WORTH-LESS SUBJECTS:
COLONIZING THE SOCIAL BODY THROUGH NEOEUGENIC ONTOLOGIES OF WORTH

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ABSTRACT

Critical disability studies (CDS) and decolonial studies both contain research streams which explore how state systems classify bodies' worth (i.e. usefulness and/or disposability) according to their perceived positions vis-a-vis geopolitical aims. For instance, decolonial theories on the production of disposability explore how bodies deemed obstacles to the state are targeted for debility and/or death. It is the intersection point of four disciplines—CDS, decolonial studies, feminist studies, and political economy—which illuminates how the production of worth is produced and legitimated. The following research proposes to intersect CDS concepts on the geopolitics of disability with feminist theories of affect (i.e. how minds are politically directed) and decolonial theories on the production of disposability (i.e. debility and death) to study the optimization of worth. The primary research question asks how does breaking down ontologies of worth provide new conceptual frameworks for understanding politics of value production? The research combines a critical literature review with antidotal illustrations of