don’t question how what’s here, where we are when we read and write, organizes how we know our oppressive environments “out there.”

Treating “the social” as a word, instead of orienting to “the social” as a world constrains an understanding of the value of writing “the social” to its function in the life of the group. It is thus that writing the social can become a project that could potentially be perceived as getting in the way of the fulfillment of group objectives. Disability theory’s demand to stop and ask what cultural values and ideals condition the visibility of a shared sensibility of social goods and collective goals is not likely the most politically expedient avenue for the disability community to take. And yet, in the absence of disability theory, the best we can hope for is the production of new stereotypes and simplifications which are more positive than their predecessors.

To treat the stories of people who can be identified as mentally ill as probably not true, and to say that their words do not express a relationship with the world, is to say that they do not really belong in the world. Disability studies has shown us how the treatment of people as though they are not really with us, already too far gone, and as such beyond comprehension and empathy, the kind of people for whom sensitivity and sympathy are the best we can do, is a cultural practice. Treating people as though they are not really here, even though we can feel

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\(^6\) In a presentation titled, “The Psychology of Disability” Vic Finkelstein says: “The way that I think that the experts, professional people can help, is to start to help such a person see that the cause of disability lies out there. When we start to build ramps, and so on, such a person would be able to get out and escape the isolation” (emphasis added; 1972, p. 17).
their presence, is a practice which our culture both gives us and instructs us is a necessary part of growing up and becoming responsible; that is, capable of responding in an appropriate, civilized way. As a practice, it is also a way of reading and writing the world; it is a language whose survival depends on our incorporation of and investment in it. It is not just the way things are. Neither can mental illness be summed up as one of psychiatry’s hallucinations. To participate in the simplification of the complexity of the situation in which we now live, and in which we are all invested, is to reproduce the authority of the disciplines and the efficacy of the practices which have got us here in the first place.

How, then, are we to think about what we “must” do? What alternative practices can we engage that will help us to remain open to the fact that there are always other interpretations of the situation? We might begin by recognizing that even though we cannot always perceive these others in their immediacy, they are always and already there, in-the-visible. When I use the word “in”, I do not mean to suggest an interiority of visibility, or a re-codification of perception. Rather, what I am suggesting is that for something to appear as visible or obvious, for which there is no mistaking that it is there, there has to be a there that is already visible. For something to appear as obvious or ordinary, it has to have a place, and in having a place, belong to a larger picture.

There’s No Such Thing as Mental Illness

In “The Myth of Mental Illness” (1960), Thomas Szasz says that there are differences in the ways mental illness is understood, depending on the social context (1960: 2), but he takes little notice of the context shaping this recognition. According to Szasz, there are “errors” in thinking about mental illness and that mental illness is now a myth. There is a methodical way of proceeding in Szasz’s writing. He makes matters “clear” and then “leaves them to rest” (1960, p. 4), which he justifies by saying they “don’t concern us specifically,” meaning that for the
purposes of his work, these “matters” are more like markers that provide a way to frame what he really wants “us” to know – that there is really no such “thing” as mental illness, at least not as we have come to think of it in everyday life as a medical issue.

Szasz asserts that he uses the word “psychiatry” to refer specifically to “that contemporary discipline which is concerned with problems in living (and not with diseases of the brain, which are problems for neurology)” (1960, p. 4). Szasz understands mental illness not as a “disease entity,” but as “communications expressing unacceptable ideas, often framed, moreover, in an unusual idiom” (1960, p. 5). But that is all he says of the matter. As if what he means by “communications” is clear, confined as he is by the “scope” of his work (1960, p. 5). In understanding mental illness in terms of communications, framed in an “unusual idiom,” Szasz suggests that our knowledge of mental illness is framed by a language that is particular to a specific group of people. There is something distinct about this form of communication, and according to Szasz, this distinction can be found in the “unacceptable ideas” it expresses and to which this distinction in part belongs.

There is a danger in following Szasz (1960) in thinking that there is no such thing as mental health and illness. My memories, my experiences and the way I understand the world tell me otherwise. As I have lived it and learned it from the ways others have treated me or my family there are rather many such things as mental health and illness, many more than I could ever begin to know, or even count. There are also many experiences that visibly resist containment in the words “mental health and illness.” The danger is uncritically or unthinkingly convincing ourselves that we can negate the power of mental health and illness by leaving it unsaid, on the margins. The notion of “leaving” appears double-sided. Passive, in the sense that you could just leave something and be unaffected by it, and in leaving do nothing to it, that you did not help create it, it was already there and will continue to be there regardless of you, in spite
of you, and, you tell yourself, never because of you. There is also the sense that “leaving” is active. While I do not know what a world without mental illness would look like, I am concerned about what a desire to experience the self free of mental illness would entail. Who would such a project target? What would such a person, or world, look like?

What is important is not that we are addressing someone in particular, but the presupposition that there is a readily identifiable body that can be addressed, and that this body can be made accessible through knowledge of mental health and illness. When we ask questions about the “adequacy of an address” with respect to “issues” of mental illness, the intended recipient, or audience, is of secondary importance to the “thing” perceived in need of an address, and the problematic character of its nature. In addressing “issues,” we reinforce a belief in the objectivity of that which is discussed, as well as the orientation or approach.

Knowing to speak to people “the right way,” and knowing the right words to say, requires that we first know what it is we are talking about. But having access to the right words does not guarantee that they will be used in the right way or for the right reasons. In *Pride Against Prejudice*, Jenny Morris describes her experience in an institution: “… all the staff at these institutions used progressive words to describe what were in fact oppressive practices” (1991, p. 134). We can say so much and not answer anything because we are not being addressed, some thing is being addressed, and it is a thing with no fixed addressed. “It” is the social, and as Corker says, the “social is transience.” In suggesting that our understandings of mental illness are “context specific” or that they need to be situated in a social context, Szasz assumes that mental illness has a specific place. Before we can know what we are really talking about when we talk about mental illness we need to find this place, which for him involves an understanding of its historical origins. We need to reflect on the paradox in which the project of locating the historical origins of mental illness begins with an analysis of the history of medicine. How is it
that a reflective relationship to mental illness as a social phenomenon is so quickly re-turned to
the need for an interest in rewriting, again as if for the first time, the history of medicine and
psychiatry? What are the limits and possibilities of this re-turn? Are stories of the historical
origins of a discipline of the same grain as the reflective origins of a problem? If so, how might
we orient to our conventional ways of storying our reflective origins differently?

Even as Szasz introduces alternative ways of understanding the phenomenon which the
‘popular mind’ has come to know as mental illness, he does little to challenge the dominant
cultural assumptions which make the intelligibility of something called “mental illness” possible
and desirable. Depicted as a ‘problem,’ mental illness is made interesting and we are made
interested. We are made to want to know more about this enigmatic phenomenon that demands
clarification and resists explanation. Repeatedly, throughout the text, Szasz invokes the limits of
the essay, which he describes as determined by the purposes of the essay, as a way to introduce
“something quite different” (1960, p. 5). In the conclusion, Szasz says that this “something quite
different” is not a new conception of psychiatric illness or therapy but a new, “fresh” perspective
(1960, p. 5). For Szasz, things have their specific place and specific corresponding knowledge
and practices. Any indication of discursive overlap is to be read as an indication that something
is out of place, and as a result, wrong. What that some “thing” is, is very clear to Szasz. The
terms have lost their true meaning because they have been displaced from their true or natural
social context, which he understands as the context in which they first emerged. Reading Szasz,
one gets the sense that should one notice language being used out of place, or perhaps out of
turn, one has an ethical responsibility to return the words and their speakers to their proper
places, or dispose of them altogether and start fresh.

The discursive overlap between mental illness and madness, or medicine and psychiatry,
can also be read as an expression of a relationship between language and practice. In
“Professional Language: Words that Succeed,” JoAnne Brown (1986) asserts that our understanding of language should not be limited to a tool that influences how we perceive reality. Language is practical consciousness. That is to say, language does not just organize consciousness, as though outside or separate from consciousness, language is consciousness and language performs consciousness (Brown, 1986, p. 33). According to Brown, “…professionals must somehow interpret, translate or mediate the results of their work in order that the public, their clients, may appreciate its value” (Brown, 1986, p. 36). The methodological approaches in disability studies theory make the act of translation visible, so that we can experience the gap as a product of the institutional demand to prove ones “expertise and cultural authority” (Brown, 1986: 35) and not as a symptom of personal deficiency. Making everything accessible to everyone everywhere all the time, regardless of social position or cultural context, relies on the same logic of generalization and simplification, or “shorthand,” at work in cultural stereotypes. It also erases the histories of oppression which have made the production of knowledge about disability possible in the first place.

According to Szasz, mental illness is a problem which reflects, “not only man’s inability to cope with his environment, but even more his increasing self-reflectiveness” (1960 p. 6). There is not an absence of mental illness in disability studies, it is there but is not always explicit; residing in descriptions of positionality. There is, however, a practice of introducing mental illness as a problem for disability studies, and then leaving this problem in tact; framing it as a background against which a new perspective on disability can be formed. Treating mental illness as a site, but only a site, for rethinking the social erases the living significance of the bodies whose objectification and exploitation have made practices such as this possible. For Garland Thomson (1996, p. 66),

The disparity between “disabled” as an attributed, decontextualizing identity and the perceptions and experiences of real people living with disabilities suggests that this
figure of otherness emerges from positioning, interpreting, and conferring meaning upon bodies.

Issues of “positioning, interpreting and conferring meaning” often appear in contemporary Western academic culture in the form of the voice. In “Mad People’s History”, Geoffrey Reaume (2006) writes that the history of psychiatry “gives no serious attention to the voices of mad people who make up the background to their studies” (emphasis added; 2006, p. 170). When disability studies reduces the appearance of madness to only an occasion for self-reflection, it shares a resemblance with studies of the history of psychiatry. At first read, what Reaume’s statement says seems obvious: the voices of mad people are not being taken seriously. To make sense of the sentence in this way, as having an obvious meaning, we have to perform an inversion. The meaning of the word “give” is inverted and treated commonsensically to mean “take.” What provides for this instantaneous and otherwise unremarkable translation? The order of the statement is changed, and the object changes places – from “attention” to “the voices of mad people.” In changing the order, we change the object-subject relation. Further, the immediacy and imperceptibility of this way of reading the world in terms of give-and-take as a reading, and a social accomplishment, is suggestive of its dominance and its association with dominant voices. According to this way of interpreting the world, the voices of mad people whom Reaume tells us make up the background of psychiatric studies are still treated as objects. Only now they are treated has having more reality than the histories of psychiatry have given them. According to Canguilhem,

… a historical narrative always reverses the true order of interest and inquiry. It is in the present that problems provoke reflection. And if reflection leads to a regression, the regression is necessarily related to it. Thus the historical origin is really less important than the reflective origin (1991, p. 63).

Let us read Reaume’s assertion for what it can teach us about how our society encounters and responds to the reclamation of reflective origins. Recognizing the intimate relationship
between disability studies and psychiatry provides an opportunity to ascertain the presence of meanings potentially other to, or different from, those which we might “normally” attribute to an author, given the subject of the work and the context in which the work appears. It conditions the appearance of new forms of life, the visible invisibles, as well as new ways of questioning how we relate to the appearance of an absence – in terms of give or take. This statement also says that we live in a world in which attention is something that can be and is given, and there is more than one way of giving attention. This is a world where doing important work means giving “serious attention” to issues, even at the expense of the people whose lives have made knowledge of such issues possible.

Recall de Beauvoir’s description of Descartes’ understanding that our unhappiness comes from our having first been children (1948, p. 35):

… the world in which he lives is a serious world, since the characteristics of the spirit of seriousness is to consider values as “ready-made things.” In this world, we may be able to play and pursue and attain our goals, but we do so with the knowledge that the “real” world is that of adults.

A Return to the Question of “What”, Makes Us Different

The question, “What does it do theoretically to say that disability studies does not adequately account for issues of mental illness?” has provided an occasion to think about how our ways of representing issues of mental illness, and mental illness as an issue for disability studies, continue to be shaped by the presuppositions of discourses in circulation in the institutional environment of the university system. The conditions of institutional life in university systems demand that we read difficulties in representing issues of mental illness as a symptom of the need for more research. This drive for more research is a governing logic of the very “idea of the University” (Jaspers, 1960), as is the faith that more research will generate more and better reason, and better reason, in turn, will bring better worlds and lives. The
underlying expectation being that once we have acquired access to a greater number of sources of information, we can develop more informed positions from which we can judge the adequacy of existing representations of the issues in question. The “sources,” which we are taught to believe will help us to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, the reality of our statements and the positions they promise, carry with them the risk that we will lose our perspective on the issues as they first appeared to us. That is, as a sense that something is wrong.

Interpretive approaches in disability studies can lead us to question the institutional demand to locate authoritative sources with which we can verify our claims to truth. In our efforts to legitimize our claims and our place in the university environment, we can get caught up in the search for valid and reliable sources; that is to say, institutionally-approved sources. Interpretive approaches provoke new relationships with our environment by shifting attention away from the source of the error to the language through which the error became visible and meaningful, the language we learned in our bodies. When engaged and invested in, such approaches can put us in touch with the cultural significance of the appearance of mental illness. A disability studies perspective informed by interpretive methods exposes the sensibility of disability at work in representations that depict mental illness as a “thing” that has “issues” in need of attention. This way of thinking about mental illness corresponds to what Erving Goffman (1961) refers to as the “medical service model.”

In *Asylums*, Goffman (1961) assesses the effect of institutionalization on the identity of psychiatric patients. He discusses the relation between thought and social position (Goffman, 1961, p. 373), and finds that the medical service model structures how we experience this relation. This model orients us away from thinking about mental illness as a meaningful occurrence of meaning making, towards an interest in removing the body from the mind explaining what makes people with mental illness tick. An interpretive approach can help us
resist the medical service model by making more explicit its values and ideals, and perhaps more importantly, its influence on our established and cherished ways of thinking. Such an approach provides “atypical vantage points” from which we can view how the university environment orients to mental illness as a mode of production, even as it orients us to it as a problem in need of a solution.7

Atypical vantage points, however, should not be equated with the “vantage points of the atypical” (Linton, 2007, p. 81). According to Simi Linton, the “vantage point of the atypical” is comprised of “the perspectives gained from negotiating a world configured for disabled people” (2007, p. 81). A disability studies perspective, characterized by an “atypical vantage point” (Linton, 2007, p. 81), can bring to view some of the imbalances in power and “confrontations which unfold in psychiatric practice” (Foucault, 2006, p. 16). I have re-presented the stories of disability studies scholars, activists, and performers to show just how varied the relationships to psychiatric knowledge are in disability studies. Moreover, I have chosen these works to bring to view the attentiveness of the authors to the complexity of reading and writing about what is at play in the world we live, while making explicit our knowledge that the very possibility of our work is read and written within that same world, and in more ways than could ever be captured in a single image.

A disability studies perspective attuned to its own complex relations with psychiatry can provide for a more reflexive examination of how psychiatric knowledge is being delivered and disseminated to the public in the context of graduate education. Situating ourselves as disability scholars and activists as active participants in the erasure of the embodied experiences of persons labeled mentally ill can bring us to new awareness of our own troubled relations with the authority of psychiatric knowledge. It can also remind us that “treating” psychiatry as a model

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7 For more on disability as a problem in need of a solution see Michalko (2002); Mitchell & Snyder (2006).
the usefulness of which can be exploited or abandoned at will is a dangerous game to play. When we flirt with psychiatric knowledge and methods, we often do so with the anticipation that we can take what is useful for the development of new insights into our present conditions and leave anything that has shown to cause distress behind. As we do our work, let us reflect on how the insights psychiatry has given us were made possible. Let us remember that language and reality are intertwined (Freire, 1983), and that theory and method are both in-and-of the world. Let us give serious attention to how discontinuities within the field of psychiatry have influenced how we recognize ourselves and others as disabled.

Making Issues of Mental Illness Matter Differently

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Frantz Fanon says, “…once we have taken note of the situation, once we have understood it, we consider the job done” (2008, p. 1). The suggestion that disability studies has at least to some extent excluded a serious consideration of issues of mental illness, “takes note of a situation,” in need of attention. The trouble, now, is not in the actual statement itself but in the dominant way this statement is interpreted within an equity-oriented academic culture in terms of what needs to be done. The recognition that disability studies does not adequately address issues of mental illness can turn us to questions of what disability studies *can do*. Consider Linton’s assertion that (1998, pp. 1-2),

Disability studies provides the means to hold academics accountable for the veracity and social consequences of their work, just as activism has served to hold the community, the education system, and the legislature accountable for disabled people’s compromised social position.

What does saying that the field of disability studies has inadequately addressed issues of mental illness do theoretically? It draws attention to the fact that while there have been some important challenges raised against dominant ways of thinking about disability, one of the conventional ways we in disability studies story our coming to a consciousness of disability is
through medically informed cultural assumptions about how people should orient to normative life: as something we can have problems with. As Corker asserts, to reduce an understanding of disability to just any departure from normative culture is detrimental to disabled people and disability studies (2001, p. 47). While it frees spaces for thinking about disability in new ways, the conceptual liberties it allows disability studies scholars comes at a cost to how we understand ourselves and others as disabled people. It makes it difficult to claim this identity, if disability is understood as anything de-valued, marginalized or excluded. This might also pose a barrier to accessing disability culture for disabled people. For one who has not already incorporated the language, the disability reality represented seems like a closed system in which only a privileged few can enter.

For Linton, claiming the identities we have been given has important social and political implications for disabled people. While a medical label might provide an entry point into thinking of ourselves as disabled, it does not necessarily entail access to disability culture and community. Corker’s critique of a disability studies approach that claims universalism but thinks in dichotomies (2001, p. 47) implicitly raises the need to think about how we relate to our departures. Conscious of our departure from the “normal” or socially sanctioned ways of talking about the experience of disorientation in disability studies, are we going to return to classical or modern conceptions of madness to confirm the validity of our claims? How can we talk about the vitality of disorientation in a way that recognizes it both as a condition of our lives and an embodied experience?

It has been said that disability discriminates against no one (McRuer, 2006b; Titchkosky, 2003). Linton (1998) proposes that anyone who claims a disability identity is generally accepted by the disability community. And yet, there is a perception within the field of disability studies that distinctions and exclusions are being made on the basis of visible particularities in
embodiment (Oliver, 1996). These distinctions are viewed as privileging the embodied experiences of some disabled people, while simultaneously abstracting the experiences of marginalized others. There thus appears to be a reality disjuncture (Pollner, 1975) in disability studies between stories that depict disability as an inclusive cultural category, and stories that speak to the disorienting effects of negotiating a disability identity from the margins of a nondisabled perspective. Rather than view these as competing definitions of the situation, and the situation as one for which only one definition will suffice, or dissolve this disjuncture, we can attend to how our status as meaning makers is created in the “gap” between these two versions of the reality of disability (Titchkosky, 2008b).

Disability studies as a field of knowledge, however, has reproduced discriminatory practices in terms of what the field takes up as an interest or treats as relevant. That discrimination can be perceived within the field of disability studies in the form of “internal criticisms” (Oliver, 1996) reminds us that the body of disability studies work is primarily produced within the institutional environment of the university system. As Titchkosky asserts in “Disability Studies: The Old and the New”: “Anyone who is to be regarded as ‘in the know’ about disability must show that it is a problem and the more details they possess of the problem, the better” (2000, p. 198). The size and shape of disability studies, or what Szasz (1961) has referred to as the “scope” of its projects, are structured by the conventions of the university. In similar fashion, our relations to these projects are in turn structured by the “conventions in which we now work” (Smith, 1999, p. 57).

A self-reflexive disability studies perspective thus offers a unique approach to an analysis of mental health promotion in Canadian universities. In asking us to be attentive to how we read and speak, and therefore how we (re)create the world, disability studies situates our understandings of how we live in-and-with culture (Michalko, 1999). As a political project,
disability studies also directs us to the actuality of multiple, contradictory and interlocked cultural vocabularies and experiential realities. That disability studies can be perceived as having internal hierarchies or divisions (Corker, 2001; Oliver, 1996) may be read as saying more about how we understand community and recognize culture, than proof of a “problem” specific to disability studies.

What unites the disability community is not our distance from the norm. It is rather what Michalko refers to as our shared “recognition that a life must be lived within the paradoxical awareness of the necessity and desire for life itself” (1998, p. 37). This recognition meets Arendt’s conditions for collective responsibility. In making us aware that we need and desire life, the paradoxical awareness that comes with being recognized as something wrong in need of diagnosis and discovery, or a problem in need of a solution, places us in a group which no voluntary act can dissolve. The assumption of formal equality within the movement is, however, both problematic, and downright dangerous. Saying people who are experienced and experience themselves through the language of “mental illness” are invisible in disability studies communicates a sense that in the present moment we are just a thought. It suggests that our perspectives and personal experiences of “issues” of mental illness are lacking in reality. This way of approaching how the field of disability studies represents issues of mental illness justifies, welcomes and encourages the demand to intervene and the authority of psychiatric knowledge. We therefore have to think about how we as disabled persons and disability studies scholars and activists are implicated in the reproduction of the authority of psychiatric knowledge. The present task concerns how together we can take collective responsibility for the way the disability studies community recognizes and responds to its relations with psychiatric knowledge.
This chapter has demonstrated one way in which questions of adequacy can be read as constitutive of new spaces and atypical angles for thinking with the conventional ways we have of performing knowledge of how claims to identity, culture and community ought to be done. Theorizing questions of adequacy can re-orient us to the need to think about how we are bound up in a visual economy of difference, the appearance of which is structured by institutional ideologies and grounded in a commitment to types. What is theoretically important is not that questions about issues of mental illness are being asked or answered in an “adequate” manner. What is important is how questions about the meaning and making of people are routinely deferred to proof of the need for explanatory models and empirical methods. What is theoretically important is whether and how the claim of (in)adequate representation is made to embody “a necessity and desire for life itself” (Michalko, 1998, p. 37).

The following chapters explore the cultural production of ‘inadequate subjects’ through an examination of the birth and becoming of the University of Toronto as a social institution, and a site of experimentation; one might even say, a birthplace of ‘living laboratories’ in Canada. This examination is accomplished by way of an historical analysis and genealogy of the University of Toronto, and a consideration of the production of a global consciousness in the material and symbolic construction of the University, as well as a critical theoretical analysis of the textual production of student life. Each of the following chapters considers how ‘inadequate subject(ivity)s’ are constituted as problems for the University of Toronto, and how the appearance of such figures can be interpreted as cultural expressions of a certain ‘style of thinking’ which treats universal experience as a prerequisite to responsible action. Ordinary, typical, ways of describing and enacting responsibility are interpreted as occasions to observe and interrogate the strategies of survival and mythologies of resilience that perpetuate Western neoliberal ways of knowing.
Chapter 3 draws on the interpretive theory of sociologist Max Weber to consider how normative theories of adjustment are foundational to the University as an institution. Weber’s reflections on the external conditions that structure the appearance of a right to happiness provide a view to the role of images of subjectivity, as displayed in notions of happiness, in the endurance of inequitable economic structures and social systems. This Weberian examination of the ‘first years’ of the University is situated within a phenomenological perspective. Such a move allows me to situate my understanding of normative adjustment within a phenomenological understanding of the lived body.
Chapter 3
(Un)Happy Identifications: A Genealogy of the Relationship between the Modern University and the Emergence of Student Mental Life

Not only the present, but countless generations yet unborn, will have abundant cause to rejoice in the proceedings of this day – proceedings which give life to an Institution, calculated, under Divine Providence, to advance the glory of God and the best interests of man. (University of Toronto, 1843, p. 8)

Minding the Map

How might educational initiatives designed to identify, manage, and prevent student mental illness reflect a pedagogical orientation to the need to forget the historical specificity of the home university and the conditions of its existence? The last chapter examined some of the ways mental health and illness appears in the contemporary milieu. Pursuing the genesis of this meaning, this chapter begins with a genealogy of the University of Toronto, informed by an interpretive sociological methodology. It offers a description of the historical contingencies which have shaped the University’s birth and becoming as this relates to mental health and illness concerns and its concurrent programs. I show how the mental hygiene movement both formalized the emergence of a clinical perspective within the University, and provided for the ascendancy of the language of biomedicine as a mode of understanding the conditions of student life. The University of Toronto, along with many universities throughout Canada and much of the Westernized world, has taken an interest in the mental lives of university students. Rather than map the student mind, this chapter asks how the production of knowledge about student subjectivity makes it possible to mind the map of the University, constituting the University both as a “behavioural field” and “geographical environment” (Merleau-Ponty, 2010, p. 349). Put otherwise, this chapter traces the relationship between the expanding architecture of expert knowledge about student mental life within universities and the actual material presence of the University. It relates to the demand for ‘new’ facts about the experiential reality of university
student life as an occasion to rediscover what makes it possible to know and describe the student role in the ways we already do.

**Rationalizing (Un)Happiness**

How our standpoints are situated socio-historically, and the way we think about student mental health and illness is made possible and informed by our spatial and temporal locations. The history of the University of Toronto cannot be summed-up in a linear chart or line graph and the history I offer here is written from the present. It bears witness to the survival of segregation, poverty, exploitation and oppression within an institution which publically celebrates universality and democracy, and claims an interest in equality for all people. The descriptions and analysis this chapter initiates are presented with the aim of demonstrating how a disability studies perspective within the university can provoke a self-reflexive mode of discovery which is productive of radical social change. More specifically, this chapter lays the foundations for questioning how a disability studies-informed analysis can guide universities toward a rediscovery of its role in the rationalization and perpetuation of inequality. This is done, not to shame the University, or dismiss or discount the revolutionary transformations its existence has made in the lives of individuals and communities. This is done, rather, to fulfill a commitment to the University and the promise its presence embodies.

This chapter thus seeks to recover the actual historical existence of the individuals typified as ‘students’. This is accomplished by way of an investigation into the construction of student mental life, and more specifically, the maladjusted student type, and its role within “the history of sociality” (Natanson, 1970, 94). Interpretive sociology is particularly well-suited to an analysis of the practices involved in the social construction of university student mental life within a context organized by neo-liberal modes of governance and capitalist values. In

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8 For more on the relationship between conditions and the promise of education please see Titchkosky (2011b).
universities in the contemporary Westernized world, there is a cultural impetus to maximize productivity through the maximization of health, wealth, and happiness. A positivistic approach to happiness, as embodied in a clinical perspective, encourages perceptions of happiness which treat happiness as an empirical fact open to observation, measurement, and experimentation, and ultimately, the formulation of general laws. An interpretive perspective, however, offers a view to the specific social and historical conditions that produce and maintain the authority of a biomedicine and a clinical perspective. It begins with the recognition that research is a socially-constructed, historically-situated, intersubjective reality, and a belief that the very activities of searching, studying, discovering, and writing about subjects such as happiness help to constitute what happiness means and how it can be understood. Such an approach offers a view of studies which fail to account for their implication in the construction of the subject, or which leave little room to reflect on the conditions of their own possibility, as impeding rather than enhancing collective understanding of social life.

In *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Max Weber (1978a) suggests that the very conception of happiness, its birth as an idea and a material reality, also provide a means of legitimizing existing social orders and the power relations they enforce. Depicted as such, happiness is best understood not as a subjective state, but as an instrument of the social order which produces a desire for legitimation. According to Weber (1978a, p. 491),

> When a man [sic] who is happy compares his position with that of one who is unhappy, he is not content with the fact of his happiness, but desires something more, namely the right to this happiness, the consciousness that he has earned his good fortune, in contrast to the unfortunate one who must equally have earned his misfortune. Our everyday experience proves that there exists just such a need for psychic comfort about the legitimacy or deservedness of one’s happiness, whether this involves political success, superior economic status, bodily health, success in the game of love, or anything else.

First, a remark about the language Weber uses. Weber’s use of the male pronoun is significant. The language he uses purposefully centers the male body as the exemplification of *successful*
embodiment. Grounding a conception of “our everyday experience” in the image of a “man” guides the reader toward an understanding of universality, and the possibility of a common experience of the “fact” of happiness in the male body whose masculinity is affirmed in the visibility of earnings, enjoyments, status and success. This produces the factual reality of happiness, which Weber imagines in terms of consciousness of “success”, as an attribute which is necessarily more natural or expected for men.

*Economy and Society* was first published in 1922, two years after Weber’s death. His publication can also be read in relation to his times. For example, in Germany, it was only in 1918 that women were granted the right to vote, in 1976 that women were given the legal right to keep their family name in marriage, and in 1977 that the First Act on the Reform of Matrimonial and Family Law was passed which gave women equal rights in marriage, allowing a woman to work outside of the home and file for divorce without her husband’s permission (Frank, 1990, p. 215). Beginning with a consideration of Weber’s use of the male pronoun is significant for this analysis. It creates a space to think about how the words that we use to reference a universal structure of experience are grounded in established epistemologies. The established character of these epistemologies leads them to be largely taken-for-granted as natural features of everyday life, rather than socially-produced, historically-situated, and geographically-specific expressions of cultural value systems. What is also as important, albeit ironic, is that Weber gives us the tools to read his words anew from the here and now of where and when we are today. A methodological relation is released in the act of attending to reading.

For Weber, rather than a transitive and subjective state of well-being, the factual reality of happiness represents a reification of value relations which are culturally organized in the form of “good fortune” (1978a, p. 491). These value relations are formalized in symbols of social prestige which mark an individual’s consumptive power, as well as a *sense of entitlement to the*
power to consume. This is a mark, which in turn is rationalized as an expression of the realization of one’s productive potential and the distinction such power confers. In Western cultures, consciousness of happiness involves reference to a “stock of knowledge” (Schütz, 1976, p. 120) about the various conditions that facilitate or obstruct the realization of productive potential. The assumption that bodies emerge in the world predisposed with an entitlement to consume is conditioned by cultural practices of comparison. In the above passage, Weber suggests that rather than securing a sense of identity, recognition of happiness as a property of one’s position produces a desire for, “[…] something more, namely the right to this happiness, the consciousness that he has earned his good fortune […]” (1978a, p. 491). Such consciousness, however, is contingent an acknowledgement of the culpability of the “unfortunate” others for their unhappiness, made to appear in the absence of material privilege. Weber further distinguishes the necessity and desire for the experience, “psychic comfort”, from the privileged position the fact of happiness references.

Here, Weber provides a frame for interpreting the meaning of the emergence of student mental life, and the practices involved in the production of the maladjusted student type. This frame makes it possible to think of the language of biomedicine as a technology for rationalizing the authority of existing epistemological orders and the privileged positions they sustain and produce. Recall that Weber’s definition of happiness includes, “[…] political success, superior economic status, bodily health, success in the game of love, or anything else” (1978a, p. 491). In positing the origins of unhappiness in students’ bodies, the language of biomedicine normalizes the absence of privilege, making it possible to treat this absence as natural, inevitable, and as a defining characteristic of a particular type of person. The language of biomedicine provides for a separation between the histories of the University and the histories of its subjects. Unhappiness can then be read and represented as a problem inherent to the way individuals are constituted.
prior to their arrival at the university, rather than a product of its institution. Students arrive, biologically predisposed for failure. The bodily conditions that have marked their individual lives have visibly marked them for failure. From this perspective, the university’s responsibility to its subjects is necessarily limited. Its histories severed from theirs, at best the university can ‘intervene’ in their lives, work to condition them in new ways, and try and teach them to become ‘more comfortable’ with themselves when they move within its world. It cannot, however, change their constitution, or the fact that its consciousness of its success, its health, has been conditioned by their lives and work.

Further, the currently widely-accepted notion that happiness is a state of subjective well-being, as opposed to an expression of privilege, naturalizes and universalizes the culturally-located and historically contingent values of success, wealth, health and desirability as images of happiness. Such images are not simply an affirmation of choices made in the activities of life and labour. They operate as ideological tools which confirm the necessity of colonial expansionism, and call forth the preservation of traditional authority through modernizing reform. Happiness can then thus also be understood as a means of reproducing the logic of the production of “ideal types” (Weber, 1949, p. 90), and managing and regulating individuals’ relations to this logic.

How does this relate to student ‘mental’ life? Weber describes his notion of the “ideal type” as a “mental image” which,

[…] brings together certain relationships and events of historical life to form an internally consistent cosmos of conceptual interrelations. In substance, this construct bears the character of a utopia which we arrive at by mentally accentuating (gedankliche Steigerung) certain elements of reality. […] This involves] the one-sided accentuation of one or a number of viewpoints and […] the synthesis of a great many diffuse and discreet individual phenomena […] into an internally consistent mental image. (original emphasis; Weber, 1949, p. 90)

Ideal types, then, are socially constructed ideas; useful abstractions which make it possible to make comparisons and read order and sense into the world. Within a neoliberal
economic context, the construct, ‘maladjusted student type’, provides a means of dividing the student body, and grouping individual students on the basis of a perceived predisposition for unhappiness and a greater risk of academic failure. For this construct to be operationalized, and put into practice, procedures must be developed and put into place for identifying unhappiness as a property of biomedicine. A field of knowledge must be defined. This field, to be described in greater detail in the genealogy of the University of Toronto, will set out to explain the relative differences of the outer lives of students as embodied in their positions within the University. Distinguished by its relation to their inner lives, the existence of this field will be bound to the discovery of the biological foundations of the mental images of a universal student type.

Rod Michalko (1999) and Tanya Titchkosky (2007) link the appearance of types to forms of exclusion, and suggest that a new form of exclusion is taking place in the university system, one which relies on and reproduces consciousness of disability as a “type.” According to Michalko,

Types make an appearance in contemporary society, types that result from accident, diseases that are as yet not preventable or curable by modern medicine, types that come about naturally. As undesirable as these types are and as unwelcome as they are in the homeland of contemporary society, the homeland, for the most part, puts up with these types and lives with them, the best it can. But those undesirable types that are amenable to prevention and cure are another story. The homeland does not have to put up with them (1999, pp. 46-47).

The production of knowledge about the relationship between the biological conditions of the individual lives of university students and their positions in the university has conditioned the emergence of new domains of professional knowledge and praxis. Within these domains, individual students are marked, and their conditions made remarkable – which is to say, sayable, traceable, and trackable. How students progress in university life, how well they ‘adjust’ to its expectations, and reproduce its culture, will be a measure of how well they can get their conditions to work for them.
Professional knowledge and praxis have opened new spaces, new frontiers, for the production of knowledge about the general ideal type of student, and the various manifestations through which knowledge of it has been gained. What is more, it has provided for the reproduction and legitimation of a necessary separation between the histories of universities and the histories of their students. Thus, offering the university a means of constructing a new history for itself; one which projects and extends its privilege. The university’s history, now, is in the hands of its students, and is a product of their success. This is a history which reflects an image of the university as stable, unified, progressive, and consistent; even “calculated, under divine providence, and whose factual reality is produced through the documentation of its birth, its names, and the places it occupies; and whose development is textually verified and given form in the detailed recording of statutes, acts, awards, commemorations, commissions, convocations, ranks, grades, publications, and profiles.

A Genealogy of the University of Toronto

Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all its vicissitudes. Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion – it is to identify the accidents; the minute deviations – or conversely the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us […] (Foucault, 1977, p. 146)

A genealogy of the University informed by an interpretive methodology and the insights of disability studies theory makes it possible to situate the historical emergence of student mental life within a narrative of the necessity of cultural imperialism and institutional expansion. My examination now traces the contours of the birth of the University of Toronto. It pays close attention to events which have influenced the interpretation and reception of the arrival of
“mental hygiene”. A term coined by Adolf Meyer, “mental hygiene” was largely concerned with public attitudes toward those deemed ‘mentally ill’. The aim of the mental hygiene movement was to align ‘mental illness’ with “ordinary illness” (Klein, 1944, p. 28). I entered my archival research on the history of the University of Toronto animated by Hans-Georg Gadamer’s (1977) assertion that, “It is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our being […] Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us” (p. 9). What prejudices have instituted biomedically-informed professional knowledge and praxis as the legitimate authority on how and what university students think, act, and feel? How do neoliberal assumptions about the meaning and purpose of a university education organize a conception of the ‘ordinary’, and of the ‘student body’ as a problem for the university?

In 1903 the Senate of the University of Toronto passed a motion for the creation of a book which would commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the University, *The University of Toronto and Its Colleges, 1827-1906*, and which offered, “[…] an account of its past history and actual condition” (emphasis added; Alexander et. al, 1906, p. 1). This book details the inception of the University, its birth, and the many struggles to define who and what the University would be for, from the founding of what is now the University of Toronto under the name King’s College, to the passing of the University of Toronto Act in 1906. The story of the University’s “actual condition” is interwoven with histories of colonialism and conflict, settlement, revolution, and resettlement. It is thus, a condition whose actuality cannot be known apart from its beginnings in loyalties and land. A history, Jeff Shantz reminds us replete with cultural genocide and colonization as part of the founding of Canada (2010, p. 230):

Displacement was social and cultural as well as physical and geographic. It involved missionary activity and the institution of schools which took away the ability of individuals and communities to pass on traditional values to their children. It also involved the imposition of male-oriented Victorian values and the stripping away of
traditional activities such as drumming, dancing, and other ceremonies. Indigenous peoples were also displaced politically, forced by colonial laws to abandon tradition governing structures in favour of colonial-style institutions.

In 1791, the British Parliament passed the Constitutional Act which reorganized British North America, and created Upper Canada, and Lower Canada (Alexander et. al, 1906, p. 9). An artificial religious divide was created in the process. Upper Canada was to be recognized as a Protestant domain, while Lower Canada under the influence of the Catholic Church.

The Act represented a response to the pressure of thousands of British Loyalists who had fought for Britain in the American Revolution and who fled or were driven out of the United States upon defeat. The Province of Upper Canada was governed by Col. John James Simcoe, a notable leader of the Loyalist volunteers, a Protestant and former English gentleman (Alexander et. al, 1906, p. 9; Wallace, 1927, p. 2). According to Alexander et al., Simcoe,

… looked forward to the development of, in the new province, of the same social conditions as existed in the old land; and, accordingly, in taking thought for the well-being of the young colony, proposed to himself that provision should be made out of the public funds for the maintenance of religion and the promotion of higher education (1906, p. 9).

To this effect, he set aside one-seventh of the lands of the Province and a fund from public lands for education, especially the education of “the more respectable class of people” (Alexander et. al, 1906, p. 9). As part of this endowment, in 1797 Simcoe requested, “an appropriation of the waste lands of the crown for the establishment and support of a respectable grammar school in each district, and also a college or university where the youth may be enabled to perfect themselves in the different branches of liberal knowledge” (Alexander et. al, 1906, p. 10). These “waste lands” were named as such to justify their expropriation from the Mississaugas, the Indigenous people living in the Toronto region at the time of the British arrival. The reference to waste lands offers the trace of the story of founding settlement of what is now the city of Toronto was secured by violent dispossession, land surrenders and enforced dependency of the Toronto
Purchase of 1787 (Freeman, 2010, p. 24). As a result of the “appropriation”, made possible by a violent logic of dispossession, 250,000 acres of land were secured for the University. Most of the people who lived in the provinces, however, did not identify with the Episcopal Church. This represented a formidable problem. Many were concerned about the influence of the Church over an institution on public lands, funded by the public purse, and which claimed to be for the “well-being” of people of the Province (Alexander et. al, 1906, p. 11). When the Charter for “King’s College” was granted in 1827, it presented the Anglican Bishop of the diocese with “the supreme judicial control of the University”, required that the President be a clergyman of the Church, limited membership to the executive government of the College to members of the Church, and restricted degrees in Divinity to the Church of England at the exclusion of all denominations (Alexander et al., 1906, p. 12).

The controversy over the connections to Church and State led to the partial secularization in 1837, and the passing of two statutes, the final of which led to a formal separation in 1849, and a change in the Charter name from, “The Chancellor, President and Scholars of King’s College at York in the Provinces of Upper Canada” to “The Chancellors, Masters and Scholars of the University of Toronto” (Lash, 1913, p. 3). The name we are now familiar with, “the University of Toronto” was not established until 1853 (Lash, 1913, p. 3). A book titled, The Origin, History, and Management of the University of King's College, Toronto, published by the University of King’s College (1844) suggests that the meaning of the University cannot be divorced from the questions its appearance provokes. This text, which names no author apart from the University, asserts that there is something false in questions which use contestations over legitimate authority to substantiate claims about the value of the Church. The “question at present”, rather, concerns the purpose of an institution that claims “to be open to all classes and persuasions of her Majesty’s Canadian subjects”, but restricts positions of authority, and control
over the means of (re)producing power and prestige within Canada exclusively to members of the Church (1844):

The question at present before the country is not, whether the exclusive claims of the Church, originally founded on justice, are to be invaded by reason of a public necessity, and whether rights, honestly acquired, are to succumb to the purposes of general utility; - but the true question at issue, is simply, whether the University, as a great national institution – endowed with funds for general education – is to be open to all classes and persuasions of her Majesty’s Canadian subjects – or whether it is to be a monopoly, for the exclusive benefit and advantage of the members of the Episcopal Church (University of King’s College, 1844, p. v).

These formative changes in the bodies, names, positions of power, and systems of governance in what is now the University of Toronto in its early years reference contestations over who has the power to define the conditions of education. It is not, as the University advises, a question of the Church, or even the State, in the establishment and administration of education in the colonies or how well they can live up to their intentions. The “true question at issue is simply” whether the institution is going to be open, or whether it is going to be a monopoly for the exclusive benefit and advantage of one body over others. Even as the University guides us to this question, the manner in which it is made visible in the bodies of “her Majesty’s Canadian subjects” re-turns the question and questioner to a need to think about how subjects are formed by the prejudices of the very language which defines them. The language of the present, in and through which the problems of the past are made real and given life.

In his account of the history of the University of Toronto published in 1927, University librarian Stewart Wallace describes how, “From the earliest days of King’s College, the problem of higher education in the province of Ontario, or Upper Canada, has been complicated by the existence of other universities or colleges, dependent on denominational support” (1927, p. 114)

The beginnings of the present University are not as clear as one might assume. This birth was a birth whose appearance has been marked by complications, federations, and affiliations. A birth marked by co-incidence, with an unfolding future celebrated in advance of a name. Degrees and
awards were granted to students who never knew its name; students who graduated from its colleges, while affiliated, still yet un-federated, and thus outside of its domain. According to Wallace, “The idea of uniting these various institutions in one great provincial university, in which each should preserve its corporate existence, while submitting to a common academic standard, was not new” (1927, p. 114). Robert Baldwin had introduced it in the Canadian legislature in 1843, followed by W.H. Draper in 1845, and it emerged again in 1853 and 1863 (Wallace, 1927, pp. 114-115). Plans for federation met resistance mainly because it would mean that the colleges, which were denominational and offered Arts degrees as well as degrees in theology, would be judged to hold the same merit as those offered by the University, which was forced to suppress its ties to the Church of England.

Federation was viewed, not simply as a question of religion, but as a threat to the existence of the University (Wallace, 1927, p. 115). From the stance of the State, federation would provide an unfair advantage to the students of the Colleges and surrounding universities. It would allow them to benefit from the privileges of the University, “at the expense of the state”, while at the same time retaining their denominational commitments (Lash, 1913, p. 5). Commitments which the descendants from the Church of England, and the founder of the University Bishop Strachan, dare not breathe a word (Alexander et. al, 1906, p 12). The unfederated existence of the other colleges was, therefore, no less problematic for questions concerning the good governance of the University than federation. In offering degrees in Arts, and graduating students who were licensed by the medical council to practice medicine, the colleges represented competitors and potential rivals over an essential, although apparently limited resource – the student body.
At an address before the University Club in 1913, Z.A. Lash, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Governors described the continued existence of the question of federation as an injurious and inhibiting “condition”:

Such a condition could not fail to weaken the position of each and impair its efficiency and retard the development of the state university. The charters and rights of the others could not be taken away from them; they could not be forced into amalgamation or agreement, but their continued existence along the same lines was detrimental to the cause of Higher Education and demanded a remedy at the hands of the state. A remedy could only be found in the voluntary action of those concerned (Lash, 1913, pp. 6-7).

For the negative conditions which accompanied an uncertain conception of equality to be removed, so that action could be decided on, people would have to learn to voluntarily accept, or at least acquiesce, to the authority of a decision-maker, would necessarily involve a change in perception. The members of the life-world of the University would learn to be led through example. Lash, it should also be noted, was an honorary lecturer with the Faculty of Medicine (Wallace, 1927, p. 143). His description of the “condition” of the colleges and the University, both in terms of the language he uses – “impair”, “efficiency”, “retard”, “development”, “remedy” - and the utilitarian ethos and logic of his claim, makes it possible to view the relations between the bodies of higher education as a medical issue. As Lash depicts the University, it appears that the presence of diverse and competing bodies of higher education in Ontario threatened the health and well-being of what “Higher Education” was really all about. To remain viable and vital within the present system, each and all would have to learn to concede to the authority and necessity of a higher body. For Lash, the efficiency of all, and the productivity of the state, rested on a commitment to a unified conception of “Higher Education”. This was a conception made visible and relevant through the unification of images and assumptions about what healthy bodies, efficient machineries, and productive relations do. In narrating the birth of federation in this way, Lash situates knowledge of the nature and history of what is now the
University of Toronto, and arguably the province of Ontario, as one of the many crowning achievements of medical science.

In contradistinction, Wallace (1927) suggests that the federation of the University and the colleges could not be understood in the absence of an awareness of the social and political dimensions of the day. He says, “The federation of the Canadian provinces in 1867, however, and its extension in the years immediately subsequent, served to familiarize the Canadian people with the advantages of the federal idea” (Wallace, 1927, p. 116). Wallace further asserts that the University’s federation was shaped by a growing realization of the value and meaning of “university work” (1927, p. 116) across the Westernized world. This was, in part, the result of the curricular changes in the natural sciences in Britain, the United States, and Europe; which were, in turn, the product of a growing dissatisfaction with tradition modes of teaching and learning as antiquated and inadequate. These changes, “affected the other sphere of subjects as well; laboratories, museums, and libraries were established on a scale not dreamt of before; postgraduate work was begun; the seminar method of instruction was introduced; and universities became something much larger, more elaborate and more complex” (Wallace, 1927, p. 116).

Extensions of the boundaries and contestations over the borders of all university subjects, marked by geographical movements, and made conspicuous in new temporal identifications, led to the emergence of a “global consciousness” (Wallon, as cited in Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 122). Changes in the University’s position concerning the subject of federation were thus conditioned by transformations in the perceptual schema. These changes were discontinuous, but nonetheless related; bound to-and-within a movement from a conception of the past. Wallace depicts this movement as an ‘adoption’. He says, “The universities, in fact, adopted all knowledge as their field, instead of a few subjects inherited from the past. (Wallace, 1927, p. 116). With the
adoption of “all knowledge” as the University’s domain, there followed the arrival of new problems. With them, came the “great burden” (Lash, 1913, p. 7) of placing all “on equal footing” (Lash, 1913, p. 7; Wallace, 1927, p. 115). This was further complicated by the fact that the University was still widely recognized as “the child of the State” (Wallace, 1927, p. 116). Post-federation, the question was no longer, whether the University was to be a monopoly. What was at issue now, was a question of supervision. This question, like those which had preceded it, took the form of an address.

An issue of The University of Toronto Monthly published in 1911 includes an address from the “University Administration” (Wallace, 1911, p. 6). It reads as follows:

One of the most characteristic phenomena of the social life of the modern world is the wide extension of educational opportunities. In the not far distant past a university training was the privilege of a small and exclusive class; to-day we have approximated to a realisation of the ideal of equal opportunity for all classes, at least, as far as educational advantages are concerned. The great provincial and state universities of this continent now number their students by the thousands, and most of the older private foundations have travelled far from the days when they could be described as “small colleges.” Naturally this rapid development has given rise to many new problems, and the work of adjusting the older ideals and methods to radically different conditions has been no easy task.

The address concludes with a reflection on the unsatisfactory nature of the current University system and a call for an adjustment of the “university machinery” which promises to be more responsive to the unique conditions of student life in the “modern world”. The “problem” concerned how to provide supervision and direction in the transition to a new world when that world is perceived to be in a state of flux and uncertainty. In the following section this examination moves from the birth of the University as a federated body, to the appearance of the language of biomedicine as a mode of adjusting preconceived notions of the past, to an image of the University’s future self. It includes an investigation of the role of the mental hygiene movement in the administration of the University’s self-image. I consider how the practices this
movement assumed necessitated the formation of a natural subject, and with this, the construction of student mental life.

**An Experiment in Mental Hygiene**

Disability is not valued in contemporary society, it is not seen as normal, and it is certainly understood as a problem. No one wants to become disabled and we do whatever we can to prevent it. But if it happens, it happens, and we do whatever we can to minimize its negative effects. (Michalko, 2002, p. 18)

The previous section considered the expanding domain of the University’s subjects. In this section I draw on descriptions of mental hygiene which emerged in the 1940s-1960s as a way to situate a contemporary interest in student mental life, currently described at the University of Toronto in abbreviated form as student life. Descriptions of metal hygiene in circulation in the 1940s-1960s celebrated a departure from a focus on the ‘pathological’ and ‘abnormal’ as objects of scientific study, to an acceptance of the ‘normal’ and ‘ordinary’ as legitimate and compelling objects of scientific research (Bott, as cited in Bernhardt, 1951, p. 15). During this time, many University-produced and published resources on the subject, field, and work of mental hygiene observe both the newness of this field, and its successful integration within the University life-world.

A commitment to the ameliorative effects of the performance of ordinary, or expected, appearances serves to exclude and suppress the radical possibilities that embodied difference presents. It also makes it difficult to conceive of disability as a social and political identity. Ordinariness is an idea that mediates, “the difference between disability and non-disability to make the two the same while preserving the dichotomy between them” (Michalko, 2002, p. 155). As Michalko says, “[...] if disability could rid itself of its exceptionality and its difference, perhaps then, it can become ordinary enough to ‘fit into’ ordinary society” (Michalko, 2002, p. 152). “Mental hygiene” is a term that was coined by Adolf Meyer in the early 1900s. Although
the mental hygiene movement was led by the once institutionalized Clifford Beers, and claimed an interest in promoting better treatment for people with ‘mental illness’ and public mental health, it also included medical specialists and psychiatrists who supported eugenic practices.

Beers published an autobiographical account of his experience with mental illness in 1908 under the title *A Mind that Found Itself*. Although the book is most widely known for its critique of institutions and practices that claim to ‘care’ for people being treated for mental illness, Beers’ story of his personal experience with mental illness is of special interest to this analysis. To make “acquaintance” with his “reader”, Beers describes his “boyhood days” as a talented, if uninspired, “sensitive and introspective child” who could excel at anything he put his mind to, if he only ‘got started’ (2004, p. 1). He supports this claim with ‘facts’ about his various accomplishments: promotions, an election to a “secret society”, a position as a manager of a business magazine and admission to Sheffield Scientific School at Yale (Beers, 2004, p. 12). Beers then locates the origins of the ‘distress’ and ‘disorder’ for which he was treated and which he discusses in greater detail throughout the remainder of the book to an “event” that occurred while he was a student “that undoubtedly changed my career completely” (2004, p. 1).

According to Beers this event was the illness, believed to be epilepsy, and eventual death of his older brother. His brother was sick for six years, two years of which he spent at home. Because Beers was a student, and therefore presumed to have “more time at his disposal than other members of the family”, he spent much of his time with his ailing brother. During this time, a fear began to take hold of him. He laments,

> Now, if a brother who had enjoyed perfect health all his life could be stricken with epilepsy, what was to prevent my being similarly afflicted? This was the thought that soon got possession of my mind. The more I considered it and him, the more nervous I became; and the more nervous, the more convinced that my own breakdown was only a matter of time. Doomed to what I then considered a living death, I thought of

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9 See also Erick Fabris (2011) for a discussion of this in relation to legislation concerning involuntary committals in Canada.
epilepsy, I dreamed epilepsy, until thousands of times during the six years that this disquieting idea persisted, my over-wrought imagination seemed to drag me to the very verge of an attack. Yet at no time during my life have these early fears been realized (2004, p. 1).

Shortly thereafter, Beers states that he had become “sick”; a becoming that culminated in the arrival of a “break” during a citation in a German language class. He describes the feeling as a snap, a building of tension and sudden release under too much force: “I remember distinctly when the break came. […] It seemed as if my nerves had snapped, like so many minute bands of rubber stretched beyond their elastic limit” (Beers, 2004, p. 1). Although Beers successfully completed his studies at Yale, and fulfilled all of the “ambitions” he had when he first enrolled, he shares that it was a very unhappy time for him. Although the “Yale spirit” had made him “[…] accustomed to the ups and downs of a nervous existence”, preparing him for a life on Wall Street and a notion of “power based on wealth” (p. 2), it had done so at the expense of a reflexive engagement with his own relations to the meaning of time; the meaning of illness and death.

In 1908, the same year that Beers published his autobiography, he founded the Connecticut Society for Mental Hygiene. In 1909, the U.S., the National Committee for Mental Hygiene was established, and it had a mandate “[…] to prevent mental disorder through public education” (Engs, 2003, p. 225). This Committee laid the foundation for the present National Mental Health Association (Engs, 2003, p. 226). Despite claims to support people deemed ‘mentally ill’, an understanding of ‘mental illness’ as a source of individual and collective suffering which ought to be prevented was central to the mental hygiene movement. In his book, *The Men Behind Hitler: A German Warning to the World*, Bernhard Schreiber (1970) discusses the relationship between the mental hygiene movement and eugenics. According to Schreiber, “The principle that prevention of birth of the mentally-ill would eradicate mental illness became an operating principle for every mental hygiene group in the world.” In illustration, consider the following passage from the *Handwörterbuch der Psychischen Hygiene und der Psychiatrischen*
Fürsorge [Handbook of Mental Hygiene and Psychiatric Care], published in 1931 by Walter de Gruyter and Co. describing the work of mental hygiene:

Therefore the hereditary constitution of a personality is the first and most effective point of prophylactic intervention: in the sense of eugenic psychiatry it is necessary to hinder unfavourable hereditary combinations and bring about favourable ones, and especially to prevent the propagation of the hereditary traits of physical illness and the socially inferior psychopathies.

Although it arrived in the form of an “experiment” (Bernhardt, 1951, p. vii), mental hygiene became a natural and taken-for-granted feature of the institutional organization of everyday life. It represented a means of mapping and inscribing a “cosmos of conceptual interrelations” (Weber, 1949, p. 90) on the student body. In its spatialization of the student body, mental hygiene also offered the University ideas and practices which extended the University’s domain to include individuals and communities, which, while not formally recognized as subjects were nonetheless monitored, regulated, and controlled through technologies of “government at a distance”.  

In a chapter titled, “The Boundaries of Adjustment: From the Clinic to the Classroom” in the ground breaking book, The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada, Theresa Richardson describes how the early twentieth century witnessed a shift from a focus on the pathological to normal child development. Within the University of Toronto, this change in perspective played a central role in the development of Psychology under the direction of Edward Bott (Richardson, 1989, p. 113). Richardson claims that,

Bott’s findings marked an innovation in the thinking of the Canadian National Committee. Previously they had been overwhelming concerned with “attempting to solve the problems of abnormality.” […] Bott took his findings one step further. […] he saw the need to step in and take preventative measures before the child exhibited signs of maladjustment. Bott refocused his version of mental hygiene in industrial

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10 For more on “government at a distance” please see Miller & Rose (2008).
Bott established the St. George’s School for Child Study at the University of Toronto in 1925 with the financial support of a Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial funding program for new interdisciplinary research in child development (Pols, 2002, p. 135). Before the appearance of this award in 1924, research on child development was scarce, and Bott’s proposal to study child development in education settings, such as the nursery, represented an innovative approach to this field (Pols, 2002, p. 135). Then, in 1926, the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene was established. This committee was charged with the responsibility of psychological and mental health screening for recruits for armed forces and resources for the training of new psy-professionals – known at the time as the alienists. In the same year, the St. George’s School for Child Study was re-instituted as the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto (Bernhardt, 1951, p. 15).

**The Same But Different**

On its 25th anniversary, the staff of the Institute published a book about the development of the programme and review of the research as a tribute to then Director, Dr. William E. Blatz. In the foreword of the book, the President of the University of Toronto at the time, Sydney E. Smith, describes the modern University in crisis. Smith suggests that the Institute of Child Study was an “experiment” in the creation of sovereign bodies within the University which have direct connections to the community and offer training for students and non-students in “living laboratories” – nursery centers with “normal children” (Bernhardt et al., 1951, p. vii). According to Smith,

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11 This expression, “the same but different” is a title heading for a section on the relations between psychiatric survivors and disability and between survivors’ and disabled peoples movements in Beresford & Wallcraft (1997).
In the modern university with its many divisions and complicated structure, it is becoming more and more difficult to realize the ideal of a community of teachers and scholars. Specialization, and the pressing demands for professional training – to mention but two factors – can lead to isolation, so that the university is in danger of becoming a loose collection of separate, self-sufficient units. Yet if the university is to preserve its real character, if it is to be an organism and not merely an organization, we must be constantly on our guard against the forces which tend to destroy its unity.

To Smith the Institute represented a means of overcoming the isolation assumed to result from pressures to specialize and professionalize (Bernhardt, 1951, p. vii). The Institute was a body with its own mandate, structurally and physically “removed” from the pathologizing patterns of the “modern university”, and “the subject of a free and diverse approach” (Bernhardt, 1951, p. vii). Smith perceived the Institute both as interlocutor, and a technique or mode of relation. Its appearance conditioned the possibility of a sense of unity despite diversity.

In “Fictions of the Scientific Imagination: Researching the Dionne Quintuplets”, Kari Dehli (1994) conducts a discursive analysis of archival research on the quintuplets which brought Blatz such acclaim (Bernhardt, 1951, p. 5). The five girls were separated from their biological parents and placed under the care of Blatz and his staff, largely women, from their birth for three years. After the third year they were removed from Blatz’s care by their parents, who were of French Canadian descent. During their time under the care of the Institute, in a special nursery that was built for them under Blatz’s guidance, the quintuplets were raised in a completely self-contained and highly regulated environment, under the constant supervision and the complete care of English nurses and psychologists. Blatz viewed the quintuplets as an opportunity to test his theories about childcare on a group of children who, for all intents and purposes, could be conceptualized within a psychological perspective as ultimately the same but different (Dehli, 1994, p. 98). Under his supervision and the care of his team of trained nurses and psychologists, the girls presented a unique opportunity. Through their care, it would be possible to chart relationships between environmental stimuli and personality development, and
make comparisons within a group of ‘identical’ individuals. This child-rearing experiment was conducted with an interest in charting, adapting and controlling the production of difference within ‘normal development’ of ‘ordinary children’. The underlying assumption being that if children born free of the experience of environmental disruption could have that freedom maintained, they would have a greater probability of becoming ‘healthy’ adults. Adults who were perfectly adjusted to their environment and could make that environment a home. Adults yet unburdened by “psychic discomfort” (Weber, 1978a).

The “routine care and training” (Bernhardt, 1951, p. 5) of the quintuplets was initiated under the auspices of the development of less authoritarian modes of child-rearing (Dehli, 1994, p. 88). According to Dehli, when compared with other theories and methods for child-rearing, Blatz’s approach was recognizably “progressive” (1994, p. 88), “[…] in that he saw children’s freedom, responsibility and self-activity, rather than overt adult intervention and control, as the keys to healthy development” (p. 90). Despite this appearance, Blatz did not simply ‘naturally’ observe events as they ‘naturally’ unfolded. As Dehli remarks, the “[…] group of ‘progressive’ psychologists and nurses constituted the categories they claimed to discover […]” (1994, p. 105). Different personalities did not just emerge. Individual-specific and culturally conceived characteristics were made to materialize. Their bodies were inscribed with gender differences, and their hair was curled and tied-up in bows (Dehli, 1994, p. 102). Their care providers looked for differences so that they could tell them apart, and know that the child whose behaviours and attitudes they were observing and documenting was appropriately named (Dehli, 1994, p. 105). Further, the quintuplets were compared with other children who attended the Institute’s nursery – the ‘control group’. Heuristics were required to order and make sense of what was being observed, directed, and performed. Consistency was key success, and a common language. It would be best if that language was English, and expressive of the values and the culture of the
The parents then removed their children from Blatz’s care. They were troubled. And we should be too. Troubled, by the textual erasure of the social and political contexts which organized the research and education, and which Dehli asserts were “rendered invisible in the research team’s reports” (1994, p. 106). Troubled, also, by the unexamined character of the normative expectations and cultural values concerning gender and labour, and the way these expectations and value judgments structured the appearance of freedom, and produced “the child as the sole generator and author of its feelings and actions” (Dehli, 1994, p. 106). Troubled, since questions of responsibility concerning the happiness, health, wealth and success of individuals, communities and institutions could now be conceived as separable from the assemblages of power and privilege that became bound to the child’s body.

Karl Bernhardt says of Blatz, “His system has a definite emphasis on mental hygiene” (1951, p. 7). Mental hygiene, however, has no room for trouble. Its aim is to avoid and get rid of trouble. D.B. Klein describes the work of mental hygiene in a way which makes it slightly resemble a mover which people can call on to help them pack up their troubles and move them to a new address. Klein (1944, p. 4) says,

Mental hygiene endeavours to aid people to ward off trouble as well as to furnish people with ways of handling trouble in an intelligent fashion when it cannot be warded off. What people call their “troubles” can be classified into a series of conventional categories as illness, religion, finances, sex, social position, economic security, safety from accident, old age, fire and inadequate shelter.

From the perspective of mental hygiene, home is where the heart is. The development of a sense of being at one with one’s environment is represented as key to the successful development of the ‘whole person’; and by virtue of that, greater possibility and acceptance of material success. Paradoxically, to actualize the values of adjustment, people must learn to minimize the
appearance of adjustment and avoid situations which make it explicit. If such situations cannot be avoided, they must be handled “intelligently”, ‘with care’. The “conventional categories” Klein refers to provide ‘boxes’; places to put troubles so that they are more easily carried, and capable of being moved in fewer trips. When a change of address is unavoidable, mental hygiene provides an efficient and systematic means of moving troubles and replacing them with techniques which promise to make people more comfortable with more familiar dwellings. At the same time Klein cautions that, “Mental hygiene is not to be mastered by memorizing copybook maxims extolling honesty, self-control, purity, and service. The problem of conjuring up an image of an ideal personality is not to be disposed of by conceiving of all such traditional virtues associated together in the same person” (Klein, 1944, p. 20). It can then be assumed that the fulfillment of the possibilities of mental hygiene and ‘true’ knowledge of its typologies requires a particular way of relating to the “ideal personality”, and with it, the “person”. One that can ‘conjure’ the appearance of the ideas which the advocates of the mental hygiene movement claim it can produce and secure: flexibility, adjustment and adaptation. A way of relating which is open to the contradictions presumed to get people into trouble, but which regulates the appearance of such contradictions through sanctions that enforce a shared understanding of the need for their removal.

**Re-Storying the Ordinary: Unnatural Adjustments and Paradigm Shifts**

The realization of mental hygiene’s philosophy of life was, however, necessarily limited by the fragmentation of the ‘familiar’ in the aftermath of the two World Wars. During the wars and immediately after, many traditional values and practices became obsolete, and even dangerous. There was a commonsense that people would have to learn to be strategic to survive. Certainty of the meaning of relations, and the very existence of familiar environments, had been made present as fundamentally disrupted, and potentially disruptive. At this time, increasing
numbers of women entered the workforce, and male-dominated public spheres, to support themselves and their families. Mental hygiene offered a solution to the uncertainty characteristic of that present moment in the body of the ‘adjusted adult’. And yet, despite claims that its search was interested in the nature of ‘normal’, ‘ordinary’ life, its methodologies and practices reflect consciousness of modernity - its present - as unnatural and disturbed; post-war modernity is confused, and no longer knows what is important. At the height of the mental hygiene movement, the present environment was one which was conceived as an event which ought to have been prevented.

Through the concept of the ‘normal’ and the ‘norm’, mental hygiene could construct a myth of the originary autonomous subject, much like the Institute as described by University of Toronto President Smith (1951, p. vii), “the subject of a free and diverse approach;” a subject who makes choices, knows what is really important and what to do about it; and makes them oriented to the unity (singularity) of thought of the “normal being” developing normally. The Institute of Child Study, and Blatz himself, were made to embody the idea of this subject. As Bott describes him, Blatz was a “[…] genius for disregarding the unimportant and cutting through language to the core of its meaning” (Bernhardt, 1951, p. 8).

During the Second World War, Blatz’s reach extended beyond Canada to Britain. He established the Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre in Birmingham, England. Here, he trained women how to care for children whose “homes were disrupted” (Bernhardt, 1951, p. 15) due to the evacuations which occurred during the War, or changes in the homes of mothers who had to work (1951, p. 6). Blatz’s aim was to “promote future well-being” and prevent adult mental illness through early intervention. This took the form of the “training” of children, students, staff, parents, communities and the general public, as well as Canadian army officers (Bernhardt, 1951). Under Blatz, the work at the Institute was significant for its shift from a focus
from the perceivably abnormal to the apparently normal child. Its aim was to close the distance between science and the source of the need for adjustment.

While the experiment with the quintuplets offered an opportunity to work with newborns, there was a need to go further, beyond birth, to the possibility of conception. Any perceivable failures in the research could thus be understood and explained within the psychological perspective of mental hygiene. The adults’ relations to the children were the problem. These relations were expressed in the parents’ desire to bond with their children, have them know their culture, and remove them from Blatz’s custody. Children elicited irrational responses in adults. What could be more rational, more just, than a parent who wants the best for his or her children? What parent would forgo the chance to secure the happiness, health, wealth, success of a child, and the child’s development into an adult who is subjectively whole, and feels at home in the world? Who would ever wish for alienation? Within the logic of mental hygiene, then, children, as part of the ‘life-world’ of an environment, could themselves be viewed as a condition of maladjustment – the maladjustment of their parents. As such, the study and production of normal development is inevitably limited, and to some extent compromised, by the interactions and interrelations between children and the adults who supervise and care for them. Dorothy Millichamp, who served as the Assistant Director of the Institute, illustrates this logic in her assertion that,

Children are one of our greatest weaknesses, and a play upon our feelings towards them brings a quick response. The adjustment which comes through knowledge and insight is slow and often difficult but it assures judgment and wisdom, and children deserve the best of both (as cited in Bernhardt, 1951, p. 25).

Millichamp also offers a view to how a discourse of deservingness can be used to justify situations of domination and control. She depicts children as a weakness, and as a potential condition of maladjustment in adults in that their appearance can elicit responses which are neither “intelligent” nor careful. Through this depiction, Millichamp orients her reader to the
need for a technique or a procedure which would make it possible to surpass the limits of childhood in the production of healthy adults, *without ever having to train children*. This since, as the quintuplet experiment had shown, any relationship with children could potentially damage the adaptation (mental health) of what are otherwise healthy and adjusted adults; in the process, causing the research and its actualization to *become disordered*. Although “difficult” and “slow”, Millichamp assures the reader that the success of child research is secured in the yet-to-be realized futures of the children who deserve this attention – the children who grow up to be healthy adults. It is here, in the representation of a natural relation between “feelings” and a “quick response” that one can begin to perceive the role of neo-liberal discourses of student potential and the ‘university experience’ in the legitimation of systemic inequality at the University of Toronto. It is the ‘yet unborn’ student, the child, the newcomer, the neophyte, which is of interest to the University. This is the body that deserves the best of what can be learned from the students who have already arrived at the University, and who live their lives under its constant supervision.

In *A History of Disability*, Henri Jacques-Stiker says, “A new way, both cultural and social, of addressing disability begins at the time of World War I” (1999, p. 121): rehabilitation. Earlier in this chapter I have made reference to a “maladjusted student type”. I now want to suspend or bracket a discussion of the construction of this ‘type’, and question how its conception is conditioned by this “new way of addressing disability” (Stiker, 1999, p. 121). Within mental hygiene, rehabilitation appears in the guise of ‘adjustment’. James Sawrey and Charles Telford (1964) describe a difficulty defining adjustment, since it has many different meanings and usages (pp. 17-29). Sawrey and Telford claim that, “Adjustment, as a broad concept, involves growing accustomed to or ceasing to respond to certain aspects of one’s environment” (1964, p. 19). Generally, speaking, adjustment involves understanding the “system
of relevancies” (Schütz, 1976) which structure an environment, and learning how to only respond to aspects of the environment which are significant to one’s success and survival.

The psy-sciences of adaptive behavioural practices and technologies provide a mode of addressing difference which encourages students to privatize their experiences, but in relation to a unified notion of health. In *The Psychology of Personal Adjustment: Students’ Introduction to Mental Hygiene*, one finds the following assertion (McKinney, 1961, p. 11):

> The first important idea in understanding others and gaining control of our own behaviour is (1) the realization that our experiences and behaviour are *caused*. Everything we feel or do is the result of causes or antecedent and relevant events—sometimes quite complex. (2) Controlling or changing behaviour or attitudes necessitates an understanding of the nature of the causes of this specific behaviour or experience and the removal or manipulation of these causes.

This gives yet another reason for a treatment, research environment of a *unified type*. Through the call to adjust, students are instructed to look for sources, and most importantly, to locate the source of dissatisfaction and distress (the embodied experiences of what Weber refers to as “psychic discomfort”) as a consequence of *lack* – of “understanding of the nature of causes” (McKinney, 1961, p. 11), and control over one’s ways of relating. To address and resolve discomfort one needs only to sever ‘unhealthy relations’ and remove oneself from unhealthy social milieus, and secure a more productive personal identity. The psy-sciences thus also oriented the University community to the need of translation, and more specifically, the translation of cultural assumptions about alienation, into a technical problem amenable to empirical analysis and expert intervention. This act of translation involves complex processes of subject formation which activate and invoke the authority of science in the conduct of human life, while simultaneously shaping and forming the University institution as a legitimate authority on students’ lives. The language of biomedicine bound the meaning and value of the lives of individual students to the reproduction and realization of scientific assumptions about the timelessness of the ‘modern university’.
Mental Health in Modern Education: The Fifty-fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (NSSE) prepared by the NSSE “Yearbook Committee” opens with an “Editor’s Preface” written by Nelson Henry (1955). Henry prefaces the publication as in-line with the values of a “democratic society”, and an endeavour to make scientific knowledge about mental hygiene more widely accessible to the public, and ultimately, more socially-responsive. According to Henry, “It is in this manner that the mental-hygiene movement has emerged from the status of a remedial agent in a mental institution to that of a professional agency engaged in safeguarding the normal developmental processes of human growth from infancy to maturity” (as cited in Witty et al., 1955, vii). The Yearbook opens with the assertion that “The attainment of mental health is a crucial problem at the present time” (Witty et al., 1955, p. 1). This assertion is followed by descriptions of the numbers of persons institutionalized or treated publically and privately - one million in a single year. No reference is made to anything other than the fact of treatment. What these persons were treated for, in what geographic locales they were treated, or in what year remains a mystery. Or, rather, builds one. Something is wrong, people are being treated, institutionalized, surveyed, and incapacitated:

It has recently been estimated that in a single year one million persons received treatment in institutions and many others received treatment from private practitioners. Another survey showed that almost half of all the beds in our hospitals were occupied by psychotic patients. Some authorities estimate further that one person in every twenty will be temporarily incapacitated by emotional or nervous instability at some time in his life. (Witty et al., 1955, p. 1)

The Chairman of the Yearbook Committee, Paul Witty, says,

Disability of this kind makes many persons temporary or permanent liabilities in society and affects in adverse ways the lives of many others. Since it is well established that many of these breakdowns could have been avoided by the provision of more desirable conditions in the home, community, or the school, it becomes the responsibility of these agencies to co-operate in preventing and alleviating personality disorder and emotional conflict (Witty et al., 1955, p. 1)

Physiological conditions are assumed to get in the way of authentic consciousness of the University of Toronto experience. This understanding makes it possible to rationalize the
presence of “psychic discomfort” within the privileged space of the University, and as such must be ‘gotten rid of’. An interest in getting rid of psychic discomfort through the prevention of disease was epitomized in the eugenics movement. Eugenics is a term coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, used to describe the scientific study of human breeding (Moran & Wright, 2006, p. 179). A form of social Darwinism, eugenics rationalizes sterilization as a means of disease prevention and population control. Eugenic policies and practices offer a strategy for preserving the privilege that operates through the restriction of a right to reproduce to only those deemed worthy by the cultural standards of dominant social groups. The appearance of bodies or relations, lines of inheritance, which depart from the conception of the universal body at the center of the established order are marked as a threat to the stability and social organization of the existing regime.

Mental hygiene was closely tied with eugenics, and according to James Moran and David Wright (2006), “Many of the spokespersons for eugenics were active in the mental hygiene movement” (p. 179). In its effort to preserve the development of a person wholly adjusted to the demands of modern life, mental hygiene’s interest – and its reach - extended beyond the development of the ‘normal child’. This provided for the construction of ‘types’ deemed unworthy of reproduction, and the possibility of recognizing some bodies both as the origin of maladjustment and the source of modernity’s descent. Through the appearance of ‘types’ the meaning of persons relied on and reproduced experiences of embodied difference as, “[…] incomplete, distorted, and defective in relation to their origin” (Michalko, 1998, p. 68).

Eugenics makes it possible to identify disabled bodies with descent; where descent is understood both in the sense of a common social lineage and personal decline, what Kathleen Rockhill describes “a fall from privilege” (1996, p. 97). Eugenics frames differential embodiment as a condition of distortion, and a good reason for destruction. Through eugenics,
the promise of the future of the modern world could be achieved with ultimate efficiency. Once the source of “psychic discomfort” could be located in bodies never to be born, and with it, the source of comparison, universal happiness could be secured. Consciousness of a right to privilege could finally be permanently preserved. The attainment of this happy consciousness, however, also necessitated that persons learn to forget their role in the construction, the conception, of others undeserving of life. It required that those so ‘fortunate’ to be born forget the social and material conditions of their good fortune, tune-out “discomfort”, and focus on becoming comfortable within a world-view which alienates us from the creative potential of our labour power. The already-born, therefore, have to be habituated, and re-habituated, again and again, to the ‘fact’ that, as every person knows, “No one wants to become disabled and we do whatever we can to prevent it. But if it happens, it happens, and we do whatever we can to minimize its negative effects” (Michalko, 2002, p. 18).

A disability studies approach informed by phenomenology can offer a way to address how the difference in perception embodied in biomedical understandings of disability is made factual, without “getting rid of” the consciousness of unhappiness. Natanson (1970) cautions a distinction between the methodological suspension of a belief in the world (p. 88) and “getting ‘rid’ of attitudes or assumptions in the sense of expatriating them or somehow erasing them from consciousness” (p. 89). On the contrary, the suspension of taken-for-granted assumptions about the meaning and value of the university experience involves making these assumptions, which are brought to life in descriptions of typical attitudes and behaviours in the university, explicit. Far from an erasure, “[…] methodological suspension is a radical procedure designed to render presuppositions and epistemological commitments explicit by making available and evident to consciousness its own activity” (Natanson, 1970, p. 89). I have endeavoured here to show how a

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12 For more on “happy consciousness” please see Marcuse (1964), particularly “… loss of conscience due to the satisfactory liberties granted by an unfree society makes for a happy consciousness which facilitates acceptance of the misdeeds of society” (p. 79).
commitment to the promise the University embodies involves a resistance to the seduction of cultural images of happiness, health, wealth, and success. Some of the types of persons and types of institutions I have discussed include maladjusted, difficult, disordered, and slow, and all of which are predicated on the notion of normal growth and development. In the next section I move from the history of the development of the University as an institution and turn toward the “student” category as a means of enacting a global consciousness of the need for Western knowledge.

The Conception of the University as Institution of Power

The term birth cannot be used simply to pinpoint a new departure. […] birth does not end until there is a new decisive rupture in the society in question, or until a new society emerges. (Stiker, 1999, p. 121)

In The Idea of the University Karl Jaspers (1960) says, “Formal education, like tradition, generally tends to be dependent upon particular forms of social organization. The changes in educational outlook parallel the changes which a nation undergoes in the course of its history” (1960, p. 61). And, as we encountered above, changes also entail a change in the version of self necessary to inhabit the change. Forms of social organization, however stable they may appear, are not static. They exist within spatial and temporal contexts whose histories are continuously negotiated, contested, and rewritten. The appearance of particular forms of social organization is, therefore, contingent; intertwined and interlocked with(in) stories of the factual realities of possible others. Through the idea of the University, “systems of relevance” (Schütz, 1976) are instituted which make it possible to organize the flow of forms, delimiting the possibilities of who or what can be present at any one time. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron (1979) open their book, The Inheritors, with the assertion that (1979, p. 2):

The chances of entering higher education can be seen as the product of a selection process which, throughout the school system, is applied with very unequal severity,
depending on the student’s social origin. In fact, for the most disadvantaged classes, it is purely and simply a matter of \textit{elimination}.

This passage suggests that the majority of students who are not immediately eliminated, and enter the University, can be understood as occupying social roles which are conditioned by privilege. The visibility of privilege may be more explicitly apparent for some than for others. But, the very fact of their enrolment, if not recruitment, is an expression of the particular ways their histories have been interwoven with the history of the university which admits them.

Students who are identified with the maladjusted student type, however, are constructed so as to represent the educational system’s recognition of its fallibility: it can, on occasion, let people in who for all intents and purposes do not \textit{really} belong, thus re-inscribing, at least the parameters around, the “ideal type”.

Through the construction of the maladjusted student type, the University demonstrates its authorial power, that it has anticipated the appearance of outsiders, \textit{the ought-to-have-been-eliminated}, but is willing to make exceptions. In the visibility of its exceptions, students are taught to accept its exceptional character as an institution of benevolence. This is a performance in two parts. It serves to segregate those students who have already been marked as maladjusted. It is also a reminder, a lesson, for students yet unmarked. Arrival in the University of Toronto alone does not secure their presence as legitimate members of its world. They must demonstrate their desire to belong. This is no easy feat since it is becoming clear that one must exist as a particular kind of self within a particular institution in need of that kind of self, or at least its “committed” development. It is one accomplished, not least of all, as Bourdieu (1984, p. 328) suggests, in the successful reproduction of its culture upon examinations, and the acquisition of certificates testifying to their merit. It is thus that the production of the maladjusted type of student secures the command of the University on the reproduction of dominant culture.
For Merleau-Ponty, “The idea of institution is precisely the foundation of a personal history on the basis of contingency” (2010, p. 36). It is the contingency of the University as an institution of power which makes it possible to think and talk about students’ mental lives. It is also this contingency which lies at the heart of representations which depict students’ mental lives as an influence on the present and future well-being of the University. The University’s consciousness of the right to enjoy privilege and be successful is disrupted by the presence of bodies whose appearance does not conform to the cultural ideals and the ‘society’ it reflects. In a similar thread, the historical contingencies of the lives of individual university students provide for the warp and weft of the personal history of the University – its biography.

The institution of consciousness of a universal experience is a characteristic of the field of knowledge about what is required for someone to be recognized as a legitimate member of a culture which conceives of itself as in transition. Within the context of a break from the traditional authority of England and the Church, the continuity of the University’s image of itself as an authorial power is necessarily a product of how this field is delimited, cultivated, and maintained, and by whom. What this chapter has aimed to show is the social and political significance of the University’s turn to science as a source of legitimacy, in its turn away from England and the Church. Rather than free the University from the prejudices of the place from which it began, the prejudices of home have re-turned, newly phrased and more finely-tuned, in the language of biomedicine (and of professional unity); re-presented as more relevant, and more timely than before. What is significant about this re-turn is that its beginnings are concealed in the expressed desire for separation from Church and State. The ‘source’ is located in the bodies, minds, and senses of the students that remind it of its former self. For it was in the name of the students, yet unborn, that the University was consecrated. In their name, that Strachan travelled to England and back again, in search of Charter and the rights to land.
The fact that students are educated within a framework which locates their social origins in able-bodied cultural values and normative assumptions about the characteristics of an unhappy life, or “unfortunate” position, should be a source of trouble and not pride for the University of Toronto community. But, as Klein’s (1944) definition of mental hygiene illustrates, trouble, or rather, social inequality, is not something the University wants to dwell with. In supporting and incorporating the assumptions of the mental hygiene movement, universities are declaring their commitment to view social inequality – embodied in “illness, religion, finances, sex, social position, economic security, safety from accident, old age, fire and inadequate shelter” - as something which requires the development of new ways to “ward off”, and “when it cannot be warded off”, ways of “handling” it “in an intelligent fashion” (Klein, 1944, p. 4). What are accommodated are not the actual students whose bodies are made to bear the mark of the privilege of the dominant culture, but an imitation of the universal student: The student whose history is one with the University, and whose presence offers a mode of producing the university as the institution of success. The student, by whom, the University of Toronto can make itself truly global. The image of the universal student reverberates in David Naylor’s installation address as President of the University of Toronto in 2005. He begins his address by identifying his audience as “Friends of the University of Toronto” (emphasis added; University of Toronto, 2009c):

We can together take great pride in this University. Our strength is in our students. And our students are extraordinary. They are not only exceedingly bright and well-motivated. They truly draw on the breath of ambitions in this country. Fifty percent of our undergraduates report a total family income of less than $50,000. 1,400 students with special needs are registered with our accessibility services. Fifty percent of our undergraduates identify as belonging to a visible minority. And fifty percent now speak a language other than English at home. This diversity makes us more than just another university. It tells the world that U of T is our nation’s most powerful springboard to great accomplishments for Canadians from every walk of life.
Thinking with the address, it is the “diversity” of the student body which makes the University of Toronto distinct. Not only does diversity make the University distinct, but it makes it “more than just another university.” Naylor marks his arrival as President of the University by attributing the University’s strength, power, and pride “in” the remarkable presence of students with “special needs”, students who “identify as belonging to a visible minority”, students who “speak a language other than English at home”; students who are “motivated”, students who “draw on the breath of ambitions in this country”. And the language Naylor uses can teach us something about the contemporary University’s relation to embodied difference – as something that can be adjusted, and whose adjustment can increase the University’s power and distinction in a global market system that like Beers’ Wall Street, operates on a notion of “power based on wealth”. For, the term “visible minority” has a very specific connotation, and one which is bound to the systematic organization of labour, as well as the systematic discrimination against, and erasure of, Canada’s Aboriginal peoples; a process that, like the history of the University, reaches back to Simcoe’s boyhood dream and his ambitions for an educational system in the ‘new world’ that would preserve the values and fulfill the expectations of his homeland. Naylor’s use of this term signifies a way of converting power based on embodied difference to power based on wealth through the construction of demographic categories. What “visible minority” references is better understood as an expression the University’s ambitions for the global market and its appearance on the world stage, than of a more equitable and inclusive institution.

Through his depiction of the University as the pride and key to the success of Canada, Naylor highlights the University’s role in the colonial project. Even though they speak a language other than English at home, Naylor also makes it explicit that 50% of the University of Toronto’s students whose first language was other than English now speak English at home. In celebration of diversity as the University’s “strength”, Naylor draws attention to the existence of
students, who have ‘needs’ that exceed those of the ordinary and expected student, the bourgeois student of white Anglo-Saxon descent, but can nonetheless provide potentially profitable sources of labour. It is thus that diversity appears today in divisive terms: both as a trouble to be “avoided” or ‘handled intelligently’ (Klein, 1944, p. 4) and a condition of the University’s future success. In his use of statistics, numbers and percentages of “extraordinary” students, and his references to “visible minorities”, and specifically, their first and spoken languages, Naylor’s claim that the University will be “the nation’s powerful springboard to great accomplishment” reveals that the University’s ‘role’ and relation to embodied difference has adapted; and with it, the forms elimination can take.

Reconciling (Un)Happiness through Holism

Within the University of Toronto environment the psy-sciences have offered conceptual tools for the de-historicization of (un)happiness, framing malaise and discontent as questions of adaptation and proof of a need for student supervision. (Un)Happiness, whatever it may mean specifically, generally becomes a technical problem best addressed through empirical analysis and expert regulation and control. This act of translation forges a distance between contemporary understandings of relations of inequality and global processes of institutional expansion. The demarcation of a field of knowledge about the maladjusted student type within the life-world of the University, and the attendant proliferation of specialized divisions of professional knowledge with its caretakers, surveyors, and landscapers, have made it possible to think and talk about the various ‘conditions’ that shape the possibilities of survival in a ‘naturally’ inhospitable terrain (Titchkosky, 2011a).

However, Bourdieu and Passeron remind us, “Students are not only users but also products of the educational system, and no social category is more strongly marked in its present behaviours and abilities by its past acquisitions” (1979, p. 13). This dissertation aims for a
radical reading of the appearance of student mental life, one which takes notice of the resistances which organize the appearance of the University of Toronto as a particular personality with a unified and enduring history, community and culture. Attention to the resistance within universities and within the constitution of subjects works to disrupt conventional understandings of where stories start and end. The following chapters consider how the mental hygiene movement has been integrated within the University archi

.texture in the form of student services divisions. This integration has helped rationalize the segregation of disabled students within the university environment. It has also made it possible to conceive of students as service-users.

Recognition of the contributions of labour by students is restricted once consumption is presented as the defining characteristic of student life. This is to say nothing of the fact of the image of the student body with which such divisions have been designed: students already or potentially troubled, students-in-trouble, students-of-trouble, and students that for all intents and purposes are nothing but trouble. Rather than take the meaning of the appearance of student services for granted as a sign of the University’s inclusive nature and best intentions, I am led by Michalko’s (2008) orientation to the “double trouble of disability” to question how students marked by a corporeal consciousness of the hegemony of normalcy are produced as “problems” (p. 405) not only by the University for the University, but for themselves and their communities.
Chapter 4
The Language of Student Life

To discuss language “within” ordinary language, without being able to “command a clear view of it”, without being able to see it from a distance, is to grasp it as an ensemble of practices in which one is implicated and through which the prose of the world is at work. (de Certeau, 2002 [1984], pp. 11-12)

Figure 2. Aerial bird’s eye view of St. George Campus (ca. 1940).

As a Tree through the Ages

Within genealogical discourse is the myth of the family tree. Coincidently, the motto of the University of Toronto is a story of trees, Velut Arbor Aevo. The motto references an excerpt from Horace’s Odes, Book 1, Ode 12, Line 45, “crescit occulto velut arbor aevo fama Marcelli,” which translates to, “May it grow as a tree through the ages.” In “Narrative Identity”, Paul Ricoeur (1991) uses the image of a tree to illustrate a “criterion of identity”, which he understands as, “[…] the uninterrupted continuity in the development of a being between the first and last stage of its evolution” (p. 73). Ricoeur says, “For instance, we say that an oak is the same being from its acorn stage to its age of maturity; this is the same for animals from birth to
death and for a person in so far as he or she exemplifies the species from fetus to old age” (1991, p. 73). As the University of Toronto grew, the tangled relations between English Churches, colonial governments, and Western European Science branched outwards, grounding the appearance of the University in a nation which was still, as yet, to-be-seen. Perceived from above, the historical roots of the University were visibly removed enough to preserve the image of the University as a single and unified body. Perceived from the ground-up, the University’s relations to Church and State and Science made it possible to imagine the University as something which, however incomplete, is continuous throughout time. This image of continuity is affirmed in the myriad impressions of the University’s ‘leaves’; the countless departures and discontinuities through which it came and continues to be formed. Bringing these leaves near offers a view to veins not as perceptible from afar, and with this new perspective, a new relation to the University as something living; something which grows.

Perceiving the University from within requires a different approach. It necessitates a kind of leveling. To try and perceive from within is a task which makes ‘keeping both feet on the ground’ difficult. That is, unless, one is open to performing a cut. Once cuts are made, the tangibility of the University can be grasped, felt, and examined. Holding, feeling and examining an aspect of the University, one might observe the University as a site marked by the growth rings, traceable circles; and with them, ways of measuring how long the University has been around. All of these ways of approaching understanding of the University are steeped in objective knowledge of the University as a “feature” of a shared environment. Are there other ways of approaching understanding which do not require positions be taken above, below, or within-but-without? Ways which can open analysis and understanding to the afterlives of fallen leaves, ‘failed’ departures, and historical breaks? A re-turn to history as a culturally-specific text
steeped in assumptions about the necessity of success and survival, creates space to question how the work of ‘turning a new leaf’ gets done.

A genealogy of the University provided a methodological clearing. This clearing expanded the perceptual horizon of the meaning and performance of the university student role. This expansion was, however, was accomplished under the pretence that certain facets of the University story ought to remain untouched. Further, as was illustrated in Naylor’s presidential address, it also produced knowledge of the value of student life as something that can be quantified. Recall Naylor’s assertion of the “extraordinary” character of University of Toronto students as a quality best expressed in percentages, dollar signs and the numbers of individual students registered with University services. Naylor describes “all” University of Toronto students as “extraordinary”. It would seem that for Naylor what is also “extraordinary”, is the fact that “fifty percent” of undergraduate students at the University of Toronto live below the poverty line, have registered disabilities, identify as “non-White”, and whose first language is not English (University of Toronto, 2009c). In presenting University of Toronto students as “extraordinary”, Naylor reconciles the fundamental contradiction at the heart of mental hygiene. This contradiction Kari Dehli poses in the form of a question in her discursive analysis of The Dionne Quintuplets (1994, p. 99): “How could they be both ordinary and different at the same time?”

Learning to Be and Feel Well

There is the growing sense in the contemporary University of Toronto, today’s ‘new’ University, that mental illness in students is not only “normal,” but a fact of life. The proliferation of discourses on a “hidden problem” (Tamburri, 2012) and even a “crisis” (Dehaas, 2011) in student mental health and illness is helping it to become one of the dominant modes of interpreting and negotiating student survival and success. At the University of Toronto, a major
cosmopolitan university in Toronto, Ontario, Canada with more than 75,000 students across three campuses, as with many other universities throughout North America and the Westernized world, faculty, staff and students are now receiving frequent formal and informal instructions to view university student services as a valuable and necessary tool in the preservation of academic standing. This proliferation of discourses on student mental health and illness is helping it to become one of the dominant modes of interpreting and negotiating student survival and success. Within this context, mental health and illness is a discursive resource available that defines the meaning of the appearance of differences in student academic performance as the product of ‘personal problems.’

In the contemporary Canadian University of Toronto, although disability and mental illness represent distinct categories of existence and experience, individuals identified as disabled and those identified as ‘mentally ill’ are routinely treated in ways which make them appear “the same but different” (Beresford & Wallcraft, 1997, p. 66). For the University of Toronto “Accessibility Services”, a division of Student Life, both categories of student, and the heterogeneous ‘conditions’ they collect, fall under the shared rubric of ‘chronic illness’, an unpredictable and emergent, but ultimately controllable, crisis. This analysis later takes up ways of framing the meaning of the relations between disability, depression and anxiety in terms of chronic illness in an effort to expose the textual practices of erasure of embodied difference that are involved in the production of ‘student life’. I draw on a critical disability studies perspective as a means of analyzing how the “common experience that something is wrong” (Titchkosky, 2005) in the university is organized by a ‘bird’s eye view’ of representations of disability as an obstacle which prevents students from “making the most of their university experience.”

Descriptions of disability in the University of Toronto Student Life (2009) pamphlet, “Health & Wellness: Helping Students Make the Most of their University Experience,” are analyzed with
the aim of tracing how a shared understanding of the existence of something wrong ‘within’ the student body, unfolds from above. I enter my analysis of the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet with the understanding that, as Titchkosky says, “[…] text is a form of social action in need of critical analysis” (2005, p. 1). I consider the Student Life Programs and Services, commonly referred to simply as Student Life, which is affiliated with the University’s St. George Campus and describes itself and its work as follows:

Dedicated to student success and development, the division of Student Life Programs & Services on the St. George Campus provides the supports, opportunities and resources students need to reach their full potential. The division consists of 11 distinct units dedicated to supporting a variety of personal and learning needs as well as a central team of program, communications, and information technology professionals who pull it all together.

The “Health & Wellness” (University of Toronto, 2009) pamphlet begins with the following statement:

Wellness refers to one’s overall physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social and economic condition, as well as the impact experienced as a result of one’s environment and occupation. Wellness does not refer simply to the absence of illness, nor does it suggest that someone with chronic illness can not be and feel well. Most university students share a common goal – academic success. The capacity to learn and be academically successful is greatly influenced by your physical and psychological health.

This statement grounds the student experience in the language of Student Life. It anchors the information that follows in the philosophy of the University of Toronto Student Life, producing a sense of Student Life as the grounds of the university experience and student subjectivity in full possession of this experience. This provides the reader with the sense that those students who can be perceived to bear a resemblance to the image of the type of student who is and feels ‘well’ are existentially secure. Through the statement, the reader is drawn into a mode of conceptualizing the “university experience” as something whose stability depends on the health and wellness of the student body. The statement asks the reader to suspend judgment on the “university
experience” in the absence of the visible characteristics of wellness. However, the question of what actually constitutes the characteristics of wellness has yet to be revealed.

In the process of securing a relationship between the objective appearance of wellness and the meaning of the “university experience”, the statement produces a rationale to explain the attitudes and behaviour of the University of Toronto toward students perceived as unhealthy. The assertion that wellness is “more than the absence of illness” orients the reader to a code for making sense of Student Life. To access the ‘authentic’ “university experience”, one must read beyond illness to the work that individual students can and must do if they are to be included as participants in this experience. Students appear as students only in so far as they can be recognized as making a positive and positivist, i.e., measurable, contribution to the overall wellness of university environments. Contributions are ‘positive’ which can be viewed as in explicit accordance with conventional understandings and expectations of the meaning and purpose of the University. When in doubt about what they can and must do to secure an image of themselves as students, they are reminded through such cultural “resources” as the pamphlet that they can gain clarity on their situations through the adoption of the language of Student Life.

In this way, the pamphlet serves to remind the reader that there are multiple ways of interpreting student life, but to be perceived as legitimate members of the University community they must learn how to view themselves, others, and the world as it does. Only then will the truth of their existence be revealed to them. Students who can be perceived as following the University’s advice are implicitly acknowledged as worthy of the University’s attention and assistance in “helping [them] make the most of their university experience” (University of Toronto, 2009b). The legitimacy of claims to the student identity made by students who do not follow this advice, and who cannot or do not stick to the normative pathways on the road to
resembling the University’s image of the type of student worthy of the privileges of *Student Life*, is represented both as questionable and in need of verification.

We can address the pamphlet and its claims as a form of social action. According to Max Weber, “Action is social in so far as … it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course” (1964, p. 88). Reading the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet informed by the insights of interpretive sociology and a disability studies perspective creates spaces for considering what disability means in the language of *Student Life*. Textual representations of disability in the pamphlet orient the reader to a universal and hierarchal conception of student embodiment which privileges the “normate” (Garland Thomson, 1997, p. 8). The pamphlet relies on and reinforces medicalized knowledge about what constitutes normate embodiment - being and feeling well - within an institutional environment that is structured to produce bodies that are and feel better than well academically. Cultural assumptions concerning the “stresses” students experience in their effort to do what ordinary university students are expected to do, succeed academically, are negotiated with medicalized knowledge about the limits of the body in relation to the world.

The materialization of stress in and on the study body can thus be read as providing a code for categorizing different types of students. With the help of psychiatric knowledge and practices, the appearance of students that are stressed-out (i.e., for whom the ‘condition’ of stress obstructs their full participation in the University setting) is readily interpreted as the product of a medically-verifiable undesired differentness in embodiment. The ‘pressures’ of the life at the University of Toronto are depicted as leaving unwanted impressions on students, who are themselves preconceived as having a distorted world view and therefore, overly ‘sensitive’ to the ‘wrong’ ‘types’ of ‘things’. These imprints, made identifiable in such physiological conditions such as “high blood pressure” and “colds and flu”, are interpreted as signs of ‘wrong’ ways of
relating to the full meaning of the “university experience.” Students who are perceived to be ‘too sensitive’ are assumed to be naturally less-than capable of managing their relations. For them, the world is assumed to appear much larger or smaller than it actually is, making everything seem much closer or further than it is from a more ‘objective’ or ‘realistic’ perspective. Their appearance as students is therefore bracketed by the recognition of the pathological ‘condition’ of their ‘natural’ ways of relating, whether these ways are the product of traumatic experience, poor parenting, or bad genes. Knowledge of stress thus marks the body as something remarkable, and remarkably troublesome for academic success.

While there is information and instruction present in the text, it serves more as an example of the general, overall ‘type’ of thinking or approach that could enhance one’s capacity for health and wellness, and achieve a successful identity. What constitutes a successful identity is sufficiently vague and open to various possibilities. Keeping the image of success at the level of generality preserves the appearance of inclusivity, and the image of the universal student, whose distinction is achieved through achievement, endurance, and dedication to meet goals, rather than an automatic privilege assumed because of one’s family name, socio-economic status, the color of one’s skin, ethnic heritage, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientations, able-bodiedness, able-mindedness, or physiology. Through the imaginary ‘student life’, the information and its formatting in folds and bolded frames orients the reader to a version of life itself (Rose, 2007) as something naturally heterogeneous, multiple, layered, and organically divided. I turn now to a detailed analysis of the pamphlet as a way to reveal how textual mediations of the student body contribute to the hierarchical organization of student life.

**Getting and Staying “On Track”**

Whether in first year or fourth, students face many challenges. Despite the demands and stress of university life, it is possible to find a balance in your life that will help to promote overall wellness. When you’re not feeling your best, there are a number
of services on campus that may assist you in getting back on track. The following are just a few suggestions for how you might go about nurturing healthy attitudes and behaviours to support you in achieving your personal and academic goals, as well as information about our health and wellness services. (University of Toronto, 2009b)

The pamphlet orients the reader to experiences of difficulty in meeting the normative demands of Student Life as a symptom of bodies that are less capable of mediating the true reality of the University. This produces knowledge of a communication breakdown, and heralds the need for a language which can bridge the divide between the subjective experiences of individual students and the objective reality of the University, “helping students make the most of their university experience” (University of Toronto, 2009b). This language is the language of Student Life. Its power lies in the variegated nature of its appearance. Dialects can be distinguished on the basis of the particularities of the region(s) within the University in which this language is employed. Its mantra – discovery, diagnosis, intervention\(^\text{13}\) - interweaves assumptions about what constitutes university culture with medical knowledge. Within the language of Student Life, embodiment is best understood as an objectification of the subjective experience of the being a student and the ‘nature’ of the work it ‘demands’.

The student body is enfolded in the pamphlet’s glossy pages. Subjectivity is read between the lines, within an all-encompassing discourse of health and wellness. In Reflexive Embodiment in Contemporary Society, Nick Crossley reminds us that, “Our bodies can resist the meanings we attempt to impose on them…bodies are subjects and agents in the reflexive process…” (2006, p. 3). Even as the pamphlet enfolds the student body, the body simultaneously exceeds the capacity of the text to enclose it. There is recognition of this in the pamphlet’s suggestion that students seek professional help and make use of the campus-wide resources for health and wellness made available by Student Life. Students whose embodied experiences and self-narrations cannot be

\(^\text{13}\) For more on the symbolic significance of the medically-informed cultural imperative to discover, diagnose and intervene please see Michalko (1998).
neatly assembled to fit within the normative structures of the University of Toronto’s vision of a complete life are represented as obstacles to their own success.

Within the discourse on health wellness, which includes the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social and economic aspects of student life, disability appears as an obstacle to the participation of individual students in the collective experience of university culture. Representing disability in this way makes it possible to rationalize the segregation and exclusion of disabled university students. According to the pamphlet, in the face of the embodied experience of alienation inherent in disability, what is needed is a language that will provide a more expansive perspective on student life. The expanse of this perspective is accomplished by the adoption of a position which looks down from above. Disabled embodiment is perceived as an impediment to a clear view of the “university experience” in its entirety, a *distortion* (Michalko, 2002, p. 94) which makes the experience difficult to pin down, let alone possess.

Disabled bodies either take up too much space, thus blocking the view of others, or fail to appear at all. This perspective, a scientific perspective which seeks the disclosure of objective knowledge about student subjectivity and claims its embodiment in student life, provides a means of habituating ‘would-be’ members of the University of Toronto community to the increasing institutionalization of space, place and identity. They are habituated in the following way: Through the pamphlet, *Student Life* introduces the reader to practices of self-governance which will help mitigate the “negative impact” disability is assumed to have on disabled students’ capacity to be like ordinary students. It facilitates the development of an unambiguous and objective understanding of the meaning of disability, and a clear view to why feeling and being ordinary matters at the University of Toronto.

In the delivery of practical knowledge about stress, and when/where/how stress becomes a problem for students, the pamphlet constitutes disabled students as members of the University
community. Their membership, however, is represented as provisional. Given the current University policy and procedure, a continued failure to succeed academically could lead to their expulsion. Further, the membership of disabled students is also represented as contingent on the “success” of institutional programs and services designed to help them be more like “most students”. Taken-for-granted assumptions which view disability as a source of stress, both for disabled and nondisabled persons, and an obstacle to participation, leads to an understanding of disability as a potential cause of mental illness. It is thus that even though no direct or explicit mention is made of disability, disability is brought to life in the appearance of stress, depression and/or anxiety. Depression and anxiety provide landmarks of students embodying the tensions of the university – when and where the university is present in the body of the student, at certain times of year, when term papers are due and exams must be written, in headaches and upset stomachs. It is through stress that the student becomes present to the University as an extension of the University which exists in relation to its embodiment, making the university present to itself as a particular kind of being. Within the language of Student Life, mental illness matters because it prevents students from succeeding academically; because it produces alienation and students who are less-than fully alive, and because it can even ‘result’ in death.

The perspective of Student Life, a medicalized, and bureaucratized perspective informed by the language and practices of psychology, frames difference in divisive terms. It orients to difference as differentness and deviation from a norm, and disability as differentness embodied. Disabled students are perceived as inherently alienated, and alienation is understood as an individual problem which can be resolved once the source of this problem can be isolated, identified, and expunged. This is a perspective that invites the reader to understand the University of Toronto’s (2010c) presentation of itself as “Canada’s answer to the world’s questions” on the homepage of the University of Toronto website as a product of the superior
command with which the University constructs, organizes, and manages its internal divisions. The University’s vision of student subjectivity could then be interpreted as the University’s response to the question of what a “university experience” means in a neoliberal political and economic context. The answer it provides relies on the textual erasure of the essential role that biomedical conceptions of difference play in the production of knowledge about student life.

Within the language of Student Life, academic failure is taken for granted as the unnecessary consequence of a lack of physical and emotional health, the appearance of which can be traced to “unhealthy attitudes and behaviours” displayed in the lives of individual students (University of Toronto, 2009b). What would it mean to think of the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet as archive, and a form of preserving a sense of the University of Toronto as a modern institution that, paradoxically, does not suffer from modern problems? Thinking of the pamphlet in this way enlarges understanding of biomedical knowledge, practice and language as a mode of preservation. The language of biomedicine provides a means of preserving the authority of a scientific perspective on the meaning of student life, while at the same time constructing a notion of student life as a problem – for students, professors, administrators, parents, family, friends, doctors, psychiatrists, counselors - in need of observation and explanation.

When we think of the pamphlet as an archive it makes it possible to think of what the pamphlet does as prose. The pamphlet narrates a story of student life as an ordinary ‘straight forward’ factual reality. It represents the ordinary student as someone who can think in straight lines. The pamphlet inscribes student life with a system of reference points and coordinates interaction, uniformly spaced differences that cross lines of intersections which for normal patterns of thinking, feeling and acting support networks and control of information. The aims of Student Life are inscribed on student life in the reiteration of three simple questions: “What student say…”, “What you can do…”, and “Why it matters…” Following Michel de Certeau, the
language of Student Life that touches lives through the pages of the pamphlet can be conceived as an “ensemble of practices”, and one which offers a view of “the prose of the world at work” (2002, pp. 11-12). An examination of the language of Student Life can give us access to what the pamphlet does, and by virtue of that, the world which has provided for its appearance.

This list of practices represents an informal code of conduct, much like a recipe, which students can refer to as a guide for accomplishing the presumed shared goal of academic success. Through the enactment of everyday practices and activities like “getting adequate rest”, “eating a nutritious diet”, and “washing your hands” students can enhance bodily resistance to illness. The strategies for coping, managing and adjusting which students bring with them may have to be replaced, discarded, reworked or more finely tuned depending on how one positioned and where exactly one is located within the University’s environment. These strategies may contradict one another, so the student has to be prepared for failure of the strategies of concealment and unconcealment. Take, for example, the recommendation to seek out opportunities for self-discovery. In following this with further recommendations to “maintain a hopeful outlook” and “keep things in perspective”, the pamphlet acknowledges that the self that is ‘discovered’ may not coincide with the self that was expected or desired; hence the preceding suggestion to ‘set realistic goals’, and the suggestion which follows: be ready to give and accept help.

In the pamphlet, descriptions of the prevalence, and therefore unexemplary character of the challenges students face, provide for the production of knowledge about what students can do within the University’s environment. One thing that students can do is mediate the presence or absence of a range of influences which can negatively impact perception of the “university experience.” Representations of disability as a “challenge,” “demand,” and “stress” occasion conversations on a necessity to monitor, manage, and control the embodied experience of student life. When disability ‘happens’, it produces an impact which has the potential to derail students
from the institutional pathways to success. Institutionally-organized conceptions of ordinary and obvious situations of derailment – such as disability or death - can produce visibility of a particular type of student: the student who is ‘off-track’ and in need of getting “back on track” (University of Toronto, 2009b). This type of student displays attitudes or behaviours which are perceived by others within the University to depart from conventional understandings of what is “healthy”, and therefore normal or natural for all university students, even those who do not go to the University of Toronto. At the same time, the relevancy of the pamphlet, and the world it represents, depends on a common understanding that the signs and symptoms of unhealthy behaviours and attitudes not immediately apparent.

With the “help” of Student Life’s programs and services students can learn how best to recognize and respond to troubling displays of a disruption in student life both in themselves and others, and to read those displays as evidence of a deficiency in “university experience.” In Stigma Goffman says that such “advocated codes of conduct” (1963, p. 111),

[…] provide the stigmatized individual not merely with a platform and a politics, and not merely with instruction as to how to treat others, but with recipes for an appropriate attitude regarding the self. To fail to adhere to the code is to be a self-deluded, misguided person; to succeed is to be both real and worthy, two spiritual qualities that combine to produce what is called “authenticity”.

Where for “most students” academic success is perceived as the common goal, expectations for students who are recognized as ‘off-track’ are conceivably lower. For universities to measure their progress towards its outcome goals, students who are not excelling academically are placed in a separate category. Perception of students placed in this category is structured by a normative assumption that they are only capable of meeting the minimum standards of achievement, and will not succeed academically. This type of student appears against the backdrop of preconceived notions about what most students are capable of achieving. Once categorized this way, both the
student identity and the disabled student’s membership in university communities become precarious.

In the pamphlet disabled students are recognized as *not fully alive to their environment*. The embodied experience of disability is devalued and cited as the primary barrier to full participation. Perceived as failing to meet the university’s ‘standards of excellence’, the ‘off-track’ student constitutes an imminent threat to the overall well-being of the university. Paradoxically, for disabled students, student subjectivity is not constituted as the result of challenges overcome, but *as* challenge itself; and as such, a barrier to be overcome. Thus, it is not the way students face challenges which decides whether or not they are representative of student life. According to “Health & Wellness” the deciding factor is whether or not life’s challenges become a characteristic feature of students’ biographies. The student who is most successful at overcoming the ordinary challenges of university life is the student who knows that his or her true self is waiting to be discovered on the other side. This is a student who can divide social reality and subjectivity, and express true knowledge of the need for these divisions through the body.

**Re-Conceiving Disability as Chronicity**

In the language of *Student Life* what could be experienced as the embodiment of what is wrong with the University, is delivered to the reader only as the uniformed and unprepared student. Something is wrong, and what that something is, is perceived as a threat to the stability and perhaps the very life of the body or bodies it appears *in*; disrupting the vitality, coherence and continuity of bodies and the communities through which they acquire a common form. Images of disability as the expression of something wrong with consciousness of the University provide an occasion to reaffirm the values that constitute the heart and soul of the University of Toronto as an experience that is shared by the diverse individuals and collectives who live and
work there. Such images call forth the production of maps, strategies, and lines of defense to protect the community against the threat of dissolution.

Students whose performance consistently fails to meet the University’s standards of excellence are thus also represented as not fully alive within its world. Situated within its world, such students represent a threat to the overall well-being of “most students.” Representations of unsuccessful academic performance as something which is conditioned by a lack of health and wellness, and suggestive of a particular type of student make it possible to present a picture of the University of Toronto as a “world class institution” despite the University’s failure to live up to the normative standards of excellence of the *Times Higher Education World University Ranking*. As a consequence, the “university experience” thought to belong to this type of student can be evaluated using measures which presuppose their inferiority. What their experience looks like and how it feels is taken for granted as naturally less-than that of their more well-adjusted and non-disabled colleagues, and can and should therefore be bracketed. The assumed inferiority of individual students who are recognized as only ‘partially present’ is brought to life in the pamphlet’s description of “someone with chronic illness.” This type of person is depicted as someone who could “be and feel well”, but who we are to assume has a diminished “capacity to learn and be academically successful” because of a lack of consistent “physical and psychological health” (University of Toronto, 2009b).

Simon Johnson Williams offers a way to think of chronic illness as a disruption, in the sense of a “critical situation” which can draw attention to “tacit stocks of knowledge” (2003, p. 96). Images of chronic illness are strategically deployed as a means of stabilizing disruption through the presentation of disruption as something which has *already been* dealt with. It produces a living memory, and a constant reminder, that the University has triumphed over

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14 For more on universities as “world class institutions” see Usher (2006): “Being world-class is fundamentally a matter of prestige and reputation. […] world-class universities are those institutions that manage to attract top tier researchers, who in turn attract high-quality graduate students.”
disruption in the past and is, therefore, prepared to do so again. In “The Generation of the Body as the Problem of Individuality: A Phenomenological Disability Studies Approach”, Titchkosky and Michalko (2012) offer a way to situate understanding of chronic illness as an exemplification of the “disability-as-a-problem frame”. In their examination of the “hegemonic taken for granted character” of this way of knowing disability, they discuss how the frame “disability as a problem” constructs disability as, “generating the requirement for the solution and thus the search” for a “permanent” cure:

Disability is understood as a problem insofar as it represents a disruption to the “natural-order-of-things” with its concomitant requirement to restore this order, an activity understood as the “need” to solve the problem of disability. Cure, of course, is the quintessential solution to disability conceived as problem. But, many disabilities resist curative measures and become, in the vernacular of the day, “permanent.” Now we have a more serious problem – what to do about and how to live with disability as a “permanent problem,” or, how to solve the problem of permanent disability.

The solution to the problem of permanent disability is to normalize disability (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2012). Dwelling with this thought, it becomes apparent that what is disruptive is not disability per se but the “concomitant requirement to restore” the “natural-order-of-things” which is assumed to accompany disability, described by Titchkosky and Michalko as the “need to solve the problem of disability” (2012). At the same time, the descriptor “permanent disability” qualifies disability as something which is not necessarily permanent. It leaves space for the appearance and inclusion of disabilities that are resistant to cure, and a restoration of the “natural order of things” through processes of normalization aimed at reversing the appearance of disability. The quintessential solution to the “problem of permanent disability” is to produce “permanent disability” as a thing of the past, and therefore, as a problem that, however it can be recalled, can no longer lived with as it once was. This makes it possible to go back in time to a place where and when disability did not exist. This way of thinking is present in contemporary conceptualizations of chronic illness that treat it as a disruption, but one which will not
fundamentally challenge the “natural order of things”; a disruption that is already imagined, expected, and thus controlled.

In *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, Jean Paul Sartre (1962) traces out the distinction between imagination and perception. Sartre offers a historical and phenomenological critique of psychology on the grounds that it treats images as things (Sartre, 1962, p. 146):

An image can only enter into consciousness if it is itself a synthesis, not an element. There are not, and never could be, images in consciousness. Rather, an image is a certain type of consciousness. An image is an act, not some thing. An image is a consciousness of some thing.

In accepting Sartre’s assertion that, “an image is consciousness of some thing,” the expression, “the problem of disability” suggests that despite the discursive formation of disability as an individual and isolated characteristic of “bodies-gone wrong” (Michalko, 2002), the problem is not in bodies. Rather, the “problem” is in the production of the body as an individual and isolated totality. A phenomenological analysis of how disability is perceived as a “problem in need of a solution” opens new spaces for questioning taken-for-granted conceptions of consciousness as a solution to problems. Within and outside of university environments, there is a libertarian ideological belief that if people were aware of social inequality, and with it, the anguish and anxiety of disempowerment, exploitation and oppression, they would do something about it. If people only really knew what was going on around them, things would change. This belief in the revolutionary power of “consciousness-raising” as a practice can be traced to the liberal foundations of modernity. The expression “consciousness-raising” constructs a notion of consciousness as some thing which can be “raised”, like a house, built and built-up, developed or undeveloped, put forth, drawn back, advanced, regressed, lost, recovered, damaged and/or restored. Understanding consciousness as some thing we can be conscious of, some thing we can set up the framework of, and over and against which we can exert intentionality, confuses
consciousness for the intentionality of the objects through which consciousness is made to appear.

The centrality of academic success to what “most students” want, what they say, how they feel, and what they can do, positions success as the characteristic mode of student subjectivity. Images of disability are thus strategically included in the text as a means of clarifying the emotional, psychological and physiological boundaries of ‘ordinary student life’ and constituting these disciplinary practices as characteristic of/belonging to distinct realms of experience. In this way the student is divided up, and through knowledge of the body, the mind and spirit are produced. Social processes which place academic success as the centre of student life lead to the devaluation of the disability experience and marginalization of any university student that fails to successfully demonstrate the importance of boundaries. Reading the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet, one gets the sense that the lived experience of disability constitutes an influence or “impact” that has the potential to de-center students and dis/dys-locate them from the grid of ordinary student life. The force of this impact displaces students from the collective “university experience,” dispossessing them of a world shared in common with other students. In an effort to preserve a relationship of commonality despite difference, disabled students must be identified, reclaimed, positioned in places and engaged in practices which force them to “keep things in perspective,” and teach them how to “avoid seeing most things as a crisis or impossible to change” (University of Toronto, 2009b).

However, despite their successes, disabled students are always already potentially in danger of going ‘off-track’ because of their perceived ‘differentness’ in embodiment. The only way identifiably ‘off-track’ students can be brought back into the fold is if the experience of disability is enframed within an institutional perspective on what student life is, and what students can and should do to make their experience of student life more complete. To be
brought into the fold, they must learn how to adjust their perceptual schemas to more closely match those of the imagined average ideal student (Davis, 1995). The statistics on the various conditions which “negatively impact” academic performance cited under the heading, “What U of T Students Say…”, offer a pragmatic means of making the ‘voice’ of the average student more immediately transparent to the University of Toronto community, so that students, teachers, staff and administrators know what they are supposed to be listening for. What U of T students say is represented as relevant to the “challenge” of qualifying the truthfulness of the “university experience” in the ‘face’ of diversity of embodiment. More specifically, what they say is treated as relevant to the University of Toronto’s perception of what the experience of being a U of T student should be, and what U of T students “can do” to “make the most of their experience”, as this experience is imagined in and by the University. The ‘fact’ that this statement is constructed out of the individualized responses of a ‘representative sample’ of students to a predetermined survey question or questions, however, is treated as irrelevant.

A Repetitive Refrain

As the reader moves through each heading in the sections that make up the body of the text, there is a noticeable shift in the address. In the first two headings of each column the reader is introduced to U of T students as a separate group with something to say that matters to the University community. In the third and concluding heading the reader is addressed as a U of T student, as in the following statement: “Focus on the things you are able to change” (emphasis added; University of Toronto, 2009b). There is an implicit assumption that what U of T students say matters precisely because it is assumed to speak to the reader’s personal experience. An inversion is accomplished: the reader, read out of the text in the preceding sections, must read her and himself back in for the text to make sense. The familiar is made strange and the strange
familiar. Through this inversion, the student learns to enfold understanding of the self in the body of the text.

With the exception of the introductory paragraph on “Health & Wellness”, and the concluding section “University of Toronto Health & Wellness Services”, which describes the services offered by Student Life, every section in the pamphlet focuses on a challenge to successful academic performance, and is structured by three questions:

*What U of T students say...*

*Why it matters...*

*What you can do...*

The constant repetition and return to these three questions organize how each challenge is to be interpreted. They also accomplish a sense of the consistency and coherency of the text. The repetitive return to these three questions discloses the logic of the pamphlet and the underlying philosophy guiding Student Life’s conception of the student body: you have to know the body first before you can know yourself. To do this you must remove yourself from the body, but with the knowledge of the necessity of return. To return to the student body and to yourself as a representative of this body, you have to learn to think of yourself as this body – to identify with how it is known. To identify with how it this body is known, you must necessarily come to terms with how it knows you. To do this involves moving on to the next section and returning to the questions that gave you knowledge of yourself as knowable, but this time, under the auspices of a new type of challenge. Existential certainty and security confirmed through a process of reiteration.

The section heading which appears in the form of a question, “What you can do,” captures the reader by proposing that the reader can penetrate the boundaries of the student body and improve the quality of life through the implementation of the psychologically-informed and
biomedically-verifiable practices sanctioned by the University. The reader can do something, but what can be done is only relevant if it addresses the experience that something is wrong, as it is expressed in “What U of T Students Say…” The reader can do something, but it only matters if it can lead students to align their self-conceptions and bodily composure to more closely resemble the type of student who is capable of academic success.

Within the language of Student Life, images of disability which treat disability as a metaphor for difficulties in learning, living, and succeeding, constitute desire for academic excellence as the ‘common denominator’ in student lives. All students are assumed to want the same thing, academic success, but from the perspective of Student Life some students are naturally predisposed with an inability to realize their desire. The sources of a predisposition to failure can take many forms: genetics, impoverishment, improper or inadequate socialization, or abuse. The biomedical assumptions about disability as a deficiency in the overall condition of individual bodies in “Health & Wellness” provide an effective way to rationalize differences in academic performance.

Even when the predisposition is not directly attributed to a pre-existing genetic ‘disorder’, biomedical knowledge and practices at the basis of a psychiatric approach to embodied difference provide a way to make people perceived to have a wrong way of experiencing the world, right. The promise of biomedicine to make right is expressed in the pamphlet’s assertion that the negative impact of unhealthy attitudes and behaviours can be mitigated by students’ deferral to “services on campus” that can “assist them in getting back on track” (University of Toronto, 2009b). Before this promise can be fulfilled, and the student returned to a correct course of action within the relegated domain of University procedure, a clear view of disability as obstruction must be established.
It is thus that the pamphlet can be read as a blueprint that structures how challenge is to be perceived and understood in a way that will provide for its reversal: challenge is conceptualized as an opportunity to demonstrate what you can do. This blueprint, sketched from an aerial view, guides students toward locales within the University environment which it claims can provide perspective on the common goal of academic success. The aforementioned “ensemble of practices” (de Certeau, 2002, p. 11) delivered with and through the pamphlet, authorizes the command of a biomedical approach to knowing the student body. It guides the reader towards the understanding that following the paths inscribed by Student Life with “Health & Wellness” will lead students to a place where they can exert mastery through the realization of the norm. Students are directed to offices, departments, programs, services and resources in and with the help of which they are supposed to gain a new perspective on their situations.

However, before they can make good use of the services designed to “help” them, they must first and foremost find their way back to the grid. Students who get sidetracked, and/or ‘off-track’, are represented as out of touch with the “university experience” and with what it means to live their lives to the fullest. They are imagined to be in need of more positive and disciplined outlooks on their deficient conditions. Then they can find their way back to normate embodiment and comportment, and with it knowledge of why being a student matters: being a student provides the opportunity to become a success story, and perhaps even one of the “Great Minds” of the University of Toronto\(^\text{15}\). Their progress, and therefore their status as full members of the University community, is represented as impeded by their incapacity to get ahead of the bodies – characterized by social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social and economic turmoil - that can wreck their chances to succeed academically and be fully alive to their environment and their role in its reproduction.

\(^{15}\text{As featured on the website, “Great Minds For a Great Future” (University of Toronto, 2010b).}\)
The language and images which appear in the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet express disability in a multiplicity of ways – as challenge, demand, stress, difficulty and obstruction. There is, however, a dominant way of conceptualizing disability which collects and grounds how disability can be experienced and imagined: “unhealthy attitudes and behaviours” (University of Toronto, 2009b). This concept reappears throughout the text. Its appearance orients the reader of the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet to the textual economy of S/student L/life. Attitudes and behaviours which appear to be “healthy” enhance the “university experience,” and are treated as essential to self-realization. For self-realization to be actualized as a reality within the University environment students must learn to adjust their perceptions to the schema of Student Life. This involves learning to read the subjective experience of estrangement and alienation as natural for bodies that fail to “keep things in [the] perspective [of Student Life]” (University of Toronto, 2009).

**The Intertextuality of Student Life**

The sensibility, as well as the popularity, of the pamphlets relies on and redirects the reader to taken-for-granted assumptions about what it means to live as a student at the University of Toronto. The pamphlet offers a technology for the (re)production of the “university experience” as a universal experience, albeit one which can appear differently depending on what one does with it. Conceived as such, the pamphlet can then be read not only as a means of the distribution of knowledge, but as consciousness of the University of Toronto as a historical event. Neither singular not dispersed, the pamphlet gives us consciousness of the University as an intertextual, and layered unfolding. Thinking of the pamphlet both as consciousness, and as intertextual unfolding, provokes questions about the way relationships to student life are organized. Alistair Rolls and Elizabeth Rechniewski describe intertextuality as both a “system of interrelations” and a “critical practice for reading text” which “emphasizes the active
engagement of the reader” (Rolls & Rechniewski, 2005, p. 19). Intertextuality\(^{16}\) is a term within literary and media studies whose present use has been most prominently related to Julia Kristeva’s critical essay, “Word, Dialogue, Novel” first published in 1966 (Friedman, 1991, p. 147). Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1968) notions of “dialogism” and “carnivalism”, Kristeva explores the “subversive political effects” of ways of thinking and speaking that “escape the dominant tradition” (Kristeva, as cited in Moi, 1986, p. 35).

The proscriptive presentation of what students say, what the reader can do, and why it matters organizes a notion of ambivalence as an obstacle to wellbeing. It makes it possible to interpret academic failure as living proof of the dangers of ambivalence. Further, the titles, “Stress”, “Sleep Problems”, “Depression and Anxiety”, “Worries and Challenges”, “Colds and Flu”, constrain possibilities for reading anguish and illness as ambivalences, and as such, resistance to the language of *Student Life* as the official word on the “university experience.” Through the language of *Student Life*, small “s” student life is made to reveal both the nature of the university environment and the need for a mediator capable of regulating its excessive character. Through assumptions about the nature of student life communicated in the pamphlet’s section titles, the “university experience” is produced as an organized space of excess and boundary loss. Through these titles, it becomes possible to read the cultural production of violence and surplus peoples as natural consequences of the coexistence of diverse populations within the context of a competitive global market. Through these titles, the concept of student life is fashioned as a screen for the production of the “pathos and change of the renewal” (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 11) of a common world. And yet, “Health & Wellness” is not the last word on student life.

\(^{16}\) In his book, Intertextuality, G. Allen claims that Kristeva coined the term in the 1960’s (1966), but also suggests that Kristeva’s notion of intertextuality is understood as emerging from Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1968) critical writings on dialogic thought. The difficulty in tracing the origins of the word is attributable to a difficulty in tracing origins of any word; and is read as a question of the fluidity of disciplinary boundaries; a reflection of the subject.
A psychoanalyst, Kristeva offers a way to situate this play of closure and openness within a discursive field. Her understanding of this field is informed and influenced, mediated and regulated, by the psychiatric knowledge and practice. Shades of the language of mental illness analyzed in Chapter 2 blur the edges of *Student Life*, making “Health & Wellness”, and through this title, the pamphlet, perceivable as a *text within a text*. This makes it possible to treat the language of *Student Life* not merely as a set of instructions but as *poesis*. Its words, mediators and regulators of the “university experience,” do not only operate through basic instructions, or the installation of fear, but also and at the same time, the organization of desire.

A hermeneutic reading of the pamphlet provides a means of tracing how bodies are simultaneously *created by* and systematically *enfolded within* institutional objectives. In the pamphlet the text is not only divided by titles, headings, and bullet points, but also by the folds which separate the pages. In the pamphlet, folds appear in the form of an indent or crease in the page on which the text is written. The existence of folds signifies the limits of the materiality of the text. Folds organize consciousness of where the text, and the story of student life, begins and ends. One fold serves to divide the page in half, and when there is the existence of multiple folds, each fold, made to appear in an equidistant relation to other folds, signifies a calculated break in the unity of the text. Breaks in the lay-out of the text represented in the form of folds cement rather than disrupt the coherency of the text. They organize the perception of breaks as natural and essential to the intelligibility of the University’s interpretation of student life. The appearance of a break provides an implicit instruction for how the pamphlet is to be opened and closed, and the story of student life unfolded. To be read in its entirety, and to access the bigger picture”, the pamphlet must be unfolded and lay flat.

There is an expression which says there are two sides to every story. However, in this case, the ‘other’ story picks up at the ‘first’s’ *to be continued*. Relations to the meaning of
‘reversal’ as produced in these two tellings are oriented to an interest in returning to the other side – to get the whole sense of the story. Where one side of “Health & Wellness” focuses on the objective existence of the need for the pamphlet’s title, health and wellness, the story on the reverse directs the reader to places with more information on the subject. This way of understanding reversal, which is to say as the embodiment of a need to return for more, is made actual and material once one engages in the work of laying out the text, flattening its folds, and flipping-it-over, and getting the full story.

“Health & Wellness” thus discloses the logic that supports the authority of Student Life: the true end of reversal is completion. According to this logic, authentic resistance requires the realization of the very words, names, and norms which one aims to resist. As such, it offers a framing device which draws the reader in to a specific way of knowing how to recognize and respond to the situations that constitute student life - something real with a beginning and an end, and an in-between compartmentalized into sections; something which can be held, opened, unfolded and laid flat; something with a story, the entirety of which can only be fully known by its having been turned over and read in reverse; something with a secret and a promise – that the truth of its existence will be revealed in the presence of something else that is wrong and in need of address.

The pamphlet organizes the perception that only in knowing that the source of something wrong can be found within the University’s perspective on their lives can students gain insight into their rightful place within the University. Consciousness of the pamphlet is therefore consciousness of the normalcy and naturalness of self-negation. The pamphlet teaches us that the ideal student life existing beyond the text, and beyond the empirical realness of percentage of students who have difficulty, fail courses or drop out, is only really experienced by the type of student who has no need for pamphlets. The success of the projects of Student Life Programs
and Services which claim to offer self-realization through self-possession is contingent on students’ learning to perceive themselves as the pamphlet: as a resource which is always potentially redundant.

Is “difficulty” what is essential about disability? Disability historian Henri Jacques Stiker seems to suggest as much when he says,

Whoever addresses disability (the valence of this concept is of no matter for the moment) is engaged in its study in a personal capacity, even if it is only through texts. But even more so if one is close to its acute, living difficulty. Certain affective pre-apprehensions always accompany our efforts to understand its psychological or physical effect and the social space that surrounds and circumscribes it (emphasis added; 1999, p. 1).

Thinking with Stiker, there is something about living difficulty which makes disability “personal”. It would also appear that whatever disability is, and however disability is known and addressed, the lived experience of difficulty is vital to understanding disability.

The appearance of disability as difficulty also plays an essential role in the production of knowledge about a particular type of student – the “student in need.” On the University of Toronto “Health & Wellness” website, the phrase “students in need” appears under the heading, “Student Crisis Response Programs” and are represented as “students in difficulty or distress” (University of Toronto, 2010a). Apparently, what they are in need of are greater connections to the “resources that can assist them in resolving the difficult or critical situations they may encounter while engaged in their studies” (University of Toronto, 2010a). It appears that consciousness of disability is consciousness of a need for institutionally-managed common resources. At the same time, disability is imagined as “difficult situation.” Difficulty is treated as a characteristic of the individual “student in need” which can be resolved given greater access to resources which are common in the sense that like the students who are directed to them, they too are institutionally-managed. Rather than accept or acquiesce to the pamphlet’s representation of student life, we could relate to the images of student health and wellness the pamphlet
provides as an occasion to question the seeming innocence of medicalized language in contemporary neoliberal societies. The dichotomous categories of health and illness captured in the description of wellness as more than the absence of illness organize perception of unwell students as “others.”

Reading the description of wellness which appears in the first paragraph of the text, immediately after one ‘opens’ the pamphlet, the reader is presented with a version of the well student as a student who is not “negatively impacted” by “physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social and economic conditions” (University of Toronto, 2009b). These conditions, and not the absence of illness, mark the boundaries of wellness. “Environment and occupation” are also described as markers of wellness, although they are separated from the preceding “conditions.” In delineating the boundaries of what attitudes and behaviours are considered normal or natural for U of T students, the folds in the pamphlet make it possible to legitimize unsuccessful academic performance as the unfortunate consequence of a lack of health and wellness. At the University of Toronto, the conditions of student life, the university environment, and the forms of labour which it sustains are implicitly defined as having particular intensity and consequence for disabled students.

How do the “boundary distinctions” (Lamont & Marcel, 1992, p. 11) communicated in the pamphlet systematically exclude disabled students from the everyday organization of university life? The conception of student wellness produces a sensibility of the health and illness dichotomy as dated, and therefore, ‘out of touch’ with the current needs and desires of university students. And yet, in its claim to simultaneously include and exceed health, the concept of wellness guides the reader away from questions concerning the constitution of a relationship between health and illness. Represented as more than the presence of health, which is in turn conceived as more than the absence of illness, shared understanding of what wellness
really means, and how wellness actually appears is contingent on the presence of an authoritative body. This body, and its authority, is validated in the visibility of its capacity to integrate what are otherwise understood as oppositional or contradictory forces within the “overall condition” of student life. It is a body which can demonstrate knowledge of the relationship between individual lives and the diversity of physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social and economic conditions in scientifically valid and empirical ways, making student life both real and replicable.

Aside from treating health and illness as though they are both already clearly defined and agreed upon realties, wellness discourse also produces a demand for the production of new knowledge about the inadequacy of thinking of categories of health and illness as dichotomies. In integrating knowledge of health and illness within the concept of wellness, and then situating that unified concept in intimate relation with what is collectively recognized as the more desirable of its constituent parts – health, the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet guides the reader towards an understanding of illness as inessential. The “clear view” (de Certeau, 2002, pp. 11-12) of the inadequacy of knowledge of health and illness as dichotomous categories, organizes consciousness of illness as potentially the same as health. With the exception being that one would prefer to be healthy and well since being both at the same time signals a fullness of life, as suggested in the pamphlet’s title, “Health & Wellness: Helping Students Make the Most of their University Experience.” Even though the pamphlet states that wellness, “does not suggest that someone with chronic illness can not be and feel well,” the proceeding lists of biomedically-informed and psychologically-approved practices for avoiding, overcoming, or at the very least coping with illness make it difficult to imagine an intimate relationship between illness and wellness.
For Robert Kugelmann, “Listing tends to be the structure of consciousness under stress […] A list orders randomness. Things themselves have no internal coherence; their seriation organizes the noise” (1992, p. 9). In reading the lists of suggested practices, it becomes very easy to imagine illness as an obstacle to the realization of a complete and fulfilled student life and “university experience.” This version of illness as a constituent part of wellness, and an obstacle to its realization is especially evident in the assertion that, “Most university students share the common goal – academic success. The capacity to learn and be academically successful is greatly influenced by your physical and psychological health” (University of Toronto, 2009b). This assertion, which concludes the introductory paragraph, immediately follows the statement which informs the reader that the concept of wellness (and not Student Life Programs and Services, or the University of Toronto) does not “suggest that someone with chronic illness “can not be and feel well” (University of Toronto, 2009b). Although it could be read as offering a ‘positive’ view of chronic illness, the positivity, or certainty, of this view is reliant on a conception of chronic illness as a marginal and undesirable condition of some students’ lives.

The only so-called healthy way out of the situation is to make a decision. It need not be an existential choice; in fact, it is ordinarily more rudimentary. The basic rational choice in the stressful world is to make a list. […] In a world of white noise, to make a list and establish priorities is the fundamental act. It orders the tasks that flood into the now. A list gives a plan of action and re-establishes control. With a list “I” can manage. Lists mediate between demands and the work “I” do to meet them (Kugelmann, 1992, p. 8).

Chronic illness, situated within wellness, and lodged between the individual’s overall condition and institutional knowledge of the conditions of failure, is made to embody the absence of health, wellness’ significant other. This, even as the appearance of chronic illness is invoked to highlight the inclusivity of wellness. Illness can then be viewed as wellness’ insignificant other. What this way of representing illness does suggest is that, as the statistics cited throughout the pamphlet show, chances are that the type of student who is chronically ill is
probably not well. It also suggests that nothing can be done to reverse the condition of this ‘type’ of student. For the kind of people that move in-and-out of health and illness is, wellness is possible, but should be judged by different standards. Further, because of a perceivable lack of physical or psychological health (a perception made possible by the pamphlet), the student “with chronic illness” can and should be interpreted as unlike “most students.” By virtue of his or her intimacy with illness, he or she is perceived as less capable “to learn and be academically successful.” The statement that one can be chronically ill and still well is perhaps one of the most powerful displays of the University’s understanding of its situation. In making this statement, and making it public, the University stakes its claim to the formative nature of revision.

Orienting to the Pamphlet as a Mode of Student Life

The “university experience” is constructed as something which unfolds. The materiality of the experience is given texture through creases. But like the pamphlet, it is mass produced in order to reach the greatest number of people. In Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory, Alfred Schütz says (1976, p. 82),

[In the common situation] the individual members are at “home,” that is, they find their bearings without difficulty in the common surroundings, guided by a set of recipes of more or less institutionalized habits, mores, folkways, etc., that help them come to terms with beings and fellowmen belonging to the same situation.

The pamphlet is not merely a routine source of information as it is understood today. Instead, it is a historically-situated social phenomenon and a mode of communication which helps students “find their bearings” (Schütz, 1976, p. 82) (while it narrates their bearings as we encountered above). The pamphlet has come to occupy a central role in the organization and representation of university life, so much so that it has been constituted as a self-evident response to questions, concerns, or comments. Within the University of Toronto, pamphlets are routinely represented as important resources to have and make use of, as well as pathways to other resources, and even
other pamphlets. As a mode of communication the pamphlet coordinates how the University can be known as an experience and a common situation. The pamphlet produces a conception of the university as an experience which can be monitored, assessed, tested, and evaluated; found true or false, right or wrong; described as exceeding expectations or in need of improvement. The pamphlet both preserves and circulates established knowledge of the various locations of authoritative knowledge about student life – programs, projects, services, websites, buildings, centres, offices, experts and educational events. In doing so, it standardizes how the University can be experienced in the form of a question of place. For their experiences and their lives to be complete, students must learn where they need to go to “come to terms with beings and with fellow [students] belonging to the same situation” (Schütz, 1976, p. 82).

In *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility: The Politics of Representation in a Globalized World*, Tim Cresswell (2002) invites us to think about how the ‘view from the top’ emphasizes the significance of place at the expense of a consideration of space. To illustrate this, Cresswell makes reference to de Certeau’s distinction between place and space in his description of the view from the sky scraper in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Cresswell, 2002, p. 24):

> To de Certeau place is the empty grid over which practices occurs while space is created by practice. The central tension in de Certeau’s work is between a systematic grammar of space – an order that we inhabit and is not constructed by us – on the one hand and our ability to use this grammar in ways which are not predetermined on the other. The guiding metaphor here is language. While we have to use the rules and structures of language to make sense, the ways we do this – in practice – are almost infinite. The same applies to place. While we live in places that come pre-structured – embedded in particular interests in the context of unequal power relations – those places are not operational without practice in them.

The language of *Student Life* constructs the student body as a focal point of activity, authority and social relations within the University. In its appearance in the pamphlet, this language maps an axis of authority - a principal line of movement that directs the reader to places and resources which can validate their experience of student life. In the act of reading the pamphlet, something
called student life becomes real and material, in need of attention and worthy of conversation. As an intertextual event, the pamphlet does not only construct a shared conception of student life, it also assembles and embodies a variety of ways of knowing this construct. Student life is not only something the truth of which can be discovered at the CAPS or in a workshop on how to write an effective CV or cover letter. Student life is a mobile focal point which makes it possible to connect widely dispersed centers of activity located within a particular geographic region – in this case, the University of Toronto campus. Student life becomes a question which, when asked, gives the impression of the University as a coherent unity and cohesive whole.

At the same time, this question also orients us to disability as a lack of integration within the otherwise unified reality of student life. This conception of a whole which is internally divided is paralleled in Thomas Szasz’s (1960) description of the myth of mental illness. Recall Szasz’s observation that mental illness is commonly expressed as a “deformity of the personality” (p. 114), and as such is regarded as “the cause of human disharmony” (p. 114). According to Szasz, the intelligibility of this conception relies on representations of “social intercourse between people” as “inherently disharmonious” (original emphasis; Szasz, 1960, p. 114). Represented as a lack of integration within student life which is made visible in the appearance of contradictory or conflicting experiences of the University, disability can be conceived as the cause of the embodied experiences of alienation. Thinking of disability this way requires the isolation of subjectivity from the so-called conditions which influence it. Disability, as a social situation, is removed, de-contextualized, and de-situated, and done so in the name of creating a conception of the University as the primary context for the emergence of a more complete life.

When we imagine that the common situation for students can be ascertained in terms of success or failure, and more specifically, a desire for success and a fear of failure, we limit the
conditions of recognition of what it means to feel at home in the University. We make it possible to divide students into at least 3 types: 1) students who find their bearings without difficulty, 2) students who can find their bearings, but with difficulty, and 3) students who cannot find their bearings. The fate of students who cannot find their bearings hangs in the balance the pamphlet represents as so essential to Student Life. Such students are imagined lost, both to themselves and the University, and part of the work of Student Life involves finding them and helping them to find themselves. Students who find their bearings with difficulty are represented are not making the most of “their university experience,” and as such are not lost so much as only partially present.

Is what is referenced the “student body”, Student Life Programs and Services, or the University? It is not entirely clear who the audience is, nor what readership the pamphlet targets. Although the pamphlet is distributed to students and made public to the University of Toronto community, its objectification of the student who is not “making the most of their “university experience” alienates student readers from the living significance of difficulty and distress. Student readers whose experiences resemble the image of the student in need of a reference to Student Life Programs and Services must accept a definition of themselves as obstacles to their own academic success and full participation in university life. They are informed that their understanding about what ordinary students do to maintain and achieve their status as members of the University community is lacking in reality. Their failure to demonstrate that they understand how to be a student through the performance of what the ideal ordinary student does, which is to say, succeed academically, produces a commonsense understanding that such students occupy a subject position which is, paradoxically, lacking in subjectivity. As such, they are conceived as matters out of place, misplaced things, condemned to mistaken readings; and conceived as such, not fully alive to the University of Toronto and all it has to offer.
How is the “university experience” different from the student experience? How does this change the meaning of “Helping students make the most of their university experience?” If we pay close attention to the wording, it is clear that the “experience” the pamphlet is concerned with is the potential universality “university experience.” Despite the obviousness of the statement, it is very easy to interpret the meaning of “university experience” as student experience. The “university experience” would seem to be the defining characteristic of the student experience, and what makes the student identity, and student life, distinct. Students have to take ownership of this experience. But this ownership is provisional, and contingent on whether they can and do demonstrate the positive nature and productive potential of the University of Toronto.

A Crisis of Communication

The social reality of the student experience is mediated by the pamphlet as something with internal differences which can be resolved in the creation of new folds. These folds give the text dimension and depth. They also demarcate important divisions within the text. They communicate a sense that the hidden truths of the inner lives of students can be revealed much like the unfolding divisions of the text. For the text to make sense, the reader’s interpretations have to be flexible enough to move with the text and follow the lines of force which communicate a sense of the direction and purpose of Student Life. Rather than take a ‘hard line’ on what the “university experience” means, the reader must learn to develop positions which allow experiences to be viewed at a distance and an angle. The interpretive frameworks which accompany the reader’s entry to the text must be bent so that their edges touch the lines which guide the flow of information and organize interaction within the university setting. Positioned on an angle, interpretations of experiences which do not capture and contain the picture
presented by *Student Life* may begin to appear unbalanced, and therefore out of synchronicity with what it really means to be a university student.

In “Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of the Metaphor”, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder (2006) use the term “narrative prosthesis” to describe how representations of disability function in literary discourse as a means of isolating specific characteristics and making their significant content visible. For Mitchell and Snyder, the “symbolic figure” of disability is central to what and how literary discourse communicates (2006, p. 205). Further, they suggest that the reliance on representations of disability as a “problem” or a “crisis” to communicate what is accepted as normal or valuable within an institutionalized culture also constitutes, “one of the major modes of historical address directed toward people with disabilities” (2006, p. 205). Literary conventions which restrict the appearance of disability to a metaphor for individual, social, cultural and political disorder have the effect of organizing consciousness of disability as atypical and anomalous. When the centrality of disability is premised on its being a symbol of difficulty, disorder, or decline, the significance of disability *as it is lived* is eclipsed by a need for more knowledge about the conditions of failure of a world in common.


*Nearly every culture views disability as a problem in need of a solution, and this belief establishes one of the major modes of historical address directed toward people with disabilities. The necessity for developing various kinds of cultural accommodations to handle the “problem” of corporeal difference (through charitable*
organizations, modifications of physical architecture, welfare doles, quarantine, genocide, euthanasia programs, etc.) situates people with disabilities in a profoundly ambivalent relationship to the cultures and stories they inhabit. The perception of a “crisis” or a “special situation” has made disabled people the subject of not only government policies and social programs but also a primary object of literary representation.

Orienting to disability as a literary technique for calling attention to inequality requires the removal of disabled persons from the experience of disability. Even as representations of disability as a problem or “difficulty” or a situation that is difficult to handle, could be read as challenging existing social structures and political configurations, they also work to reinforce a common sense that in the absence of disability such norms and values are otherwise unproblematic. In this context, the appearance of disability acquires a technical character. When disability is translated from an actually lived embodied reality to a technique for improving how we exist together within the familiar boundaries of everyday life, we miss occasion to question how the already there is constituted as a cultural necessity.

In proposing to know what matters to students, the pamphlet organizes a conception of which type of students matter. That the pamphlet is available online in electronic format is also significant and an understanding of the social processes which shape how we perceive pamphlets, and therefore, modernity, requires an examination of the role of information technology in structuring social relations. When we orient to pamphlets as a technology producing effects we have to question our own epistemological and ideological categories. We have to accept the objective reality of student life. We also have to accept that it’s successful realization is a product of how individual students relate to the various conditions the pamphlet represents as potential obstacles to “making the most of student experience”: stress, sleep problems, depression and anxiety, colds and flu, worries and challenges.

How we perceive the world organizes how we participate in the world. The mode of participation which is characteristic of the scientific perspective is also a mode of preservation. It
archives what is “not” as a means of building a common sense of what “is”. The scientific perspective thus orients the perceiver to a conception of limits as a technical means of affirming the existence, and calculating the probability, of the true source of the relationship between anxiety, anguish, and tradition. True and false impressions are represented as the calculable outcome of changes over time. This kind of thinking secularizes time; it separates the embodied actuality of the ‘here and now’ from the world in which embodiment is experienced. Discourses of student mental health and illness situate disability as a delusional reality, delusional in the sense that there is something false about it. However, its falsity makes it no less functional. If anything, it is the presumed falsity of disability as represented in the discourse of “Health & Wellness”, which makes disability meaningful for Student Life. Through established images and ideas about disability, the reader can be made alive to the true meaning and value of community and collective life as it is experienced at the University of Toronto. While this may seem to be a move in a ‘positive’ direction, we must consider the implications this direction has on the actual lives of disabled students. The next chapter examines how even perception of the potentially negative impact of ‘positive directions’ on students is institutionally-organized through health services literature by way of a discursive analysis of the appearance of resilience in The Student, Body, Mind, and Spirit.
Chapter 5
The Myth of Resilience and the Making and Unmaking of ‘The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit’

The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit

Knowledge about the problem of student mental health and illness is institutionally organized, but it is also routinely destabilized. Unfortunately, the common practice of rationalizing the assumption that there is formal equality in universities has a tendency of defusing the disruptive potential of these destabilizations. In this chapter, a close reading and textual analysis of eight issues of the University of Toronto “Health Services” quarterly publication Student Body, Mind, and Spirit (2008-2011) is conducted with a view to understanding the role of resilience in the production of student life and the governance of the “university experience.” The purpose of this analysis is to examine the possibilities and limits of a new vocabulary of resilience (Seligman, 2009), which posits an expectation of suffering as a resource which can be drawn on in times of stress, and the ‘positive’ disciplinary regimes this vocabulary enforces. This examination is carried out with the aim of disrupting unexamined relations to the presentation of institutional sites and services as resources.

This chapter begins with the recognition that psychiatric definitions of ‘difficulties’ decontextualize and “reject” lived experiences (Chamberlin, 1998, p. 407). From this recognition, I consider how, in a way similar to television sitcoms, self-help pamphlets, and the cliché water cooler at a job, the newsletter offers students vocabularies for fitting-in, techniques for shaping-up, and places for finding-out; which is to say, survival knowledge for getting through life in a systematically hostile terrain. Even as the Student Body, Mind, and Spirit helps students navigate the ins-and-outs of the University of Toronto, it does so by locating adversity in experiences external to the University. Just as was the case with the language of mental illness, the celebrated and suppressed narratives of the University and its building and the global
policies that shape its appearance as a setting, and the language of Student Life that circulates through the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet, I orient to The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit as a text which includes instructions both for how to read it, and ourselves (Titchkosky, 2007; Weiss, 2008). Even if a particular reader is faculty or staff, there is an assumption that they too were once, they know, or have known, students and will therefore read themselves into the situations it presents. Thus the text governs more than access to resources, since it guides us to understand the type who is in need of such resources and even what resources should and do look like. The text organizes consciousness of the text as a conception of a universal body.

In my analysis of the Student Body, Mind, and Spirit, I consider how a focus on resilience, broadly understood in terms of a “positive adaptation in the face of adversity” (Cassen, Feinstein, & Graham, 2009, p. 73), is used to justify and conceal exploitative social and economic relations. The Student Body, Mind & Spirit is a newsletter which began circulation in 2008 and is published by the University of Toronto “Health Services” and circulated within the university community via electronic list serves, the University’s Counseling and Psychological Services website, departmental and program coordinators, and University-wide public health workshops. It targets students, primarily undergraduate students, and its principal focus is the promotion of health and wellness. In a Student Body, Mind, and Spirit article titled, “Investing in Resilience”, Judy Vorderbrugge (2008) states that one of the defining characteristics of today’s culture is a focus on physical health. She recommends a need to think about mental health, and more importantly, a need, to use her words, to “protect” and “enhance our capacity to enjoy life more fully”, which she frames as a need to think about resilience. Vorderbrugge asserts that, “Resilience essentially refers to one’s ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, threats, or significant sources of stress. More simply put, resilience is about our capacity to ‘bounce back’ from difficult experiences. One of the main determinants of resilience is our
thinking style; the way we explain adversity to ourselves” (2008, p. 2). Thus we can note that Vorderbrugge is working with a conception of resilience that is substance-like, a kind of capacity that can be enhanced or deterred through individual activities and thoughts.

**What does Resilience Have to Do with It?**

Within the newsletter the same words are used over and over again – resilience, coping, alone, stress, adversity, change, ability, care, success, belonging, acceptance, choice, love, values, beliefs, feelings, relationships, risk, intimacy, challenge, difficulty, trauma, transition, adjustment, manage, listening, communication, feeling, and then of course, survey, %, shown, and why? As one reads through the various articles in the newsletters, *in-and-out, and-in-again*, of the stories of students’ struggles, a rhythm becomes recognizable. The repetition of words - nutrition, stress, sex, sleep, suicide, academic success and homesickness - guides the reader through a succession of discontinuous scenes, along a path which makes it increasingly difficult to tell where one story, and with it one type of student struggle, ends, and another begins. The reader is left with a version of the *naked truth* of the university student as a *body-in-transition*. A body that can shift the taste and smell of its sex with a new diet and recorded practice (Haworth, 2010); a body that can maximize its efficiency and the profitability of its labour through positive thinking, a thicker skin, a good night’s sleep, abstinence, and in lieu of that, birth-control. A body that knows to “eat lots of fruits and vegetables (7-10 a day)”, “drink sufficient amounts of water”, “minimize stress”, “limit alcohol intake”, “if you smoke try to quit”, “get regular exercise (30 minutes a day)” (Haworth, 2009, p. 4), “wash your hands regularly” and, last but not least, “apologize, if the situation calls for it” (Champagne, 2010, p. 4). A notion of resilience as a fundamental prerequisite for the survival of ‘vulnerable’ individuals and groups is central to all of the articles.
There is no singular agreed-upon concerning the precise meaning and definition of resilience, but much of the current literature on resilience primarily tends to converge on positive adaptation despite adversity (Atkinson, Martin, & Rankin, 2009; Bottrell, 2009; Cassen, Feinstein & Graham, 2008; Goodley, 2005; Mohaupt, 2008; Seligman, 2011; Sriskandarajah et al., 2010). For Seligman resilience offers a “new vocabulary” (2009, p. 18) which can redirect the gaze within the discipline of psychology away from the ‘pathological’ and towards the “positive features that make life worth living” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). He says that his thirty years of scientific research on “learned hopelessness” and “learned powerlessness” had positive results: “We have learned not only how to distinguish those who will grow from those who will collapse, but also how to build the skills of people in the latter category” (Seligman, 2011, p. 101).

Pat O’Malley states that, “In recent years discourses of ‘resilience’ have emerged in which elements formerly identified as human ‘attributes’, such as courage, will-power, fortitude and character, have been reconfigured as ‘coping strategies’ or ‘skills’ that can be learned by anyone” (O’Malley, 2010, p. 489). It is the presumption of a being learned by any body which this chapter aims to disrupt. I suggest that for those who do not demonstrate learning become recognizable as sub-human, as beyond comprehension and even compassion. Resilience, as imagined from the perspective of a positive health and positive psychological approach, mediates perception of adversity with professional knowledge about the ameliorative power of reading beyond the breaks (produced in the newsletter as page breaks, leisure time, and crises). The work of resilience involves learning to create borders and boundaries; to think of relations as “friends and family networks” (Tate, 2009, p. 1), and situations as complex systems which can be broken up into more minute series of manageable ‘things’ - what Nikolas Rose (2007) refers to as
“molecular biopolitics.” Making resilience a thing that has real consequences, which I will explore.

‘Bouncing Back’: Narcissus and the Return to Language

Throughout the articles in The Student Body, Mind and Spirit there is a recurrent theme of the dangers of being and living alone. This is evident in the article, “Is It Really All About Me?” which describes a cultural narcissism and references a “me-first culture” (Vorderbrugge, 2010, p. 1). A definition of narcissism from the Webster’s New World College dictionary is included in bolded blue print (whereas the rest of the print is presented in black), in a text box located kind of off-side and off-centre, in the middle of the article, roughly dividing the text into two asymmetrical columns. It reads, “Narcissism: definition nar-cis-sism; noun; self-love; interest, often excessive interest, in one’s own appearance, comfort, importance, abilities, etc.” It initially appears as though the definition is external to the article, taken from somewhere else, and then placed over top, hanging over the words. Where the sentences end on each line of text provides for the text-box shape which creates a boundary around the definition, separating it from the rest of the article and creating a kind of restrained disruption within the form of the article. This gives the article a three-dimensional quality, and the ‘definition’ the appearance of having a distinct texture, raised up over and against the story. The appearance of the definition draws the reader into the text.

The image of the narcissist is invoked as a warning to students; one which represents culture as something which can, and at times should, be resisted. This resistance would have to take the form of a distancing from culture, and paradoxically, a withdrawal from culture (since culture can get in the way of what needs to be done). An instrumental notion of culture is produced as a factor in students’ lives which, if left unexamined, has the potential to disrupt academic performance and with it their very status as students. Focusing on the self too much
could deplete students of energy which should be directed toward the work that needs to be done. Narcissism cautions students to make the kinds of choices which can be perceived as responsible, lest they risk being perceived as both uncaring and vulnerable: “Those with narcissistic personality disorder believe that they’re superior to others and have little regard for other people’s feelings, But behind this mask of ultra-confidence lies a fragile self-esteem, vulnerable to the slightest criticism” (as cited in Vorderbrugge, 2010, p. 4)

Writing of an understanding of the intimate relations between disability and narcissism as a requirement of theorizing disability, Tobin Siebers says, “To theorize disability requires that we understand not only the history by which the accusation of narcissism is leveled against people with disabilities but the centrality of disability to the concept of narcissism itself” (2002, p. 40). Siebers further asserts that, “Narcissism is a psychological concept that defines social withdrawal, suffering, and demands for attention as the direct result of the psychopathology of the victim. Its structure allows no room for the idea that the accuser might be an interested party in the process of accusation” (2002, p. 40). To say that someone is a narcissus is to say that they are a figure of mental health and illness needs. For Siebers,

Narcissism is a collective accusation that isolates one member of a community as completely different from everyone else … Narcissism promotes a structure of blame where collective violence is concealed and victims are described as people divided against themselves. Narcissists bring themselves down and we know nothing and can know nothing about it. A more sinister masking of violence could not be imagined (2002, p. 48).

What is also “sinister” about this masking of violence concerns the boundaries the mask simultaneously creates and blurs. The violence is in its individualization of disability, which forges an unbridgeable distance between disabled persons on the basis of a perceived differentness in embodiment. Experiences of adversity are presented as individual problems, rather than social issues. This poses a barrier to collective organizing around and against oppressive social systems and cultural mores, making of individuality an “impediment” to, rather
than a principle of, collective action (Siebers, 2002, p. 49). Narcissism establishes the presumption of non-reciprocity from the start. It makes the figure of mental health needs a desiring subject, albeit one whose desires are perceived as distorted and a potential source of destruction.

In saying, “Disability is the other other than helps make otherness imaginable” (p. 51), Siebers offers a view to the pivotal role cultural assumptions about disability play in the construction of the student as a figure in need of mental health and illness. The mental, whatever it is, is framed within normative frames that medicalize difference. These frames remove the bodies that bear witness to the suffering produced by inequitable social structures from any culpability for that suffering. This has the dual effect of absolving the responsibility of those who benefit from such structures, and at the same time, constricting the meaning of the lived experience of oppression to a demonstration of the superiority of some bodies over others.

Within the context of higher education, critique of these dual processes of absolution of authority and denigration of resistance is most routinely couched in knowledge of meritocratic reward systems which recognize individual differences (Manning, 2000, p. 62). However, such critiques are limited in their failure to acknowledge the significant role which professional disability knowledge plays in the preservation of the universities’ rituals and norms of excellence.

This way of relating to disability devalues both the disabled student and the assemblage of possibilities which has hitherto been referred to as the “university experience” (University of Toronto, 2009b). The strategic introduction of narcissism into a conversation about adversity makes of this model, this ideal, this average, this type of experience, a shallow pond for reflecting on how we all need to act in order not to kill one another. The meaning of education thus reduced to a set of practices for surviving the world, rather than a vantage “point” from which the world can be perceived as an expression of love, and a responsibility which must be
assumed (Arendt, 1961, p. 96). Through narcissism, the student body appears as something which however much in ‘need’ of love, can nonetheless threaten the unity, stability and future of a shared world.

Shirley Sugerman describes an engagement with the myth of Narcissus, which she depicts as one of the “eternally repeated myths” of Western culture, as a means of reconciling recognition of an inability to return to “original conditions” to set them right (2008, p. 16). This she understands as in line with Paul Ricoeur’s representation of the “task of the philosopher”: “… to break out of the enchanted enclosure of consciousness of oneself…” (1986, p. 356).

Sugerman frames the myth of narcissus as an unreturned embrace, and a “play of contradictory gestures” (Sugerman, 2008, p. 20):

It was in the pool that Narcissus saw and fell in love with his own reflection, “unwittingly” it is said, for the image in the water seemed to him to be that of another. Narcissus tried to embrace the loved object, but it fled at his touch and returned again to fascinate him. The image apparently welcomed him. When he approached it, it approached him; when he stretched out his arms to it, it stretched out its arms to him. It seemed to want to be embraced, yet it fled when touched. In contradictory gestures, it both welcomed and rejected Narcissus.

It is significant for Sugerman that this Narcissus’s unreciprocated relationship with his image was not merely tragic or perpetual, but destructive. Citing different versions of the myth, all end in Narcissus’s withdrawal from the world, and eventually his death. Sugerman concludes, “There could be no union with his love – for there was no other” (original emphasis; Sugerman, 2008, p. 20).

The ripples of an underlying resistance course through The Student, Body, Mind and Spirit. There is recognition that self-sufficiency is not the answer, and that the desire for perfection could actually produce failure and even lead to death. However, the means of resistance to a culture of self-sufficiency, of the autonomous individual, which University of Toronto “Health Services” proposes involves learning how to prioritize, to be one’s own
sovereign. Through the, in Sugerman’s terms, “contradictory gestures” (2008, p. 20) of the newsletter, which “both welcome and reject” all students the University enacts a myth it claims to define: the myth of resilience. In the process it confines understanding of the meaning of student life as superficial and potentially deadly. The way resistance is performed – through self-monitoring, the observation of others, referrals and deferrals to the expertise of authorial bodies – limits the possibilities for a radical transformation in the cultural system of values. Although gestures of including a student voice are part of the articles, it is more of an echo in the University’s mind, a memory recollected through opinion polls, interviews, averages, statistics, and surveys.

The Myth of Resilience

Resilience continued…

Many people make intentional choices to do something in the course of the day that is good for their physical health. Fortunately, many of the things people do to support good physical health also support good mental health. Resilience, like physical health, can often be improved with some effort, depending on a person’s life experienced. Some students will be able to develop greater resilience on their own, or with the support of good friends, family and/or mentors; others may benefit from professional help, such as psychotherapy. (Vorderbrugge, 2008, p. 4)

Recalling the literary function of disability (Mitchell & Snyder, 2006) discussed in the previous chapter, I now turn to a consideration of how metaphors of disability are used as a technology for producing a sense of the ‘whole’ and with it, the call for a more integrated and holistic, or global, perspective. Proceeding in this way allows for a line of inquiry which can pursue how disability is made meaningful as myth, and that rather than a “prosthesis” (Mitchell & Snyder, 2006), what disability offers language is a cast for the rehabilitation of accepted beliefs about the primordial existence of the ‘natural body’ (Stein, 2010). Through this examination I hope to continue to explicate disability as myth, especially as this is tied to the production of resilience. I consider how disability is simultaneously, and paradoxically,
recognized as a site and symbol of the re-creation and rediscovery of possibility for marginalized and oppressed students. The focus on marginalized and oppressed, rather than ‘disabled students’, is reflective of the recognition that within university contexts, students must have a formal medical diagnosis, usually from a specialist, confirming disability. The medicalized and bureaucratized governance of disability identities is not unique to the University of Toronto. What is distinct about disability’s appearance in the University, and especially its appearance in relation to students, is the fact that “psycho-social” or “mental disability” (Price, 2011) played such a pivotal role in its personal history.

Despite its focus on the ‘positive’, the myth of resilience perpetuates and sustains a sense of ambivalence concerning values, beliefs and goals. Like the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet, The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit literature can be read not only as a means of the distribution of knowledge, but as an intertextual event which mediates between other texts within and without the University. It can thus also be read as an expression of the intersubjectivity of student life. The various texts and articles speak to one another; before one story ends, another begins; picking up where the other leaves off, taking it in new directions. Although interrupted, the stories are not necessarily broken or fractured or compartmentalized, but related; thematically.

For instance, in the “Health & Wellness” pamphlet discussed in Chapter Five, it says that one thing students “can do” to protect and enhance their physical resilience and increase their chances for successful academic performance is “Stop the spread of germs.” To do this, they are informed that they should, “Wash or sanitize [their] hands frequently”, and, “Avoid sharing personal items and avoid contact with others who are sick” (University of Toronto, 2009a, b). This recommendation posits academic success and/or failure as a question of communicability. In the interest of health and wellness for all, or at least “most students” (University of Toronto, 2009a, b), a protective barrier must be established which separates bodies that are ‘recognizably’
healthy and well from the bodies which are not. However, creating barriers between bodies is not enough on its own since, “Resilience, like physical health, can often be improved with some effort, depending on a person’s life experiences (Vorderbrugge, 2008, p. 4).

These understandings are made apparent in the *Student Body, Mind, and Spirit* article “Colds, Flu and… Community?” in which Kathyrn Haworth reminds the reader that although, “It has long been known that our social relationships can have a positive effect on our mental health. [...] What is less commonly discussed is the extent to which meaningful community connections can help to protect or enhance our physical well being” (2009, p. 3). Within the newsletter, depression and anxiety are represented - alongside stress, sleep problems, colds and flu, worries and challenges - as conditions that obstruct individual students from fully integrating into the culture of the University and realizing their potential, and with it, that of the University. A life lived with and in depression and anxiety is depicted as a condition of isolation, narcissism and ultimately, the “university experience” and student life being ‘less-than’ – *less than it could be, and less than it should be.* This depiction is instructive. It teaches the reader that success requires learning to just know that ‘at bottom’ individuals and systems are really more than ‘their problems’. Rather than struggle against the conditions of university life, find solace in the rewards and privileges that can be secured through the acceptance of de-contextualized and de-politicized notions of subjection.

In portraying mental illness as something that can happen to anyone and saying that, “Mental illness does not discriminate; it crosses all cultural, economic and social divides” (Hyland, 2009, p. 3), the newsletter organizes a conception of adversity as something unfortunate which individuals and communities cannot get ‘caught up on’. A singular logic holds communities together as colds and flu - adversity is just something that happened, and it will need to be gotten through, and gotten over, to ensure a successful and complete transition into
university life as it is done at the University of Toronto. The newsletter thus produces a need to situate oneself “beyond language”, in a place where greater perspective can be gained on how and why difference is relevant. Difference is relevant when it provides us with a sense of the “impact of culture” (Hyland, 2009, p. 3), and what can be done to manage or mitigate that impact.

This understanding is also reflected in the article, “Where Does Your Story Begin”, which provides eight strategies for “coping with the transition [out of adversity] to University”: 1) develop your learning skills; 2) seek out people who want to be successful; 3) know where your supports are; 4) get involved; 5) get organized; 6) find rest spaces; 7) recognize the loss; 8) keep an open mind (Garbutt, 2008, pp. 3-4). These pragmatic ways of relating to adversity as something which must be ‘transitioned out of’ invoke and recall the anguished questions of adversity, “What am I going to do? Where am I going to go?” But, they offer the reassurance that because mental illness is “highly treatable,” with the “professional help” and “early intervention” already at their fingertips, “with some effort” (Vorderbrugge, 2008, p. 4) there is a good probability that students can begin to achieve a greater semblance of a normal healthy, happy and socially productive life. An even greater probability if they can learn to do so in “meaningful communities” (Haworth, 2009, 3). The outcomes, however, cannot be certain since the communities they engage, and how they well they do, will also depend upon their individual “life experiences” (Vorderbrugge, 2008, p. 4).

However, also implicit within this understanding, a practical and rather ordinary response to what Judith Butler understands as the “disorientation of grief” (2006, p. 30), is an important point concerning a political relationship between individualized conditions and collective knowledge of pre-reflective origins, and the places where our stories begin. A critical and self-reflective relation to the normative demand to give and seek help can then also be viewed as a
“point of departure” (Butler, 2006, p. 30), a political education, through which ordinary stories (Weiss, 2008) of university students and institutions can be reconsidered, resisted, refigured and retold.

**Disabling Adjustments**

How does asking, “What can I do?”, as The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit assumes and recommends we all do, reproduce non-reciprocal modes of exchange? How is this question bound-up with an exploitative textual economy that marks the student body as a legitimate and acceptable site of mourning and violence (Butler, 2006)? I now consider how the ways we frame questions of inequality organize how inequality is perceived through an interpretive engagement with the meaning of stress in the university context.

Depictions of student stress posit students’ experiences as the natural subject of medical knowledge. Within this domain, students are not marginalized by the institutional organization of student life and the neoliberal values of flexibility and productivity it espouses, but by personal deficiencies which place them in a position of a natural disadvantage. The lived experience of adversity and oppression can then be framed as individual traits which make it difficult to adapt to the presumably ‘positive’ changes an institutional perspective brings to the physical, social and psychic organization of environments. Robert Kugelmann (1992) describes this adaptation in terms of “boundary protection” (p. 24). He says,

> The force of the discourse on stress is to persuade the individual to adapt to change, given the discourse’s mentality that the world is hostile and traumatizing, and its equation of health with boundary maintenance. Flexible but firm boundaries are the ideal. Avoiding disease and death become theoretical possibilities, if ways could only be found to secure the borders from the assaults of the alien world. Our borders are secured not by opposition to the world, but by adjustments of our various systems and their parts in the interest in maintaining the system itself (Kugelmann, 1992, p. 24).

Paradoxically, in drawing on the discourse of stress as a potential reserve of strategies for succeeding and techniques for ‘fitting-in,’ the university produces a commonsense version of the
university as an “alien world,” and thus it is taken for granted that it is a potential danger to the health of assumedly already marginalized students. The myth of resilience is simultaneously offered as the solution, it teaches that to survive the stressful spaces of the university, you need to master its language. What I take issue with is the way this language places responsibility for suffering as ultimately beyond the students’ control, but within the scope of campus health professionals and service providers. Although the text claims an interest in integration, its performance of integration as a problem for ‘professionals’ and ‘providers’ organizes consciousness of the student condition as something which is, unfortunately, naturally divided.

Rod Michalko says, “Disability always appears, makes an appearance, in the midst of others. Disability is not only here, it is everywhere and is so even when we see it nowhere. […] disability is everywhere even when we ‘see’ it nowhere; it is always present even in its absence” (2009, pp. 66 & 68). In the newsletters, ideas and images of disability abound, but the disabled student is nowhere to be found. Disability appears as some ‘thing’ adverse, a source and symptom of stress and grief for that which has to be done, even when it seems by all accounts and purposes, that it cannot. As such, disability makes an appearance as a presence. The striking vulnerability of this presence which appears even in its absence, and the uncertainty about what it means exactly, can threaten the very existence and integrity of something called ‘ordinary everyday life.’ The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit displays a cultural understanding within the University of Toronto that disability is “here,” is “everywhere” and “is so even when we see it nowhere” (Michalko, 2009, pp. 66 & 68). However, it also responds to this understanding as something contingent, and as referencing something else which it also is, but for which there is as yet no consensus about what it is. Disability appears as something which calls forth the need for consensus. This calling is presented within the text as a pedagogical moment. If we listen to it, it can teach us about the existence of a common language, what we can do through the

Within the text, biomedical understandings of disability are included so as to demarcate the boundaries of the healthy, normal, student body; a body with potential. Descriptions of “chronic illness,” “chronic stress,” “depression and anxiety,” “health problems,” “obesity,” “physical illness,” “suicide,” “get professional help,” weakened “immune system,” and “psychological resilience” structure the reader’s relation to the limits of the student body in the form of questions about what, and who, really belongs at the University of Toronto, or any university environment for that matter.

In *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement*, Sharon Betcher (2007) maintains that,

> Even where architecture and social geography may have reworked toward greater inclusion of persons with differing modalities (still very rare), a psychological apartheid preserves a socio-cultural preference for appearing wholesome and functionally integrated, for being like everyone else […] To be valued members of society, persons must assume or resume normalcy. They must organize themselves toward the values of publically acceptable appearance, independent function, and productivity, the key values of capitalist economies (p. 72).

In an institution focused on success, students perceived as struggling are viewed as a potential liability to the privileges afforded by successful systems of governance. Differences in embodiment, made conspicuous in biomedically defined disabled “sensibilities” (Corker, 2001; Overboe, 1999) are presented as devalued and undesirable given the perceivable barriers they pose to ‘full’ participation. This makes it possible to justify their absence within the University of Toronto and view their ‘acceptance’ as a product of the tolerance and benevolence of a presumably straight, white, able-bodied, and “wholesome and functionally integrated” (Bletcher, 2007, p. 272) minded University community. Margaret Price describes how the dominant strategies for surviving a “psychological apartheid” that compels and coerces an “ability to bounce back” maintain stereotypical and stigmatizing perspectives:
Those of us who do not function successfully in academe tend to pass much of the time. Sadly, the necessity of passing for survival perpetuates the conventional view of the academy as an “ivory tower” – an immaculate location humming with mental agility and energy, only occasionally threatened (from the outside) by the destructive forces of insanity (2011, p. 7).

The categorization of some students as lacking in productivity due to a natural deficiency makes it possible for the University to maintain its reputation as a recognized ‘world class institution’ (Usher, 2006) despite contradictory information present in student satisfaction surveys and recorded as “empirically confirmed good practices” in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) College Student Report, often used in university rankings in the U.S. and Canada (NSSE, 2011). Student dissatisfaction can then be rationalized as the consequence of individual students’ inability to manage their personal problems and evaluate the University in an objective and unbiased way. The progress of individual students who do not replicate the University’s standards of excellence can then be included in assessments of the University’s progress towards its strategic objectives as already potentially excludable since they are not conceived as really representative of the student body and what it is capable of.

“Most students” can be expected to “face many challenges” (University of Toronto, 2009a, b). There is, however, also the expectation that most students will not need ‘professional help’. For “most students”, challenges will not become part of their social and personal identity, but will be overcome, leading to a “positive view of oneself”, “self-discovery”, “perspective” and a “hopeful outlook” (Vorderbrugge, 2008), as well as better grades, “a nice salary” (Fisher, 2008, p. 1), “healthy relationships” (Champagne, 2010, p. 4) and a good night’s sleep (Vorderbrugge, 2009). This communicates a sense that something is wrong with the way students are experiencing themselves, others, and the University. Otherwise, students would have nothing ‘negative’ to report. In 2000 the Canadian national newspaper The Globe and Mail

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17 In Reading and Writing Disability Differently: The Textured Life of Embodiment, Tanya Titchkosky (2007) discusses the textual production of disability as an included “excludable type” (p. 5).
began publishing what is now known as “Canadian University Report” (formerly the Canadian University Report Card). Published annually, and featured on *The Globe and Mail* sponsored website [www.globecampus.ca](http://www.globecampus.ca), “Canadian University Report” profiles and ranks universities across the country using data collected from student experience surveys. Rather than a problem with the social organization of university life, the wrongness of student experience, as revealed in the University’s failing marks on its public report card can then be attributed to the presence of individual students who do not ‘know themselves,’ and are not actively doing the work that needs to be done to “protect and/or enhance” their “resilience” to the intrinsic challenges of already appearing different from “most students.” The significance of the dual myths made through this literature regarding disability and resilience is thus multifaceted and far reaching. But, what accounts for the timeliness of these myths? Why do they appear with such force now?

The celebration of resilience comes at the same time as changes are being introduced within student services infrastructures. According to George Kuh and his associates, within the context of “university experience” alignment is “… making certain that resources match the institution’s mission and educational purposes and students’ abilities and needs” (Kuh et al., 2005, p.110). *Within* this context, human rights issues are reconfigured into personal needs within institutional settings and thus addressed in the form of questions about what makes some services more sustainable than others (Burns & Priebe, 2004).

Fitting within the frame of resilience as something which can and ought to be learned in order to survive requires that students accept medicalized definitions of situations. *Within* this frame student anguish, resistance, and dissent can be rationalized either as the outcomes of a ‘lack’ of learning and a symptom of inferiority, or resources that support the development of deviant identities. One example is found in the article, “Building Social Capital” by Deanne Fisher cited below:
You’re here to earn a degree, perhaps hoping for a nice salary at the end. Education and income are two forms of capital – human and physical, respective – that have value in our society. But there’s a third form of capital that many students neglect, and it turns out, university is a great place to accumulate some of it.

Social capital is about the connections between people and the norms of trust and reciprocity that arise when people have relationships. Most of us are familiar with the adage “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know” in the context of the job search. But the benefits of social capital extend well beyond career advancement, and are now thought to affect your physical and mental health as well (Fisher, 2008, p. 1)

The newsletter is violent both in what it says, and in the relations to the meaning of materiality its words produce. Through the notion of resilience, student bodies are reduced to technologies for the reproduction of the social system, their values determined in relation to their function. To perform resilience students must demonstrate that they can adjust to any situation. In framing resilience as a resource, and even a hidden reserve (Unger, 2004), resilience literature offers a way to order those spaces conventionally considered outside of the University’s domain. The focus on resources within resilience literature does not only create new spaces for the emergence of “alternative discourses” (Unger, 2004, p. 21). It also produces knowledge of marginality as a “difficult experience” that can and should be “exploited” in situations of adversity (Unger, 2004, p. 16). This raises the question of who or what resilience is a resource for? And it is a question which should be asked of all myths. Although the newsletter is presented as a ‘self-help’ resource for students, its target audience is primarily composed of University of Toronto health and social services providers, practitioners and administrators. It is they who decide on its relevance, and they who ensure its circulation more broadly throughout the University community, not students.

Resilience, an Acquired Taste

Techniques for the successful performance of resilience are spelled-out in an article in The Student, Body, Mind, and Spirit titled “Just for Girls” (Haworth, 2010), which claims to
represent the interests of women students at the University of Toronto. This it does through the publication of the ‘5 most frequently asked questions’ asked by students during women’s sexual health workshops held at the University in the past:

- I don’t get organisms when I have vaginal intercourse but I do with oral sex. Is there any way that I can achieve orgasm during intercourse more easily?

- Does eating certain foods change the taste of semen?

- When should I get a pap test? What should I expect?

- Does Health Service provide free pregnancy tests?

- How do you put on a male condom?

The sexual health education workshops are referred to as Girl Talk. Girl Talk is described as a University of Toronto “Health Services” outreach initiative with a focus on sexual health and healthy relationships: “Girl Talk, is a proactive, mobile Q and A session where women put anonymous questions in a hat and Haworth answers them. It is relaxed and informal and usually held in the don’s room in residence” (emphasis added; Thorne, 2008, p. 1). Both the title of the article and its tone recall the familiar scene of Western teen magazines (Currie, 1999).

As a way to demonstrate the full movement or breadth and depth of the myth of resiliency I focus on one of these questions, questions #2: “Does eating certain foods change the taste of semen?” and its response: “The taste of, and taste for semen is unique to all of us” (Haworth, 2010, p. 3). After posing and answering this question, the text then provides an explanation which includes a description of various techniques and practices students can ‘experiment’ with to alter the taste, by changing one’s partner’s diet, and abstaining from smoking or drinking alcohol. The article concludes with the following assertion, “Remember, whether or not he alters his diet, his semen, like our breath and perspiration, have a taste and smell all their own – so, any modifications you make may only have a limited effect” (Haworth,
2010, p. 3). The consciousness that the article imagines organizes *already knows that* if the flexibility of body fails (taste and smell), there is always the hope of resiliencies.

The presentation of “frequently asked questions” offers a reproductive technology which makes the progress, history and inheritance of the University more widely visible. In a 1986 Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women titled, “A Future for Women at the University of Toronto,” Dorothy Smith et al. (1986) assert a need to question the gendered organization of inherited questions as a means of contesting inequality between women and men. Western cultural assumptions about the relations between desire and health shape the discursive fields in which these differences come into play. The focus on relationships with men at the Women’s Health Workshop made visible in the article’s commentary and re-presentation of the “most frequently asked questions” reiterates and reaffirms heteronormativity within the University of Toronto Health Services. In light of the article, the presence of an article on Lesbian, Transsexual, Gay and Bisexual (LBGT) students finding belonging at the University (Tate, 2009) becomes a token gesture of recognition of sexual difference. The public presentation of the ‘nature’ of questions one can expect to find at a workshop for women, and the kinds of issues which dominate discussions, privilege heterosexuality. Challenging inequality produced by the patriarchal structure and organization of the university requires women have access to information. But, the focus of this information and the way it is circulated, as an issue *just for girls*, reproduces the dominance of paternalistic heterosexuality within the university setting.

The construction “most frequently asked question” begs the question of why the taste and smell of men’s sex is something female students should know, and *even control and adjust* to meet their personal tastes, by learning the kinds of technical knowledges, skills and competencies students can access through University “Health Services.” Once presented as a
question of taste, the regulation of the body provides the impetus for a universal definition of sex. The article cites the following passage from a male American university student, Anthony Grollman taken from The Kinsey Institute for Research on Sex, Gender and Reproduction website “Kinsey Confidential”: “…the absence of a universal definition of sex may mean that people may be engaging in sexual practices that entail some degree of risk for sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, yet assume what they are doing does not count as sex and fail to effectively protect themselves” (as cited in Haworth, 2010, p. 3). Here, what counts as sex takes the form of a question that can be answered. In this particular version of institutionalized “Girl Talk” the myth of resiliencies trumps the safety and risk issues.

However, Judith Butler reminds us that (1990, p. 31),

Even if heterosexist constructs circulate as the available sites of power/discourse from which to do gender at all, the question remains: What possibilities of recirculation exist? Which possibilities of doing gender repeat and displace through hyperbole, dissonance, internal confusion, and proliferation the very constructs by which they are mobilized?

In light of what Butler says, the question what does semen smell and taste like could be interpreted as an expression of recognition of the absurdity, and constructed nature, of the assumptions of the sexual health “Q & A”, which assumes women students have a lack of experience, knowledge and understanding of sex. From this perspective, the inclusion of the question could be read as signaling a re-appropriation of textual practices of (re)production. It identifies the gendered organization of sexual health, making heterosexist assumptions about the nature of sex explicit as a question of how the taste – or preference – for patriarchal relationality is learned within the university setting. Interpreted as a way of doing gender ‘head-on’, the question interrupts the internal consistency of a unified notion of sex as something simultaneously singular and multiple, in the sense that sex is conceived as something which can
be healthy, good, normal, productive, smart, safe, and unhealthy, excessive, foolish, risky, and dangerous.

The question could also be read as expressive of students’ understanding that even though the workshops claimed to offer resources for women’s sexual health, it was gender that was being done. The questions of sexual health the workshops elicited were not relegated to when and where and what to do, or how to do it, but with whom. The newsletter suggests that it is with university health services that students should learn to do gender, and that learning to do so will bring the strains and obstacles of life within a historically patriarchal institution into relief. The construction “most frequently asked question” can not only be interrogated on the grounds of a lack of information about sample sizes and representation, leading, for instance, to a consideration of the heteronormative social structures that have produced these five questions as in need of publication. It also begs the question of why the taste and smell of men’s sex is something female students can know, and even control and adjust to meet their personal tastes, by learning the kinds of technical knowledges, skills and competencies University of Toronto Health Services make accessible.

Without inferring the motivations of the editors, the inclusion of this article in the newsletter could possibly be read as a return or rejoinder to the limits of textual practice and publication imposed on women who occupy the role of health professionals within a university setting. The appearance of some questions and not others, their being asked and published within the university community, did make it possible to question how education concerning the knowledge and experience of women’s bodies is organized by heteronormative fantasies and desires. Situated within the language of health, the meaning of women students’ sexuality was pushed to the edge of desire. Question #3, “When should I get a pap test? What should I expect?” offers a way to bring the relationship between sexuality and desire back into perspective,
rendering the culturally constructed nature of female sexual health in the process. The question also exposes how the normative sexuality of student life is monitored and policed by question-and-answer temporal schemes.¹⁸ The fact that the person asking the questions was a woman who represents women’s health illustrates how the recommendations of the 1986 Report on the Status of Women at the University of Toronto have been acknowledged and addressed.

The text, which is divided into two columns, includes but one image in the far right corner at the top of the page (see Figure 11). In the image a Black woman figures prominently, facing forward, but gazing towards the left side of the page. Following her gaze, the reader’s gaze is led to the following passage: “Girl Talk allows the opportunity for students to share and discuss with one another their own thoughts on sex and sexuality and observe the diversity that exists within these ideas and to explore the factors that contribute to them” (emphasis added; Haworth, 2010, p. 3). Appearing at an angle, both the image and the Black woman’s gaze could be read as pointing to the legitimacy of the text’s claim to represent diversity. This is a claim that the reader like the University can presumably engage head-on, as displayed in the following assertion: “The questions that surface over the hour are as varied as the students who attend the workshop. In this article, we’re sharing some of the more common questions that have been asked by students who have attended past sessions” (Haworth, 2010, p. 3). Here, “common questions”, and normative assumptions, about the relations between bodily difference and desire provide an occasion to observe “the diversity which exists within” (Haworth, 2010, p. 3) the concerns of an unmarked ‘majority.’ At the same time, the article can also be read as an expression of resistance, insofar as the masculine is represented as something uncertain, as well as something potentially noxious and undesired.

¹⁸ These observations were facilitated by Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music by Philip Auslander (2006).
Raewyn Connell invites us to think about how “women are bearers of masculinity as well as men” (2005, p. 230), and dwell with the possibilities where gender, race, sexuality, and disability politics not only intersect but interact. We must also question how Western cultural assumptions about the relations between desire and health shape the discursive fields in which these differences come into play. The focus on relationships with men at the Women’s Health Workshop made visible in the article’s commentary and re-presentation of the “most frequently asked questions” reiterates and reaffirms heteronormativity within the University of Toronto Health Services. Alternatives to, and interruptions of heteronormativity, are visibly absent in the issues. Although one article appears on LBGT communities, its emphasis is on how to build a sense of belonging within the university which can facilitate the integration of individuals who identify as LBGT, providing directions to offices supplied with professional expertise and professional competencies students can draw on to increase their resilience to adversity and realize the University’s aspirations for them – academic success.

In the publication of the Student Body, Mind and Spirit, normative assumptions about students’ subjective attachments to the body have not only been secured and unhinged. They have also been lubricated by a conception of fluidity as an ability to be agile and “bounce back from adversity, disappointment and tragedy” (University of Toronto, 2012). Given the centrality of the conception of community in the publication, and in neoliberal discourse (Rose, 1999), social justice does not only involve advocating for the inclusion of a greater sense of community in student life. It also involves critically examining the assumptions about how, and where, and when a sense of community can be expected to materialize. That is, we need to consider how community is intuited within the university environment, and question how ideas of community both offer access to, and activate, assumptions about the commonsensical, the necessary, the nature, the new, the experimental, the absurd, the absent or invisible, the present and undeniable,
and the normative and normate, no less than the pathological, the aberrant and the anomalous. Otherwise, we do not only ‘risk’ reproducing the structures of inequality. We also participate in a mode of exchange that values mechanistic conceptions of relationality – as embodied in notions of social capital, social bonds, and ‘networks’ - in terms of their flesh-and-blood vitality. An exchange that climaxes in a predetermined notion of ‘fluidity’ as the desired end, and as something which can be observed, measured, practiced, perfected, documented, and even saved for future reference and reproduction.

We participate in desire –treating it as a thing – albeit ‘fluid’ - which can be located in bodies, or transferred between bodies. According to Ursula Kelly, “[…] we learn to desire some things and not others as ways of participating in and being literate in the world” (1997, p. 11). The textual reality of desire brought to life in the Student Body, Mind, and Spirit can be read as a gesture to inclusivity and a greater sense of belonging for all students who share the university environment. As such, it should not be easily dismissed. It is not, however, just a text, nor is it simply a surface for reflecting on the needs and wants of the university community, one inscribed by the values of the dominant. It is no more ‘just’ a text, than it is a ‘just’ text. The Student Body, Mind and Spirit is a relationship, a commitment to an integrated future. The trouble is, however, this commitment, respectable, admirable as it may be, treats desire in an instrumental universalistic way, as something which ought to be respectable and admirable, as a source of motivation and a means to the success of all. Within this future there is diversity and the image of the young black woman confirms the University’s interest in diversity while at the same time concealing its grounds in a white, heterosexual, masculine-centred culture. The value of desire for student life is reduced to an opportunity to identify individual preferences which can be empirically validated through the mastery of heterosexual practices.
In “Double Trouble: Disability and Disability Studies in Education” Michalko (2009) asks us to pay attention to how, “The social processes and practices of marginalizing and normalizing […] are invoked by normalcy and placed on the disabled body as a way to veil the social construction of the norm” (p. 409). Through the appropriation of recognizably alternative discourses, *The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit* governs a surface level perception of health services as progressive and inclusive. Alternative knowledges are integrated, or rather absorbed, into Western ways of knowing health, “…which understand illness as located within the body or mind of the individual” (Moodley, Sutherland & Oulanova, 2008, p. 156). The seductive power of *The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit* stems from the possibilities its way of knowing and experiencing the world create to reconcile the increasing rationalization of the world with its critique – the sublime or spiritual dimensions of daily life (Zaretsky, 2008, p. 375). In this way, it represents an effective strategy to absorb criticism, of any kind.

The title, *The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit* suggests that the newsletter can be read as a resource for resistance to marginalization and oppression. However, a critical analysis of its content and form displays the presumption that students’ ‘need’ for resistance to the normalizing regimes of dominant discourse is a thing that can be ‘got around’. This ‘getting around’, assumed to supports students in ‘getting through’ the university ‘in one piece’, involves the integration and application of empirically validated principles of good governance within students’ individual lives and social worlds. The apparent disjuncture between the histories and images that the title *The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit* provokes, and the normative practices which the articles promote, offers an occasion to dwell with the myth of resilience as an instrument of power. Staying with, and wondering about, this disjuncture creates space to consider how disembodied conceptions of a Cartesian mind-body split can distract attention from the social and historical resilience of Western ways of knowing.
Resisting Positivism, Reclaiming Corporeality

We cannot separate our lived ideas about what constitutes a “whole” body or a “normal” man from our lived experience of patriarchy, white supremacy, violent colonialism, and capitalist exploitation. This is not to say that we’re all wandering around duped into false consciousness, and it is not meant to question certain desires as a pathology of oppression. (Loeb, 2008, p. 55)

This chapter has aimed to disrupt the self-evident good of integration. Treating *The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit* as a technology in the production of the student as ‘resilient subject’ (O’Malley, 2010) can illustrate how the redistribution of resources under the auspices of social justice is rife with unintended consequences, and necessarily relies on and reproduces cultural assumptions, stereotypes, stigmas and distinctions couched in Western bourgeois values of autonomy, agency, self-sufficiency, independence, and personal strength. It also provides a way to read the newsletter as a tool for framing suffering in words which reference the dominance of capitalism and a notion of the student as ‘entrepreneur’. Within these frames social location appears as something which can be overcome and enhanced through universal definitions, and consensus as something to be strived for and achieved through hard work, ingenuity, a playful demeanor and ‘knowing when to apologize’ (Champagne, 2010, p. 4). The textual aesthetics relies on a notion of power as strength, fortitude, might, determination, presented in the form of *invisible divisions and thick bolded lines*. Within these lines, ‘vulnerability’ is posited as a weakness, the knowledge of which can be exploited to improve or enhance resilience, and with it the probability of being able to prove oneself worthy of power.

Through the notion of ‘resilience’ students are taught that they can negate the damaging potential of a disability identity, what Erving Goffman (1963) refers to as “stigma”, by building social capital, diversifying their portfolios, and learning how to organize their activities, experiences and attachments in ways that will help them cope with adversity in more ‘socially productive’ ways. Fitting within the frame of resilience as something which can and ought to be
learned in order to survive requires that students accept medicalized definitions of situations. Within this frame student anguish, resistance, and dissent can be rationalized as the outcomes of a ‘lack’ of learning or common sense, and a symptom of an inherently inferior subject position.

In a review of the literature on resilience and social exclusion Sarah Mohaupt shares her finding that the core word of resilience is “resilo,” which means ‘to jump back’ (2008, p. 63). This is in line with the dominant way of understanding resilience as ‘bouncing back from adversity.’ The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit, however mundane, banal, ordinary and inconspicuous, is a cultural production by which we, the readers, should not only be taken aback, but from which we should jump back and reconsider our normative attitudes about the good of life as usual, or the desirability of unreflective relations to others, embodied in notions of tolerance and programmatic attempts to enforce ‘cultural sensitivity.’

A critical reading of resilience demonstrates the possibility of contradictory and conflictual understandings and interpretations of the meaning of resources. As such, it provides a caution concerning social justice’s call for improved access to, and more equitable distribution of resources. Powerlessness and helplessness are not merely attributes which can be learned, and since learned, overcome, as Seligman (2011) suggests. Powerlessness and helplessness are ideas that are essential to the (re)production of neoliberal governance. This raises the important issue of whether and how the university represents a ‘living laboratory’ for testing new techniques in ‘sustainable governance’. A reflexive relation to The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit as a mode of student subjectivity, and technique for governing the meaning and experience of difficulty and distress, makes it possible to shift the emphasis from resources to the practices which constitute spaces of conformity and resistance. Embodied and emotional difference can then be repositioned as expressions of agency, protest and affirmation, rather than simply signs of passivity or sites of exploitation.
For Bill Hughes and Kevin Paterson, “Ones body is ones window on the world” (2006, p. 101). *The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit* can be picked up and read as an expression of the University of Toronto’s materiality, its corpus, or at least its dominant mythologization of the student body. This, not because it is part of an archive on the university, but because the university lives and breathes, is taken-up as a reality, and one which can be negotiated, re-interpreted and redefined, not only in ‘subsequent issues’ (although the anticipation of foregoing issues provides for the expectation that stories can be revised and reintroduced, if not explicitly, then implicitly). *The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit* is the University’s body, its “window on the world” (Hughes & Paterson, 2006, p. 101). This makes it possible to question how the frames which structure the university and secure its connection to the world may be organized by a desire for visibility.

The newsletter offers, not only a mechanism of social control, but also and at the same time, a “window” into what Talcott Parsons refers to as “balancing processes” within the university system (Parsons, 1951, p. 479). The newsletter is a performance. In its reading it enacts a language which structures how students can be thought about. It is part of the University apparatus and regardless of whether its orders are followed its precepts organize the appearance of the student as a universal subject and the University of Toronto as a unifying experience. Given the centrality of community in the *Student Body, Mind, and Spirit*, social justice for marginalized university students does not only involve advocating for inclusion and promoting integration. It also involves critically examining how community is intuited within the university environment as a question of capital and as “something to be programmed” (Howell, 2010, p. 354). Taking it for granted that marginalized students are lacking in community depoliticizes and disappears non-institutional solidarities within and across marginalized communities and the critical moves students are making to re-appropriate difference as a space to reclaim and redefine
the meaning of resistance. This chapter has aimed to show how the difficulty immanent to students’ lives may not be a question of how best to navigate the university, so much as how to find strength in the differences through which individuals and collectivities are brought into relation. Following Tanya Titchkosky, what is being performed, and perpetuated by the Student Body, Mind, and Spirit’s focus on resilience, and the scene it sets, is the normalcy of isolation and “the on-going exclusion of bodily difference” (2009, p. 80). But, as Titchkosky also reminds us, “we are … never alone in our bodies” (2009, p. 78).

Resilience is a type of frame or window that transforms an interest in situational troubles into private issues of response. It is also the substance or the way of being which we are all supposed to be seen to be engaged by and committed to as the “only source” of support. With this in mind, I conclude with a passage from Audre Lorde’s Sister Outsider (1988, p. 12):

Those of us who stand [and sit and lay] outside the circle of this society’s definition of acceptable … those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference — those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older [who are disabled] — know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand [sit and lie] alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those… who still define the master’s house as their only source of support.

Too often the final sentence in that passage is omitted. The ‘threat’ to survival that Lorde describes is not a consequence of the existence of houses, or health services constructions, but a world in which the master’s house comes to be defined as the “only source of support” (Lorde, 1988, p. 12). As we move within and without the walls of the university, let us find strength in the vulnerability of the social and material constructions through which we come to know ourselves and others as ‘problems’. Let us also take shelter in the fact that there are always multiple myths in play.
Chapter 6
Conclusion: Beyond Disclosure: The Hidden Curriculum of Academic Success

Students encounter disability-related barriers and we try and come up with a set of accommodations to address those barriers, and then to think more systemically on campus about what needs to be changed in order to facilitate peoples’ participation. Around academic success, there’s a hidden curriculum in universities that’s never explicitly taught, and I think academic success is about taking that hidden curriculum and making it more explicit and because the range of students – their experience in life, their cultural backgrounds, previous educational institutions that they’ve been in, in other parts of the world, it’s even more important these days to make that hidden curriculum visible.19 (Student Services Representative at the University of Toronto, 2010)

Reframing the ‘Big Picture’

This dissertation began with language, and was moved to history. In its mediations, tensions between theory, methodology and experience materialized in the form of a sense that ‘something is wrong’ (Titchkosky, 2005); what Emmanuel Lévinas (2003) refers to as “being ill at ease” (p. 58). Recall that for Weber, happiness offers a means of rationalizing claims to superiority and legitimizing domination over others. Regardless of the questions happiness answers, the ‘reason’ for privilege which happiness gives rests uneasy. Once unhappiness is framed as a consequence of condition and rational choice, inferiority, subjection and subordination become possibilities which are always and inescapably ‘near-at-hand’. It is thus that the “right to this happiness” (Weber, 1978a, p. 491), its inalienability and untransferability to “the unfortunate one” (p. 491), is desired. One question which Weber provokes but leaves unanswered, concerns the meaning of the relation he posits between “the right to this happiness”

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19 Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight representatives of the University of Toronto Student Life Programs and Services, St. George Campus in September and October 2010 to learn about their perspectives on the ordinary ways students navigate and negotiate the university environment. With participants’ permission, I recorded the interviews with a digital audio and transcribed them myself, omitting any personal identifiers that emerged in the conversation. The transcriptions were then coded according to emergent themes and analyzed using an interpretive sociological approach. Participants were provided with a post-interview report and research intentions in the winter of 2011. Unless otherwise specified all material quoted in this chapter is from your interviews of 2010.
and “the consciousness that happiness was earned” (1978a, p. 491). In Chapters 4 and 5, I explored the role of textual media in circulation on university campuses in organizing the appearance of a ‘complete’ “university experience” as something that can be enjoyed by students who earn it.

In this concluding chapter, my analysis of student mental life shifts from textual representations of the language of *Student Life*, to what one *Student Life* professional referred to as the “the space in the middle.” I engage with how student mental life was made to appear within conversations with student services personnel as a matter of meeting “needs.” The decision to interview student services personnel reflects my recognition of their roles as guides within the university setting and formal representatives of its system, as illustrated in the following assertion by a student services staff member:

… if they’re looking for help we’re often directing them to CAPS [Counselling and Psychological Services] if they have crisis, or occasionally to Health Service if they’ve had something where they’ve gotten hurt. But, often if they’ve left their home and there is some sort of domestic violence we’re hooking them up with Community Safety Office or Student Retention and Crisis Counseling, but other times it’s more broad so sometimes we’re referring them to the Career Centre or if they need to work, but more broadly around Student Life issues we’re connecting them with the Registrar, we’re connecting them with College groups if they are a commuter student. So, it depends on their needs.

Through a discursive analysis of interviews conducted with eight student programs and services personnel at the University of Toronto in 2010, I map the subtle, compelling, and sometimes coercive ways that university students are taught to survive the university environment. I consider how knowledge of student survival is implicated in a story of the hegemony of the University. Under the auspices of “complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, 2012), students are instructed to ‘live with’ the privilege of finding oneself in the University setting.
The stories I was told during the interviews were treated as “… tools used in understanding and describing the world of human experience” (Myers 2000, p. 1). Findings are not ‘generalizable’ or ‘representative’ of a Student Services Perspective in the conventional scientific sense. They offer a glimpse into the ordinary world of everyday life of the University staff for whom students health and wellness is not only an issue, but a task to be completed. These stories also provide one way of situating the existence of university student as a collective engagement, rather than merely a social problem, and as such a way of relating to the social accomplishment of student life as a space within which the ordinary can be refigured (Weiss, 2008).

While acknowledging the value, and the import, of David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder’s critique of disability studies’ reliance on “people-based research practices” (as cited in Durgin, 2008, p. 134), this chapter aims to demonstrate how all textual analysis is in fact “people-based”. This dissertation suggests that it is not a question of people or no people, but orientations to the notion of people. Conversations with actual people working with students on a day-to-day basis, communicating and translating the University’s “relations of ruling” (Smith, 1996), offer a way to “reposition the position” (Parr, 2005) on the meaning of student life. For the purposes of this analysis, privilege is understood in terms of definitional power – the power to decide the meaning and value of a situation. Performing privilege involves making a decision over whether or not something matters, and if so, how it matters, and not thinking about how it is that such a decision can ever be made. At the same time, privilege, is also understood as the experience of finding and having found oneself in the world; of coming to oneself as an appearance in the world.

Student survival strategies are not just about ‘making it through’ the programmatic life of the university. They are also about successfully demonstrating mastery of the values and
language of the university, and *its* culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). I now consider how dwelling ‘in the beyond’ of taken for granted understandings of the meaning of the disclosure of student ‘mental illness’ affirm the existence of a “hidden curriculum of academic success”?

**Dwelling with Disclosure**

In conversations with university staff the disclosure of a ‘mental illness’ was framed as a right, a resource, and perhaps most importantly, as a “question of culture” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1). I learned of programs for students with families living in poverty, students that are homeless, students that are not eating or sleeping, students working multiple jobs while going to school in order to pay their tuition and maintain their student status ‘in good standing’; as well as students for whom the Anglo-Saxon culture of the University was a ‘shock’, but were nonetheless expected to immediately recover and habituate to the newness of both the university life-world, and the city and country in which it is situated. I learned of disabled students that had to document their ‘disadvantage’ and prove they deserved to have ever been accepted.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha says, “It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the beyond” (1994, p. 1). I orient to the disclosure of a disability identity as a space in which contemporary understandings of the meaning of access are routinely revisited, revised and resisted, as well as reproduced. For Bhabha, to “dwell ‘in the beyond’ is […] to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human historic commonality; to touch the future on its hither side” (emphasis added; 1994, p. 10). Most participants depicted the university as a setting that was becoming ever more inclusive of, and accessible for, disabled students, but “not-yet” (Titchkosky, 2010) where it needed to be. All of the participants engaged the ambiguous nature of the meaning of academic success, posing it as a problem – *of capitalism, of neoliberalism, and of conflicting interpretations*. Participants’ descriptions of their everyday activities as university
staff displayed a reflexive and at times ambivalent relation to their implication in the ‘bureaucratization of life within the university environment’ (Titchkosky, 2011; 2010). However, stories of the ‘work’ of ‘making’ and ‘doing’ the meaning of access and accommodation with students who had disclosed a ‘mental illness’ were also framed as a kind of bearing witness to the violence implicit in academic success. Bhabha invites us to think about the importance of a self-reflexive politics. He says, “Despite its firm commitments, the political must always pose as a problem, or a question, the priority of the place from which it begins, if its authority is not to become autocratic” (emphasis added; 1994, p. 92). Rather than dwell with the questions of whether and how students are accommodated by the university, this chapter makes a problem of how the problem of academic success, “the priority of the place from which [student services] begins”, can be posed as an ordinary ‘reality’ and fact of university student life that must be accommodated.

My aim in conducting the interviews was not to disclose the “real self” (Dingwall, 1997, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 664) of the University or university services, but to engage in an activity which would make the interactional accomplishment of university student life and death more explicit. To that end, I sought to speak with the ‘expert’ practitioners of the ‘student body’. This was not done to supplement the textual analysis conducted in the other chapters. Rather, the interviews provided a way to situate texts such as The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit within what Josef Pieper (1952) refers to as the “work-a-day world” of student programs and services. Beginning this way, in-situ, relations to students and to the assumptions concerning student subjectivity, or ‘mental life’, appeared more uncertain and ambivalent. I privileged the perspective of student services staff as a way to attend to the production of student mental life as embodied labour, and as such, a “long and arduous process of education” (Weber, 2003, p. 61). The ‘obvious’ nature the work of student services staff as labour (in their capacity
as formal university employees), and the resistance by university administrations to recognize the work that students do as labour (Rhoades & Rhoads, 2006), as well as my recognition that production of student mental life involves, implicates and affects bodies beyond those of the students themselves, were all factors that guided my decision.

Further, as a current student at the University of Toronto, I was curious how mental illness was perceived by the ‘experts’; those charged with the task of educating the university community about the ‘realities’ of a specifically student condition through the circulation of objective knowledge about student life and death. Understanding student life from a student services perspective, both as a product(ion) and a site of labour, provides a unique insider’s perspective on to the many nuances and negotiations that shape the meanings of activities, rationalities and expertise undertaken and upheld in the name of students; unique, in the sense that a paradox is unique. For, treating student services personnel as the location of ‘insider’s knowledge’ on student life disrupts unexamined relations to what is meant by, or referred to, in the expression “student life”. It interrupts a taken for granted relationship to students as the ‘experts’ of their own lives and experiences; and in the process, shakes the very foundations of the authority of experience. This interruption must occur if the authority of lived experience “is not to become autocratic” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 92). Starting with student services serves as a reminder, embedded within the analysis, to continue to question what is being referenced when one speaks of expertise, as well as the mode of action as training which this notion regulates and enforces. It also provides for ways of conceptualizing student labour both as a question of the subjective performance of the student role, and as the scene for the production of the student as the object of the labour of university staff.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in individual, face-to-face verbal interchanges. The recruitment process involved extracting contact information about student
programs and services staff from the public domain, specifically, University of Toronto Student Life websites. I sent an email with an invitation to participate that provided my information and a request for prospective participants to contact me within a six week period. I then met with participants at a place and time of their choosing. The questions I asked focused on the paths students must follow to access programs and services related to student life and wellness. They had the aim of documenting: (1) how members of the university community are educated about the reality of student mental health and illness; (2) the strategies, services, programs and techniques specific to student mental health and illness; (3) the role of conceptions of student mental health and illness in the production of knowledge about student life. With the participants’ consent, I audio recorded and transcribed the interviews and coded the conversations according to emergent themes, which I analyzed from a disability studies perspective informed by interpretive sociology and phenomenology.

In the interviews I was oriented by an “ethnological imagination” (Kurasawa, 2004), both as a way of thinking that I aspired to adopt, and a way of thinking that was implicit in the public campus events and workshops organized and delivered by student services programs and services that I had ‘naturally’ observed in the collection of material for this research. Clifford Geertz describes the practice this imagination takes up as a process of “looking at the ordinary in places where it takes unaccustomed forms” and involves “finding our feet” (1973, p. 13); and making one’s work a personal matter. According to Geertz, “Looking at the ordinary in places where it takes unaccustomed forms brings out not, as has so often been claimed, the arbitrariness of human behaviour […] but the degree to which its meaning varies according to the pattern of life by which it is informed” (1973, p. 13). It also entails discovering who people think they are.

For Geertz (1973, p. 16),

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20 Geertz describes “finding our feet” in the following way: “Finding our feet, an unnerving business which never more than distantly succeeds, is what ethnographic research consists of as a personal experience…” (1973, p. 16).
To discover who people think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it, it is necessary to gain a working familiarity with the frames of meaning within which they enact their lives. This does not involve feeling anyone else’s feelings, or thinking anyone else’s thoughts, simple impossibilities. Nor does it involve going native, an impractical idea, inevitably bogus. It involves learning how, as a being from elsewhere with a world of one’s own, to live with them.

I attended to the locale-specific discourses and “mundane routines” of social action (Garfinkel, 2003). The ‘interview’ is a form of interaction the people I spoke with were familiar with in their everyday work. Student services personnel routinely interview students to assess which service is best for them. Many of the offices I entered make use of questionnaires (psychiatric scales), applications (housing applications), insurance forms and forms for social service eligibility, and some even prepared students for how to act in interviews with prospective employers or graduate schools. In the interviews, I asked about pamphlets, programs, policies, and ‘promising practices’, I was given stories, anecdotes, recollections, and reflections concerning the realities of the student experience. Otherwise dissonant and discontinuous tales, converged on questions of resource distribution; of too much and not enough – centralization, coordination, standardization, co-operation, administration, information, and last but not least, support. Support was framed as a resource some students had, and others did not; some divisions within the student services umbrella had, and others did not. Another dominant phrase which emerged in relation to distribution was ‘cultural sensitivity’. Some students, and some divisions, were presented as in greater need of sensitivity than others. One way that cultural sensitivity was made to appear was in office aesthetics. One participant described student success as a condition that could be influenced by the presence or absence of pictures hung on walls that reflected recognition of cultural variation within the university. The university, I was told, should be a place where students can see themselves; otherwise, how can they be expected to succeed?
While the participants shared their stories, I scanned the rooms for images of those who they worked with or were going to speak to me about. Posters came to life as invitations, and I was drawn in to the mysterious world of student life. I was told truths in lowered voices that gave me the impression of something secret, doors were opened and then closed behind me. With heads bowed, and arms stretched across tables, I was also occasionally told to turn the recorder off. There was something exhilarating about the interviews, strangely exciting. At the end of one interview a participant looked at me puzzlingly and ask why I never asked about their specific experiences of student disclosure of mental illness and with it, the validation of the existence of ‘student mental life’, or how student disclosure shaped their ways of relating to their work and world. After asking this, the participant turned to me thoughtfully and said,

…but when I was coming in and thinking about mental health, which is something which is very important to me because I have family members who are, who suffer from mental illness, in engaging, and this is why I was really interested in doing this study with you, is because I have had students who have come to me and disclosed information about their mental health … And I find it very interesting that I had never asked, and someone else disclosed that to me, probably not appropriately, but I was told about it and it got me thinking a bit more about how I should be interacting with students in a different way. It refines my skills and attitudes towards how I am supposed to address this student, particularly, because he’s not only a student, engaging as a student that goes to school, but wants to actually engage in a higher level conversation about what it means to be a citizen or whatever the situation is. And similarly I was working with student staff and she had never told me that she had bipolar syndrome, and I was just like, “Oh, okay, thanks for telling me,” but nothing changed. I mean, she just said, I have this situation, I want you to be informed about it and I said okay and there was no change in our attitudes towards her but there is that acknowledgement that it does exist in my field and we need to be aware of these things. So, when you were telling me this morning about mental health and asking about the experiences I had with such students, you didn’t and I was like okay. I wanted to make that note that we have experienced it with such students and it’s an interesting place when you are a staff person to see students who don’t necessarily think of you as faculty, you appear as a student and they think of you as just staff and you are a little more, you need to be a little more attuned because they aren’t looking to you for help or assistance, right?

21 I have removed the gendered pronoun in the interest of preserving the anonymity of the participant.
It is with this version of mental illness in mind, mental illness conceived as a decision about what to say, and one which began with a thoughtful “but”, and a discourse of resources as a mode of making this decision and eliding the subject, that I entered the work of analysis.

**Listening for the ‘Nothing But’**

What does it mean to ‘listen for’? To ‘listen for’ presupposes an expectation, there is a sense of anticipation; *something is about to happen*. If you listen close enough you might be able to catch it, but otherwise it is very possible that you will miss it and at that point it will be too late. One participant described how the disclosure of a mental illness by a student, who was actually also a subordinate staff member at the time, offered a reminder that mental illness “can happen” and as such is something that needs to be “prepared for”:

Yeah, I’m a bit more attuned to the fact of it can happen, and that I should be prepared for it, and that maybe sometimes when I’m thinking, well I’ll have frustrating moments with the staff person when they’re like this is a really annoying student to work with, perhaps more is going on. Perhaps something more is going on that I don’t know about. And so, there’s a level of compassion that increases in me about what I should be expecting from students. Especially when this is a diverse background population of students I work with at the University of Toronto, so it does change me as well as about the concepts of mental health. Because, I mean, having someone who has experienced mental health in a severe way in my own experience, I mean it does make, oh my god yes, other people, and not only other people but students I work with are subject to not only maybe themselves *but* maybe someone they know are going through the same thing. And so, it has reopened my mind, because I was open to it before. *But*, because I am working in a professional capacity now I feel like I should be professional, but this is part of my practice and this is part of what I should be doing regularly. So, it does, and these experiences, I should be, I wish more students would tell me, and not tell me, *but* I wish that more students would disclose that information to me. *But*, they don’t have to at any time, *but* in doing so it kind of helps me work better, and not overcompensating for, you know, I would treat them the same and give them the same kinds of rights and responsibilities that they are supposed to receive, *but* it gives me a little more fine tuning understanding. It gives me a little more level of why I shouldn’t be maybe as frustrated or overtly happy to help a student or help a student staff or help even a staff person or a faculty member. It opens the doors of all realms of the populations that I work with.
The disclosure “reopened” the participant’s “mind” to the possibility of mental illness, recalling a personal experience of mental illness. The participant described this as a process of sensitization to the ‘reality’ of mental illness within the university setting which involved becoming more “attuned to the fact” and developing a “more fine tuned understanding” that could lead to more objective perspective of the situation, one which constituted the teller as neither “frustrating” and “annoying”, nor the listener as “overly happy to help”. The disclosure offered a check and balance of rights and responses, a way of regulating the distance between responsibility and resilience. In the recognition of a once open mind that had suddenly become visible as, and felt to be, closed, “compassion” appears in direct relation with what can be expected of students. In the absence of knowledge about “what is going on” (which means ‘what is really going on’), and what to expect (which means ‘from someone who identifies as mentally ill’), there can be no guarantee that what needs to be heard to help will be heard; especially in a setting in comprised of a “diverse background of populations of students.”

When I spoke with student services staff about mental illness disclosures I heard that they, and students too, are often waiting for a message to lead them to what they are supposed to do, to send them in the right direction; something to confirm a sense of purpose and make it possible to trust in the existence of a meaningful life, a life worth living; a life not separable from suffering, but not reducible to it either. It is the kind of message that even though you “wish for it” you cannot “ask for” it, the kind of message that might not ever happen, and doesn’t have to, but when it does “it kind of helps [us] to work better”. To ‘listen for’ involves a sense of waiting (Titchkosky, 2010), of being on the threshold of something to come. But, what is this ‘something’ that has yet to appear? How can we confirm its existence, if even when we think we are open, we are actually closed? To confirm we have to remember, and remembering is not something that we can do alone (McHugh et al., 1974). According to Titchkosky, “To confirm is
to recognize one’s position in the world as marginal, as a stranger, as ‘beneath notice’, and use this space of marginality […] as a way to recognize one’s distinction from what has been given” (2003, p. 236). W.E.B. Dubois reminds us that this recognition, which he describes as a “double consciousness,” is not an isolated act achieved by individuals; it is not what Émile Durkheim calls a “social fact” (1982[1895], p. 52). The sense of having no single unified consciousness, of being “beneath notice” (Titchkosky, 2003, p. 236), and “of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on with amused contempt and pity” (emphasis added, Du Bois, 1903, 8-9) is something learned through one’s relations with others.

Conceived as an unrecognized “distinction from what has been given” (Titchkosky, 2003, p. 236), the something to come is always a “nothing but” (Titchkosky, 2007, p. 123). Paradoxically, it is only after the nothing but has already arrived that it can be something, only then that it is made present as a to-be-expected. To be recognized, the nothing but must become some thing in particular: A person in need of a name. This becoming has so much to do with the ways ‘we’ can be heard, framed, regarded, and perceived, as evidenced in the following assertion by another staff member:

I think the students with mental health issues or psychiatric disabilities or whatever you want to call it, they often feel the most embarrassed or ashamed to register with Accessibility Services because they have the sense that Accessibility Services is for people with physical disabilities and that it should be around accommodating people with tangible, discernible physical needs or barriers to access. So they feel like it should be for difficulty taking notes physically – then they deserve the note-taking, but somebody with a mental health issue, they feel embarrassed or not worthy of seeking the accommodations often, and that’s one of the big things that I address and typically after I speak to students in the first session and I sort of make an analogy often that if you have really intense anxiety around test-writing, the accommodation for that is the functional equivalent to me of someone who breaks their arm and needs extra time writing tests. It’s the same principle for me, the same Human Rights principle of accommodation. Students are typically really relieved – the students with mental health issues, because they come in feeling embarrassed that they are even requesting the accommodations.
“Whatever you want to call it,” the particularity of the this ‘thing’ is grounded in assumptions about the meaning and nature of the body and, more specifically, the embodied experience of a physical “break,” and the “needs” such a break both produces and empirically justifies. The “nothing but” captures the “the ambivalence of terror and wonder” (Rubenstein, p. 38) involved in remembering; an ambivalence that is lost when all that mental illness can be is some thing which requires accommodation (and ipso facto, success). The discussion on which the rest this chapter is based is grounded in my desire to listen for the alterity that resides within the point of view of Student Life, or to borrow from Merleau-Ponty the “vague beckoning” of “nothing but” the sensible (2002, p. 248).

“Not a Counselor”

In an article titled, “A Collaborative Approach to Student Mental Health” published in the University of Toronto online newspaper The Bulletin in September 2008, Anjum Nayyar describes preparations for a launch of “Mental Health Awareness Week” at U of T in October 2008. According to Nayyar, “[…] faculty and staff are often in a position to identify early on those students who may be struggling with emotional and psychological problems.” One of the implicit aims of the awareness week was to inform faculty and staff about their role in promoting mental health by identifying students with problems before students become problems for the university. Nayyar quotes one of the panelists, Victor Likwornik, then psychiatrist-in-chief for the University’s psychiatric service:

Over the last 10 years, the number of students we see at the service has doubled […] A lot of students have anxiety about social situations, particularly presentations, and some of them can fail a course because of this. Some students choose courses entirely on the basis of being able to avoid presentations. If a TA or professor can identify that anxiety is affecting a student's academic performance early on and refer them to the appropriate resources, it can make a huge difference for the student and their potential to be academically successful.
Another article, this time in the Canadian newspaper *the Globe and Mail*, titled, “Students’ Deaths Leaves Queen’s Struggling for Answers” (Morrow & Hammer, 2011) tells of the “commonplace” of grief at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, following the deaths of six students, “including at least” two suicides in one year. Despite the University’s claim to be interested in the health of well-being of its students, students have begun to protest the inaccessibility of counseling services made available by the university. In response to criticisms of unreasonable waiting times, it states that the university administration has plans to increase the ‘efficiency’ of “front-line” services and train graduate student teaching assistants to identify “students who may need help and refer them to counselors” (Morrow & Hammer, 2011).

A question arises concerning how the identification of students to be referred to counselors does anything to address the inaccessibility of existing services. According to the rationality of “commonplace” grief, such an approach would only serve to increase the number of students seeking someone to talk to about the lived experience of adversity, grief, and struggles to make sense of the meanings and dominant priorities of university life. That is, unless the University aims not to address the inaccessibility of existing services, but to regulate the appearance of student death. The logic of the University’s plan to train teaching assistants in the identification of students with ‘unmet needs’ to be referred to counselors as a response to grievances regarding long wait times to meet with counselors is difficult to understand. How will this make “front line” services more efficient? That is, unless, students identified by their teaching assistants – their superordinate peers - as ‘needing help’ are constructed not only as grieving but as potential sources of grief for the university.

Despite the emphasis on academic performance within University-sponsored publications such as the *Health & Wellness* pamphlet (University of Toronto, 2009b) or *The Student Body, Mind, and Spirit* (2008-2011), many of the people I spoke with shared their understanding of
their role in relation to the experience of student mental illness as that of a listener. However, many also perceived this role as limited. Student services staff were not there to “solve problems,” and when problems were made to appear, when they “happened”, the best that they could do would be to direct students to the “right resources.” In one interview participant’s description of an ‘incident’ of disclosure, disclosure occasioned a view of mental illness as something that “happened” which marked a distinction between the responsibilities of students and those of university staff:

Okay, so when that happened I made the phone call right here. I asked the student’s permission, “Do you permit me to call this person? Do you need help? Or do you want to go to hospital? I would go with you.” And it’s with their permission. It’s not something I would just take them and go to the hospital and I would not disclose anything. It would be their responsibility to disclose that, and that goes with anybody that comes here because that’s not our place, we don’t mediate in those kinds of disputes. Or if it’s a staff member, we’re here to listen. We’re not here to solve all the problems, and we encourage people to solve their own problems and go to the right resources.

What are the ethical, social and political significance of the cultural demand to “disclose” one’s mental illness within the university community, represented in the form of a ‘recommendation’? What they said is one thing, what they meant was, we don’t have insurance, should anything go wrong. We do not have that level of ‘clearance’. We cannot be held responsible for what you do, because we are not the experts on this…but neither are you…Not having insurance, a verifiable claim to authority made material in the form of credentials, and not being influenced by psychiatric knowledge and discipline are two very different things. The meaning of counselor is here constituted in the form of a provisional authority, one which needs to ask “permission”, and by virtue of that, an authority which would not disclose, cannot be held responsible, and is not there to “solve all the problems”. “Not a counselor” is a mediation which understands itself outside of conflict, which does not enter “disputes” concerning names and
naming, is just there to encourage and direct. This expression exemplifies resilience as a “style of thinking” that does not only know when to apologize, but to ask permission.

I now situate this understanding of resilience, as recognition of the authority of Western knowledge regimes, in relation to the social model of disability. Although the social model recognizes disability as a product of oppressive social and economic orders, one of the limits of the social model is that its acceptance may rest on a failure to question who the oppressor is. A taken-for-granted relation to oppression as a feature of ableist societies was illustrated by several of the interviewees. Dimitris Anastasiou and James Kauffman (2010) situate the problematic character of relations to oppressive structures within Oliver’s conception of expertise as a ‘trap.’ From their perspective, “The problem, for Oliver (1996), is that physicians and ‘pseudoscientific paramedical professions’ are seen as trapped in their social roles as experts and, at the same time, as oppressors of people who have disabilities” (2010, p. 1). Student Life professionals invoked the bureaucratic hierarchy and divisive nature of Student Life Programs and Services as a sign of the limits of what they can do to support students who disclose a mental illness.

Others shared similar stories which highlighted the importance of “documentation” and ‘training’ to what could be expected from them. On multiple occasions “documentation” was made to appear as something which students need, and also something which University student services staff can provide. In such instances, what students are perceived to ‘need’ is to be sent elsewhere. Consider the following assertions by two separate interview participants:

No, so, like I’m very clear that I’m not a counselor. I’m very clear that I’m willing to listen and be a friend in the sense of listening, but I’m not a counselor so they can come and they don’t need any documentation. But, I also cannot offer any documentation, so I can’t write any letters for them or anything.

Yes, so particularly if I felt…because I’m not a trained counselor, you know a student who had come who was concerned about his mental wellbeing and was suicidal and often the first place I refer students is to Counseling and Psych Services, here in the University, so to use the University system first.
In their stories of themselves as ‘there to listen’, there was a sense of ambivalence about the extent of their roles as staff and not “trained counselors”, and a tacit assumption that a failure to act appropriately could, as the newspaper article displayed, end in death. They were careful to distinguish what they did from that of the ‘experts’. Only the experts had the power to confirm what had actually happened. Doing so, they also shared a version of listening as something which is situated within a social system.

In a chapter in his book, *The Social System*, titled, “Belief Systems and the Social System: The Problem of the ‘Role of Ideas’,” Talcott Parsons (1951) discusses “patterns of value-orientation” (p. 326) and the place of culture in action systems. According to Parsons, there is “[…] always a normative aspect in the relation of culture to the motivational components of action; the culture provides standards of selective orientation and ordering” (Parsons, 1951, p. 327). The next section considers how the capitalist values of Western university systems organize a pragmatic view of student life within the university setting as a potential and unfortunate casualty of the seemingly inescapable need to succeed.

**Conforming to the Capitalist Rules of Action**

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber says,

The capitalist economy of the present day is an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live. It forces the individual, in so far as he is involved in the system of market relationships, to conform to capitalist rules of action (2003, p. 54).

In the below passage cited below, the interviewee communicates an understanding of mental illness as immanent to the nature of capitalist society.

I think it’s a myth that you can be well in 21st century capitalism, like I think it’s impossible, and I think this work-life balance is kind of bullshit and we need to name it and then help people strategize around what’s possible. But, individualizing it as I’m just not achieving work-life balance, like I really resist that. I think that in a culture that is so consumer focused and so uncommunity-minded, to think that
people won’t be anxious and depressed is ridiculous. So, to think about sort of what I call low-grade anxiety and depression that is getting in the way of somebody’s life, and that is why they might be registered, but to think that is not culturally-constructed is a mistake… I think I have a clear recognition that there is probably something biologically based that will be long term mental health stuff that we need to take more seriously than I would have ten years ago. Because, I’ve met more folks that seem to have something that’s longstanding and hard to navigate without medication, because there was a time when I would have questioned the concept of mental health and was it strictly cultural. I think there’s very little recognition in 21st century capitalism that people can’t work all the time and be well. And there are some people who are a little more vulnerable, that go down faster than the rest of us, but we all go down. And very little tolerance for vulnerability and for the opportunities that vulnerability creates around community-building and humanness and sharing. We want to teach ethics, but we want to prevent the ethical lesson.

If we accept this as true, representations of mental illness which depict mental illness strictly in terms of deviance or nonconformity become questionable. Rather than a deviation from the norm, or abnormality, mental illness is presented by student services in a way which makes it appear as ordinary and to be expected, a reality of everyday life within a neoliberal context.

According to this staff member’s perspective, mental illness both marks the exploitation of students, and rationalizes their descent, “we all go down” but some “that go down faster than the rest of us”. And yet, and at the same time, this statement can be read as an expression of recognition of “a shared condition of precarity that situates our political lives” (Butler, 2011, p. 15): “we all go down.”

Within this context, student services was presented as offering a ‘safe place’, and a discretionary space, comprised of people who understand and are sensitive to the precarious nature of students’ positions within what Weber described as “the immense cosmos” and “inalterable order of things in which [students] must live” (2003, p. 54):

Everywhere else, it seems to me, they’re called upon to be better-than or they are less-than or whatever, but at least I think here we’ve nurtured them and we’ve given them an opportunity to be who they are and they’re accepted for who they are. Because that is the truth. Are they going to get a job? I went to a graduation of PhD students and there was close to 200 and they looked like they were 16 years old and my thought was, where are you going to get a job? Like how are you? You know, and it’s sad, but that’s the route that people have to follow. Most things, most times.
… that’s their biggest concern – you know, what am I going to do when I’m finished, or I don’t want to go to grad school or am I going to get into grad school – I mean, this is the anxiety that starts at year one. And this plays out and plays out and plays out, and goes on and on and on, this is what I’m noticing to be very difficult, and really, what can I say? … And so, I think that that is where their anxiety is, and they get caught up in that sort of feeling of what am I going to do, what am I going to do?

In an article in The Globe and Mail titled, “Mental Health Worries Grow Among University Students”, Erin Anderssen (2009) says that “suicide is the second leading cause of death among university students.” She tells the story of Taylor Kagel, a 17 year old at Simon Fraser University who had, “won a scholarship, but felt too overwhelmed to study for exams, and his failing grades just made it worse.” Anderssen places Kagel in a group of a growing number of students with mental health problems, including 19 year old University of Ottawa student Michel Gariepy who committed suicide shortly after moving into residence. She describes how Kagel contemplated suicide in his second year but “made the choice instead to go to his doctor.” Interestingly enough, Anderssen suggests that this really does not come as much of a surprise since, “In many ways, universities are the perfect incubators for mental-health problems. Illnesses such as depression and anxiety often strike in late teens and early twenties, and students often far from family face common triggers: break-ups, drug use, the pressure to make good grades while bills pile up.” Anderssen cites the economic situation as an additional “trigger” for mental health problems. Students are buckling under the strain of increasing expectations and worries about the kinds of futures, or more aptly, “careers”, their grades can secure. However, the story ends on a high note: “Today, in his final year, his depression and anxiety under control, he helps lead a student wellness group that uses hikes to encourage mental health” (Anderssen, 2009).
Stories like Kagel’s are in abundant supply in the Canadian media, as well the University of Toronto newspapers. These articles offer a way to contextualize the stories of student services staff. Reading the interviewee’s within this context, the following assertion is hardly surprising:

… if a student is obviously mentally distressed or suicidal, I would most definitely send them to the hospital or to the services at U of T. If they need to know things about, you know, what is the residence life, we would refer them… So, definitely there is a referral. We wouldn’t try to handle everything in this office, I’m not a psychologist or anything like that, but a lot of times students would come here asking for advice for this or that, and we are very good about referring them.

Like the others who described themselves as ‘not a counselor’, this interviewee invokes the authority and expertise of psychology. The assertion, “I’m not a psychologist”, offers a means of communicating the specific nature of the work that is done within that particular unit of the division of Student Life: making referrals. And yet, what is also displayed in this assertion is the power and authority of the psychology within the University of Toronto to define what actually counts as a bona fide referral. What they are doing within the different units of the division of Student Life is distinct, and valuable in its own right. At the same time, recognition of this distinction is represented as something which can be accomplished through self-negation.

According to this staff member, their office is different from psychology in that they “wouldn’t try to handle everything”, but they “are very good about referring [students]” nonetheless.

The commonality of ‘referral’ as a practice for students perceived as “obviously mentally distressed or suicidal” should provoke questions concerning the nature of the authority of psychiatric knowledge on North American university campuses. Clearly, psychiatric services are not simply one service universities provide, equal among others. Psychiatric and counseling services play a rather more definitive role in the conduct of everyday life within the university setting; organizing relationships above and beyond those of the students, to include relationships between and among service providers, institutional divisions, and even institutions, such as between the hospital and the university. When students consult university student programs and
services staff for ‘advice’ not only do they receive ‘referrals’, but ways of recognizing the meaning of “extreme circumstances” as something which can be grounded in the “day-to-day” of university life. They also learn of the partial participants who will help, but not force; who will recommend, but not mediate; who understand, but need more information. When I asked what programs are available for students who disclose a ‘mental illness’ I learned about the training staff receive in how to “deal with” students with “emotional problems.” One example is included below:

… there are things like “Safe Talk” which is a program for suicide prevention … it’s part of our engaging with where students are at times and it’s a very difficult period, and even if it’s not so extreme, because Safe Talk is for extreme circumstances, the training you get from that does help with the day-to-day even. It helps for decompressing students and making them come back to the ground. There is that kind of training for wellness of students.

“Safe Talk” illustrates how the language of Student Life Programs and Services is oriented by a notion of the student as always potentially suicidal. “Training for wellness” is presented in a matter-of-fact way as something which exists and which has been adjusted to reflect a growing consciousness “of students.” Under the conditions of modern government, suffering has a use value, a purpose and a goal – to move on and let go of that which we are told cannot be changed: the inescapability of our mortality. Unless it is put to work in the service of utilitarian conceptions of suffering, suicide can have the potential to disrupt this dominant narrative of the usefulness of human suffering.

Martin Seligman produces a notion of suicide as a sign of personal weakness in the face of a challenge. Seligman describes that from his research, “We learned that people who don’t give up have a habit of interpreting setbacks as temporary, local and changeable” (2011, p. 102). This way of relating to death is made powerfully present in the form of University-based reports (ACHA-NACHA, 2006; MacKean, 2011), University-published newspapers such as The Student Body, Mind and Spirit (Vorderbrugge, 2009, p. 2) and U of T News (Nayyer, 2011; Thorne,
2009) and the popular press (Bradshaw, 2011; Brown, 2009; Rodan, 2011), and it takes the form of resource hotlines and directions to offices. This form of ‘acute care’ for students should be troubling, not least of all because it comes too late. It illustrates how what Nikolas Rose refers to as ‘responsibilisation’ is not merely placed on students, but professors, staff, administrators, and perhaps most of all on students’ friends and families. What is not included in the newspaper articles is any mention of the fact that the counseling available to students is limited, usually between 6-12 meetings maximum, or that they may have to wait. It is all short-term. That is what resilience does, and also what resilience conceals: The enduring nature of our short-term problems and their interim solutions. Even as resilience provokes questions concerning the acceptance of domination, it conceals the force – naturalizes it, mythologizes it, erases it, conceals it under the cloak of a certain uncertainty. This temporary, transitional nature of care is something which must be accepted for positive psychology to make sense.

At the University of Toronto, the tenants of positive psychology are communicated in University-sponsored representations of student mental illness as an occasion for students to demonstrate their agency. However, agency is produced as something which is itself in need of care. Students are expected to seek help and to know when and where and how to get it. To fulfill this expectation, students must learn to manage the possible negation of the “university experience”, as made to appear in worries, stress, illness and death. This management necessitates the production of breaks between themselves and the “university experience,” even if these breaks lead to their own self-negation. It is through these breaks that something called ‘student mental life’ emerges, and with it, the possibility of individuals making decisions about the type of student they want to be. This, however, is no easy feat. Especially, once one begins to consider the existence of breaks for which no individual student can lay claim.
Getting Caught - Up in the Break-Down

U of T is a bit challenging when it… it is so decentralized … Students come here, they don’t know anybody. This is a huge overwhelming campus. Say you’ve always volunteered at an animal shelter and you are really passionate about animal rights issues. It would be good to have students right walking in the university door where they would have the opportunity to be more likely to meet other students who also have those same interests and things in common. It breaks down the university into something smaller. And they feel like they were doing that in high school and this is just a continuation of something they are already passionate about. And they can find that community, breaking down this big campus, finding the staff, this organization as well as other students who are also connected, as well as have the same passions and interests, as well as the skills.

According to the above quoted Student Life professional, “U of T is a bit challenging when it… is so decentralized….” Finding others “who also have the same interests and things in common” can help make the work of living up to this challenge an occasion to reflect on one’s sense of self. Thus, part of the work of Student Life involves orienting students to an understanding of the world as something in which breaks can be conceived as the basis of a common sense. Within this way of a world, the University is made meaningful and material as “just a continuation of something they are already passionate about.” According to this expression of a Student Life perspective, the necessity of “breaking down the big campus” can be positive in that it creates opportunities to find other students desirous of making connections. Within this perspective, the University is a place where students can rediscover themselves, and perhaps even a home.

In Student Life discourse, feelings of belonging or a sense of home are presented as the ‘gold standard’ of successful institutional organization. An engagement with the (un)settling practices of colonialism can offer a view to one pragmatic way through which an unfulfilled desire for home is reconciled. The genealogy of the University of Toronto discussed in Chapter 3 illustrated how this reconciliation takes the form of a process of outward expansion motivated by the promise of yet undisclosed and ‘undiscovered’ territories and ‘natural resources’ waiting to
be claimed, cultivated, and exploited. This has a damaging effect on both the homeland and the new territories “discovered” and colonized (Fanon, 1965). Technical knowledge about homesickness as a private experience and an alienated consciousness organize a collective “recognition of aloneness” (Natanson, 1970, p. 89) as both a symptom of general pathology, and a particular pathological type – the mentally ill student.

While all students may experience homesickness, the mentally ill student is made to embody the pathos of estrangement. The psychic and material realities of homelessness, being and thinking and feeling in ways which are not at home in or with the world, what Durkheim (1951) referred to as anomie, are represented as serious threats to the stability of social orders. While all students are expected to experience a ‘degree’ of stress, anxiety, distress and disinterestedness, the type - mentally ill student – is made one with stress, anxiety, distress and disinterestedness. In this body the boundary lines dividing idea and image, individual and society, become irretrievably blurred. This is a student who is “constantly moving”, literally and figuratively. As one interviewee recalled, “the students that we see are constantly moving, we can’t always do anything about it but it does seem to be that type of person who has other issues, right, mental health, home life challenges or financial or a combo.” The alter to the ‘mentally ill type’ of student, permanently in a state of transition, is the commuter student, for whom it is also assumed that travel constitutes a barrier to participation (Gianoutsos, 2011; Horn, 2008; Tamburrie, 2008; Kuh, Gonyea & Palmer, 2001). However, the commuter student, the student whose permanent residence lays outside the periphery of campus centres, the distances traversed from home to school, to home again, are measured, calculated, regulated and contained. For this type of student, participation is a problem which can be reconciled through the production of more flexible schedules which incorporate a greater number of breaks, including “common hours” and “class free time” during the day when off-campus students can participate in
curricular activities (Tamburri, 2008). In contrast, the students *Student Life* professionals see as “that type of person who has other issues” move in a way over which you “can’t always do anything about.” Unlike the commuter student, the constancy of the movement characteristic of the type with “other issues” is best understood as an expression of the need for measure, and proof of what happens when the hard and fast distinctions between the worlds within the university and those situated beyond become obscured.

Without seeking to explain why “that type” of student moves the way it does, it would appear that there is something more than ‘role conflict’ (Macionis & Gerber, 2010) at work. If we accept what the *Student Life* professional says, “that type” of student is not simply being *pulled in* various directions, and as such, cannot be assumed as making ‘conscious’ decisions concerning how and where and when to move. In the presence of a presumably ‘unconscious’ constancy, the power of influence and persuasion characteristic of the caring professions, here embodied in *Student Life*, meets its limit. Within the “limit situation” (Jaspers, 1919) which “that type” of student makes visible, it becomes possible to imagine an unregulated multiplicity as a barrier to both success and survival. For “that type,” progress is a product of being and having been *pushed out* from multiple sites. The student that meets this description is perceived not merely as an “issue” to be addressed, but also the proprietor of “a combo” of “issues” (e.g., “home life challenges or financial or …”). As such, students perceived as personifying “that type” represent a triple threat to the orderly life of the university. In “constantly moving” the way they do, they threaten the legitimacy of neoliberal forms of care, the integrity (i.e., self-sufficiency) of ‘institutional culture’, and the presumed positivity of resilience. For, “that type” of student can make of resilience so much more and other than merely a measure of successful adaptation. “That type” can make of resilience something *supernatural*, something mythical and something which can be perceived as refusing to die. This is a student who dwells in the beyond.
The appearance of the mentally ill student type reflects social imaginations of the ‘conditions’ of a life expected to live outside of norms, standards and deviations, averages and ideals, a life as if outside of culture. This is a life that cannot be lived except through death. Through this life we come into proximity with the possibility of living death, observed through plated glass through the contemporary Benthamic panopticons of televisions and computer screens that, like Marx’s *camera obscura*, reflect inverse truths whose consumption, ironically, comes to constitute leisure. Stories of addiction, overdose, self-harm, self-mutilation, suffocation, school shootings, suicides, *senseless suffering* are presented as a contemporary ‘reality’, as the excess of culture (Michalko, 2009). Too much culture could be, as Durkheim (1951) understood it, bad for the soul. And not only individual’s souls, but the souls, or spirits, of peoples, places and things. This is a fact, and not just any fact but a “social fact” (Durkheim, 1982, p. 50) that can be empirically verified and statistically proven. It is on these grounds, in a belief in society as a place for ‘people’, that Sociology charted its field of application and experience; its ‘not to be got around’; which is to say, its sense of itself as something simultaneously a part of, separate and whole. It is the assumption of a transitional life that makes it possible to personify the world, and to say things like the world is mad or sick or pathological and mean it is the nature of the world to be mad, sick, pathological, and to know that the truth of the world is that it is predisposed to mad-ness, sick-ness, pathology and error.

Western culture positions some lives as if lived outside of it. The ‘true reality’ of the possibility of a life lived outside culture is affirmed in its strange mythic character as an uncanny sense of being captured by the radical alterity of the world; the recognition of difference as an unexpected reminder of the fact that we do appear. For Mark Taylor, objects that are perceived as ‘transitional’ are inscribed by what he refers to as the “transgression of the grotesque” (1990, p. 14). According to Taylor,
Such objects are not really “objects” in the strict sense of the word, for they do not stand over and against (Gegen-stand) a subject. The liminality of a transitional “object” eludes clear conceptualization and classification. The grotesque upsets thought by dislocating its structure. While the logic of reflection tends to be either Aristotelian (either/or) or dialectical (both/and), the grotesque involves the nonlogic or neither/nor. Neither inside nor outside, but inside-out and outside-in… (Taylor, 1990, p. 114)

The recognition of difference does not only invoke and rely on a notion of the same, but the existence of other differences. As Anastasiou and Kauffman remind us, “in speaking about difference we implicitly compare one or more differences in existence” (2010, p. 3). Not only do we appear, but others appear with, and through our appearance.

The atypical vantage point Linton introduces discussed in Chapter 2 cannot, therefore, be treated as something which is good beyond question. It too requires further thought, especially once we consider that, “Atypical is the opposite of usual or typical, but not the opposite of natural” (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2010, p. 3). Thus far this chapter has endeavoured to show how what can begin as a recognizably radical interpretation of disability can also become a “natural attitude” (Husserl, 1983; Schütz & Luchmann, 1973). There are limits in thinking that what constitutes consciousness of disability is the experience of being a deviation from the norm since, “Judgment of deviance itself is not sufficient to define a disability” (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2010, p. 4). This understanding was expressed by a previously cited interviewee who said that although there was a time when mental illness appeared as something which could be “strictly cultural”, over time s/he realized that it is also “probably something biologically based.” For this Student Life professional, the probability of a biological basis of mental illness makes it something which warrants its being taken “seriously.”

In focusing its efforts on breaking down, and ‘decompressing’, student services perceives itself as offering students a way of making sense of their separateness, not as the source of distress or despair, but as a site of reconstruction. You might even say, a way of reconciling with
a world. The difficulty, or ethical dilemma, it also poses, concerns the implicit instruction to treat
the meaning of the world as something which can be reconciled, despite recognition of
uncertainty or ambiguity. To achieve reconciliation in observable, measurable ways student
services both rationalizes the world, and treats it as a sacred space and hallowed ground, the
resting place and alter of the mystery of a sovereign “I”. Thus getting caught in the break down
is to be taken as a certain type, and caught as such. This is the type that is perceived as
permanently out of place. This type is simultaneously without an in-between, and the site of one.
As such a problem, the type of student with mental health problems represents the need for
solutions that we saw offered above, but there is more. There is also the possibility of alternative
solutions, or alternative relations, to which I now turn.

Engaging Success as a Question of Accommodation

Titchkosky (2003) says, “Clearly culture organizes the lives of disabled people in a
devalued way. The task now is to seek some reconciliation (Arendt, 1994, pp. 307-27) with a
world that has almost no interest in, and sometimes would rather kill, alternative ways of being
in the world” (p. 236). I now consider the labour of forgetting involved in the work of ‘seeking
reconciliation’ as a capitalist venture. To this end, I examine assumptions concerning the
‘competitive nature’ of university life and work. I do so with the aim of disrupting reductive
relations to the University which treat it as a context which, once grasped in its entirety, can
provide for the development of more finely tuned understandings of the “empirical reality”
(Titchkosky, 2003, p. 236) of student mental life and the conditions of academic success. This
examination begins with an engagement with the meaning of success, and with the various ways
we have at our disposal of engaging it.

One interviewee expressed concerns over the usual ways success is understood:
I think it can be a really valuable word, “success”, but sometimes I have concerns about that as a drive, because I’m not always sure how it’s being defined and students themselves are perceiving that definition themselves, right? So, I met with a student the other day who is doing her PhD and she’s like, “I don’t know if I’m going to be able to complete it, but I’m just thankful to have gotten this far.” She’s battling with a little bit of ability issue and in a new context – she’s an international student – so what is success for her, then, right? Is it a completion of a program and high grades? Or, is it that she made it this far, she’s taken two classes, she’s learned a bunch of things and she’s made a few friends. So I often think “success” is this nice word, but I’m not quite sure. It’s so outcome-focused in some ways and what is the process for helping students stay present to what is going on now.

To achieve a ‘higher order’ of being, students are instructed to view a focus on survival as a barrier to success. The normative expectations of the university environment can produce stress, but it is up to students to learn how to interpret and respond to these expectations in “productive” ways. Students must learn not only to prioritize, but how to distance themselves from the visibility of survival, so that they appear to be more natural, more playful, and learn to experience themselves and their worlds ‘more fully.’ Central to this is becoming accustomed to breaking-up complex situations into “manageable chunks.” This is true whether you are a student or a staff member:

So, I’ve developed that knowledge that I need to know in terms of when a student comes in I know the best practices around the accommodations that they require. Just through building contacts, knowing who I need to phone to have certain accommodations put in place and to sort of break it down into manageable chunks for the students.

It’s difficult enough to be a student and then you add on the symptoms and side-effects that a lot of our students experience, and then ask them to do a lot more work on top of that. So, that’s one of the intentions of the workshops – to help break it down into more manageable chunks, and to target the workshops at times of year when the students need to be thinking about certain things, so that we’re not telling them everything in September; so that we’re re-orienting them throughout the year.

We can address the discourses of student mental health and illness to make the horizons of perception manifest and explicit through processes of translation, standardization, and harmonization. However, when the discourse is made to reveal its forms of perception, culture is removed from the world. No longer part of the world, culture appears but one factor in much
bigger equation. This analysis has aimed to unpack what it is that this equation is oriented to figuring out, and how this figuring can involve making sense of bureaucracy as that which we ‘all’ have in common. As another staff member informed me,

A lot of the workshops that happen are very specific to the bureaucratic nature of our office. So, we’re trying to help students understand what their responsibilities to our office are, and then to be there to assist and to walk a student through the process so that they understand what their responsibilities are and what deadlines are, so that they’re able to learn in an interactive environment.

And the activities of filling out forms, writing up reports, securing appropriate documentation and specialized expertise, do provide a common ground, however tenuous. Within student services the issue of accommodation is undeniably and irrevocably bureaucratic. It cannot be otherwise. But that is not all that it can be.

… we work with residences a lot around accommodations for students. So, if a student needs certain types of accommodations in a room, right, or has allergies around certain types of carpeting, or needs a single room. I worked with a student recently who has [Obsessive Compulsive Disorder] OCD so we had to strategize together with the residence Don and get her permission around ways to disclose her disability, with her support, ways to disclose her disability to her suitemates and ways to make the residence experience as positive for her as possible. Even though she had certain compulsions which were important to her, like opening and closing the doors several times at night and turning on and off the lights several times at night, and so the issue there was how do we arrange this with the suitemates so that everybody is as satisfied as possible? So the student has her accommodations and suitemates feel as least disturbed as possible, and there’s good will.

In the above interview excerpt, the student with OCD is narrated as though she belongs to another culture. This student would be able to continue the cultural practices which are meaningful to her, with the support of the other people who shared the common space, even though her practices might conflict with theirs. This is expressed in the example of her ‘compulsion’ to open and close doors repeatedly, or turn lights on and off at night when night time is for sleeping, to close doors and turn lights off. This example shows up one of the major limits of thinking of disability as a cultural difference, as depicted in Garland Thomson’s (1997) conception of disability as ethnicity (and not ethnicity). Is the appearance of the student with
OCD best understood as an example of accommodation? Is this appearance proof of the existence of a specific type of student living within the University that has recognizable needs and preferences? Or, can the appearance of the student with OCD also be understood in terms of reconciliation, as a means of reconciling contradictory and conflicting interpretations of the existence of a nature/culture divide?

Within the passage, students with OCD can make night time a “strange time” (Taylor, 1990, p. 16) at the University of Toronto. The intelligibility of such an approach rests to some extent on the homogenization of disability, and a conflation of the Cartesian mind-body split. Rather than offer a viable alternative to Cartesianism, it collapses the mind and the body, culture and nature. Disability is simultaneously naturalized and denaturalized, constructed as a negatable reality, or to use the words of Titchkosky, an “excludable type” (2007, p. 5). The student with OCD is depicted as having a natural tendency or “compulsion” to do certain practices, and yet these practices are represented in cultural terms, as a ritual which is subjectively meaningful for the participant. There is the implicit assumption that abstaining from this practice, this ritual, could lead to a sense of what Durkheim calls “anomie” (1951), or what Weber referred to as a ‘disenchantment with the world’ (2003). And, as one of the other interviewees suggested, if the university wants the “academic product” that it claims it does, it needs to recognize and address what is important to students.

This view is limited in that it constructs culture as an outcome that results from an interaction between the nature of students and the nature of the environments that students inhabit. The student with OCD is represented as having a routine which conflicts with the normal routines of her nondisabled “suitemates.” As such, her very presence is presented as a threat to the self-actualization of her suitemates, transforming what was designed to be a common space into an unlivable space through the disruption of the routine performance of everyday life which
is expected from all students. This disruption becomes a question of accommodation only because of the closeness with which the practice resembles the cultural practices of the suitemates, fellow students and the authorities which monitor and manage these spaces. For difference to be conceived as something which can be accommodated, OCD must be represented as, ‘the same but different’ as non-OCD. Its presence has not fundamentally altered the meaning of the space – the residence has doors to be opened and closed, light switches which can be turned on and turned off. It is what the student identified through the language of OCD makes of the space, and the way she is made to appear as another possibility within it, which is disruptive.

Stiker says, “What is natural is integral. This may seem banal, because the division of things is so often to be found. But, as I shall demonstrate, this is no longer true in our society, where the natural is not primarily the condition of being integral but that of being integrable. This will become the new social naturalness” (1999, p. 32). Recognizing the way disability is situated in the university as an “absent presence” (Titchkosky, 2011a; Walcott, 2003), and perhaps moreover, a condition of error, illustrates Stiker’s suggestion that the ‘new’ natural is best understood as the condition of being integrable (1999, p. 32). The presumably routine practices of the student with OCD are constructed as natural for her given the ‘disorder’ that conditions her life; natural insofar as they are “compulsions”, but therefore also cultural too. Her natural compulsions, like those of her suitemates are assumed to be “important” but inessential and even disruptive to their lives. Their natural compulsions are, on the other hand, assumed essential to her successful understanding of, and participation in, the “university experience.” In framing the difference that OCD makes in terms of compulsions, the student services staff member that made this assertion reproduced an assumption that this difference can be managed, but because it can be ‘managed’, and so everyone can manage (i.e. ‘get by’), this alternative way of thinking about disability nonetheless relies on very ordinary ways of understanding disability,
as a problem that is beyond her, but which can be contained through education and expertise. The expert here is not the girl, despite the fact that it appears to begin with her experiences.

When the meaning of the difference which OCD makes visible is presented as a matter of, “opening and closing the doors several times at night and turning on and off the lights several times at night”, and when the value of cohabitation becomes something which can be evaluated in terms of “satisfaction,” “feeling as least disturbed as possible,” and “good will,” difference becomes something which, however “important,” can be lived without. Accommodation increases the probability of her integration within normal life, making it more possible for her to participate in the ordinary activities assumed to characterize university student life. It is however also assumed that, in the absence of “good will”, a relatively normal situation within the university context such as living on campus could become unliveable. Doors and lights regulate the traffic of what Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann refer to as “waking life” (1973, p. 46). The seemingly unwarranted and repetitive activation and deactivation of these regulators, for purposes beyond those of coming and going, disrupts the “unfolding of routines that constitutes day-to-day life” (Giddens, 1987, p. 60), making the continuity of the university student identity questionable.

Despite the presumed naturalness of these actions, the difficulty identifying the intention behind these actions within the context of established knowledge about what students do makes the actor appear unnatural. Without refuting the fact that such actions could disturb the normal order of shared residence, it is interesting to note the central role that disclosure plays in recovering or repairing (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 3) a potentially disrupted normalcy, and how this work of recovery and/or repair, produces a notion of the disabled individual as always potentially a source of disturbance and a problem for “good will.” This also raises the question of how the
meaning of possibility is constrained, when all that can be made of it is framed as a question of more or less.

Also, these behaviours are disruptive because of the barriers they are presumed to create for the ‘ordinary’ non-disabled student who co-habits with the student with OCD. Recognizing that disability is produced as a barrier to the fulfillment of the idea and image of normate embodiment, and through it, the realization of the norm, discloses the reality of the norm as something unfulfilled and in-transition. OCD mediates cultural understanding of academic performance as a measure of participation. For, whether or not this student and her suitemates accept disability, if she fails to sustain a certain average, and keep a certain grade, she will be expelled and removed from that space. The same can be said of the other presumably non-disabled students, with the very important exception that the educational instructional and testing system has been designed on the basis of a body ideal which they can be expected to more closely resemble.

The meaning of participation cannot be understood in isolation of the rules of relation which govern institutional contexts such as one might expect to find within the university setting. We all fall, but some faster than others, expresses a sense of ambivalence concerning the possibilities for radical transformation within the university. The widely acknowledged competitive nature of university life does not only blur the lines between success and survival, but between the University of Toronto and society in general. Although analogies can be made between social institutions and social structures, it is extremely unlikely, and would be very surprising, if people could be justifiably evicted from their place of residence because they failed to demonstrate mastery of scientific knowledge of the natural, social, applied or artistic variety on a multiple choice test, a take-home exam, or five page essay. So, what does participation
mean within the context of the university, and not just any university, but the historically-specific and contingent university, as in this case, the University of Toronto?

**Learning to Live with(in) a Secret**

Students living with the secret of an undisclosed difference represent a threat to the integral-ness of the institution; and with it, taken-for-granted relations to the nature of consciousness, and the meaning of the relations between biology and individuality, as represented in the social mode of disability studies in terms of impairment and disability (Oliver, 1986, 1993). Difference left undisclosed and undiagnosed is culturally understood as a cause of disorganization and deterioration, like an “accident” waiting to happen (Titchkosky, 2011a), or a trigger to be pulled (Madden, 2012; University College Cork, 2010; University of Sheffield, 2012; University of Western Ontario, 2010). This assumption may say more about the University’s own relation to its deeds than those of students – it posits a hidden dangerous potentiality within the student as a way to ‘come to terms’ with its participation in the violence of colonial capitalism.

Knowledge of mental illness is produced as a means of addressing the problem, which is to say, the difficult question, of a disordered sameness: pathology. In *The Normal and the Pathological*, George Canguilhem (1991) describes pathology as a relation to error. The interviewee, who refers to the students with OCD, too reveals a way of understanding such a student as ultimately just like everyone else. The medical diagnosis, OCD, frames the difference as an error in the way individuals who live with this condition receive and process the meaning of environmental cues. The social services perspective represented by the interviewee also frames the difference as an error, albeit one which is realized in the way others within her environment relate to the behaviours expected of someone with her condition. Even as the student services perspective shifts the onus to integrate OCD into the ordinary university
experience from the student to her suitemates, there is the prevailing sense that the barriers to her participation in the university environment are the unfortunate outcome of an error, whether in biology or understanding; an error that can be corrected given access to more refined knowledge of the internal divisions which, taken together, make up the “university experience.” A social services perspective thus not only illustrates that a Cartesian divide frames the University’s relations to its students, but that so-called alternatives to biomedical perspectives can work to reinforce the assumptions on which biomedicine is based. These assumptions could be conceived as the hidden curriculum of academic success. They are compelling precisely for what they give us, the timeless and resilient character of breaks.

The body which has animated this dissertation is not that of the student, but the University of Toronto. It is of the University of Toronto, that the student can be perceived as a part, and apart. It is through its texts that the meaning of the student life becomes political. Within the text of the University of Toronto, the history of its becoming is (en)folded in pamphlets and (en)framed in columns, produced as something caused to be in the hands of its students. Quartered in newsletters, broken down into manageable chunks, the story of the University of Toronto’s identity, the coherency of its approach to the otherness as something to be included, acquires a distinctly ethical character. Through these texts that the university becomes transitive.

At the University of Toronto “history is happening” (original emphasis; Bhabha, 1994, p. 237). It is through the textual production of the student that the University of Toronto can get beyond itself, “to touch the future on its hither side” (Bhabha, 1994). The appearance of student types could thus be read not merely an expression of the exclusionary and oppressive character of the University, but also as an “internal subversion in which the binary is both presupposed and proliferated to the point where it no longer makes sense” (Butler, 1990, p. 160). It is through the
textual production of the student as a figure of mental health needs that the University recollects its possibilities. It is through this production that the identity of the University is affirmed as not an asylum. The meaning of the University identity is thus inescapably bound-up and in-with the appearance of the student as one who, however in need of supervision, nonetheless takes responsibility, has insight concerning external conditions and knows when and where and how to ask for help. And if those individuals who enter under the auspices of the student fall, the University mourns their loss as a most unfortunate reminder that we all fall, but some of us go down faster than the rest of us.

Conceived as a figure of mental health needs, the construct ‘student’ represents the University’s attempts to re-member its body; to put itself back together again (Butler, 1990, p. 161). However, this work of re-membering rests on a rendering of the University as chaotic, a space of stress and a place of violence (Rockhill, 1987). This not even the University can conceal from itself. Instead, it tries to neutralize the power of this rendering through naturalization, representing the student as a conditional subject. The presence of individuals whose appearance threatens the stability or coherency of the University of Toronto’s biography, can thus be justifiably removed on the basis that they fail to meet the requirements or benchmarks of student life as it is imagined at the University of Toronto. Although included, such individuals are made present and recognizable as always already potentially negatable. Put otherwise, such individuals are made present and recognizable not as students, but student types.

The student can therefore be understood as the University of Toronto’s “stable point of reference” (Butler, 1990, p. 163) for the reclamation of the nothing but. The trouble the University of Toronto faces in this pursuit, and the problem that this pursuit makes of the individuals who enter the University under the auspices of becoming its students, is that the nothing but never belonged to the University to begin with. Hence, the University’s work of re-
membering can never be completed; it can only be revised. With each revision and reconstruction of the student as a figure of mental health needs, the meaning of the University for students is instituted as an “internal situation” (Weber, 1991, p. 134) and a source of grief. It is through grieving that it stakes its claim to what Weber refers to as “consciousness of happiness” – the right to be happy, as illustrated by the following staff member:

They’re thinking faculty can help me and my friends can help me, but not a staff person per se, unless they are giving you a direct service. But I often find, having a conversation with students kind of alleviates that, even, you know, discussing the internal struggles I have with mental illness, with their mental illness if they choose to disclose it to me. So, I mean that conversation is very helpful, I find. I wanted to share that with you.

Images and ideas concerning violence, illness, and death play a definitive role in contemporary relations to what has come to be called ‘mental illness’. Although it may seem redundant to say that the meaning of ‘mental illness’ is shaped by notions of illness, this can only be the case if ‘mental illness’ is taken literally, at ‘face-value’, as a designation with a corresponding reality. Thinking of ‘mental illness’ in this way requires one forget, at least momentarily, the historical specificity of the term. It also involves an investment in the claim to truth that the term ‘mental illness’ represents. Rather than a redundancy, saying the meaning of mental illness is shaped by images and ideas of illness can be interpreted as an occasion to recollect our relations to identity; an invitation to stay a while, sit with, and listen to what our relations, more than often ignored or taken for granted, are telling us about who we are. It also offers a way of perceiving ‘mental illness’ not simply as a ‘social construction’ used to categorize, exclude and silence difference, but also and at the same time a name.

The solution to the perceived lack or loss of a name which Student Life mediates is accomplished through the provision of places, offices, where such questions can be asked in private and held in confidence:
The other students, what they say about the transition is that it’s the first time in life where they get to go down the slide and make the decisions. So, they’re saying don’t take the slide away, it’s actually a very exciting thing at 17 to actually organize an experience according to what you think matters, and it might be going to the pub and that’s fine. Just let us go down the slide but pad it so that when we mess up there are systems there to help us, right? And I think academics want critical thinking, but you don’t get critical thinking if the students don’t have a sense of autonomy. You build that sense of autonomy by having them go down the slide and make their own decisions for the first time. So, if you actually want the academic product that you say you want you’ve got to work with Student Development Theory and Student Life to create the adult whose got the sense of agency and the sense of empowerment to develop the skills that you want them to have and to a large extent in first year courses we have enormous classrooms where people feel anything but empowered. So they’re in a classroom with 1000 people. Where is their voice? Who’s noticing them? Who’s paying attention to them? Where is the sense of belonging? Where’s the sense that I could ask a stupid question?

Students who do not have a name, a diagnosis, a file or a type, are represented here as desirous of this space. The reality of this desire is not disputed, however, the provision of predetermined places within which they can, they must, figure out this desire is, or should be, problematic. Problematic, since not all students enter the university with the privilege of being able to make mistakes. That in fact, if we recall Naylor’s assertion, and the other stories told by members of Student Life, many if not most of the students entering the university do not have this privilege. Taking the ‘wrong’ course, failing, ‘messing-up’ a presentation, could mean the difference between life and death.

Writing of the “difference that disability makes” (2002), Michalko invites an engagement with the grounds of a world which makes of disability a place for movement. Speaking of difference in this way, Michalko makes it possible to question how movement is routinely accepted as a natural characteristic of non-disability. By stopping the flow of movement and normative sequences, disability could be interpreted as presenting the University with an occasion to reflect on the idea of the student. However, the sudden halt or interruption that disability can present to nondisabled movement is not only a situation, but one situation, which is to say, also and at the same time occurring within-and-in-relation-to multiple situations. Since
this interruption is not only within, but also between and across situations in the institutional setting of the University environment tensions and pressures mount which redirect attention from the ‘student question’ (i.e. What does it mean to be, and think and feel like a student?) to appear as the ‘University question’ (Who belongs in a University?). This brings us back to the idea of the university (Jaspers, 1960). In the specific case of the University of Toronto, the idea of the University is an idea steeped in a history of colonialism. Although the British colonists had dreamed of creating a home in the ‘new world’, they also wanted to preserve a sense of the home they left in this newly discovered land. The possibilities of discovery were restricted since the buildings they created referenced the image and memory of the homes they left behind. The deep structural violence of this otherwise nostalgic relation surfaces once one considers that the land they arrived in was neither uninhabited, nor even really ‘new’.

Reconciliation

An understanding of what is happening at the University of Toronto cannot be summed-up or explained by making reference to a particular ‘model’ of thinking. The phenomenal grounds of understanding make it such that it will always exceed explanation. There is, however, a certain way of thinking, speaking, and acting that is, and can be, commonly recognized as powerful and persuasive. The medical service model offers a view to the way we have become accustomed to “enframing” (Heidegger 1977, p. 17) the social; conceptualizing the social as a resource that can be drawn on or extracted to reorder our relations to ‘disorder’, thus making recognizably ‘broken’ people work better, and into better students and workers. In “The Question of Technology,” Martin Heidegger (1977) proposes the concept of enframing as the essence of modern technology and modernity. As Patrick Fitzsimons writes in Heidegger, Education and Modernity (2002, p. 178),
Enframing is the historical stamping which compels humanity to disclose everything in one dimension, as standing reserve; it is a problem in that it imposes upon everything to the degree that nothing is allowed to appear as it is in itself. […] The direction of technological practices that flow from such an Enframing is towards order for its own sake as “everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering” (Heidegger 1977, p. 17).

How, then, can we develop responses to the perception that something is wrong in the university, and not get caught up in the very activities and assumptions that lead to new practices of enframing and with them the hegemonic reproduction of student types? We could begin by looking more closely at the cultural texts with which the meaning and value of disability are routinely scripted.

Student Life professionals’ stories of the meaning of students’ disclosure of a mental illness diagnosis is represented as a difference which, however sensible and made sense of, nonetheless marks a limit in professionalized, bureaucratized understandings of the university environment and the types of subjects the University of Toronto environment literally relies on and reproduces. This difference can only be imagined once brought down to earth and broken down; made an issue for disciplined knowledge and pragmatic expertise. Imagined as a point of access, one might even say an opening, onto the existence of ungrounded experiences, university student disclosure of mental illness makes it possible to reconstruct the University as the “site of the sublime, its experience within the subject” (Sallis, 1987, p. 111). According to Taylor (1990, p. 16),

The difference marked by the sublime cannot be reduced to identity or unity. In the uncanny space of this site, which … is also a strange time, understanding and reason are checked, and held in suspense. In relation to the sublime, the imagination is not synthetic. Instead of reconciling or uniting opposites the imagination constantly alternates, oscillates or hovers between differences it simultaneously brings together and holds apart. Rapidly alternating between opposites it cannot unite, the imagination creates a sense of vertigo – as if the foundation were shaking, cracking, tearing, as if the ground were falling from beneath one’s feet.
One’s choice of disability, the claim to a disability identity, does not necessarily lead to liberation from dichotomous thinking. On the contrary, as Butler (1990) discusses in relation to sex and gender, it relies on these categories and ways of knowing disability as a problem. Rather than reverse the problem which disability is presumed to be, this dissertation has aimed to trace the contours of other ways of knowing disability from within its visibility as a problem. This tracing, which approached the wrongness of disability from multiple angles, followed blood lines, bolded print, and a range of to be continueds to the invention of the student body as a figure of mental health needs.

In “Politics as a Vocation” Weber represents responsibility as, “an attitude of detachment towards things and people”, and an “ability to comprehend things as they are with inner calm and composure before allowing them to affect ones actions” (1978b, p. 212). This understanding of responsibility is present in the responses of Student Life staff in the form of an ‘attunement’ which helps them to act, and educational philosophies and programming they make available to students to help them “decompress.” However, for Arendt, the question is not how to help individuals to learn to decompress, come back down to earth, or to borrow from (1973) Geertz, find their feet. “The question is how much reality must be retained even in a world become inhuman if humanity is not to be reduced to an empty phrase or phantom. Or to put it another way, to what extent do we remain obligated to the world even when we have been expelled from it or have withdrawn from it?” (1968, p. 22). Rather than worlds apart, these two thinkers provoke an important question: What ‘experience’ grounds the possibility of “an attitude of detachment. From what ‘experience’ are we expelled or do we withdraw? Student Life is the answer; which is to say, the complete experience, the “University experience.” And with it, the promise of a yet untouched future.
Reconciling resilience involves reconciling ourselves with a notion of suffering as the very thing which makes us the same; the quintessential basis of shared experience. To reconcile ourselves with suffering, to come “face-to-face with suffering” as Michalko (2002) says, is to encounter responsibility as radical *impossibility*. What is radical about this impossibility is the way recognition of it produces consciousness of particularity as something that can be accessed through conceptions of the ‘physical.’ Positing responsibility as solution leaves many questions unanswered, and perhaps even more unasked. For, what is meant by responsibility? Is what responsibility means for one the same as it is for everyone? What is the responsibility experience? *Re*-imagining responsibility as consciousness of suffering recognizes the relation between responsibility and suffering as a fundamental condition of the appearance of human agency. Accepting that the world is made up of individual choices, *decisions*, delivers an uncomplicated notion of responsibility as something we can control, enact, take, give, leave, ignore, realize, *do*. As tempting as it may be to accept this version of the world, we do so at the risk of forgetting the ‘nature’ of work of recollection and the violence involved in the re-membering of ‘first languages’. With this acceptance, we risk forgetting that remembering, and recollection too, are exercises of power.

The myth of resilience mediates a collective desire for new beginnings. I have endeavoured to show how whatever the new may be, it is not merely something which can be achieved through a ‘conscious decision.’ It is *also*, an interpretive moment structured by ‘collective contextualizations’ (Weiss, p. 7). A critical disability studies reading informed by phenomenology, sociology, and feminist and a self-reflective relation psychiatric knowledge can make of a beginning out of an overdetermination. The problem, and the trouble is, that for the transformation to occur we must first become something *other*, and not just any other but an other’s other, an other which is *no thing*…*but* an “internal situation” (Weber, 1991, p. 134). The
return to the “but” is read as a resistant reconciliation. A critical analysis of student types can thus teach us that what is central to the authority of modern forms of governance may not concern answering the question, “Who am I?”, so much as being perceived as being in a position to ask it. The problem, and the trouble is you are not supposed to ask who you are. Asking such questions does not remove one from the pragmatic frames which order social interaction and the appearance of ‘everyday life’ or the ‘work-a-day world’. But...

The pamphlet and the newsletter provided illustrations of how breakdowns ought to occur and be read. These texts do not only make the ‘facts’ of life at the University of Toronto accessible, they also produce a notion of what it is that is essential about the University of Toronto. What makes it different. However the meaning of student life may initially appear to be about academic success or institutional survival (a contemporary and university specific rendering of the culture/nature binary), it is the affirmation of the existence of the “University experience”, and with it common questions, and a shared world as something which can be earned and enjoyed, that really counts. The hidden curriculum, perhaps even the subliminal message of Student Life is that the answer to who we are can be found within universal experiences. Within the story of Student Life, resilience trumps reconciliation.

To imagine the construction of administrative and institutional divisions simply as social responses to individual student needs that parallel the ‘natural’ divisions in students’ lives absolves universities of their role in the production of others within: students who co-habit within the University’s domain, but who are not assumed to dwell there. That divisions such as Student Life Programs and Services can have productive value for marginalized and oppressed bodies is not disputed. The presence of divisions is often interpreted and experienced as a form of care available to students perceived as ‘in need.’ Nor is it disputed that this way of caring for students can facilitate their ‘adjustment’ to the normative expectations of university
environments, contributing to the successful realization of university students’ ‘potential’. What is disputed, or rather, questioned, is the underlying assumption that the source of student ‘mental life’ and its presumed problems can and should be located in divisions that exist within the students themselves.
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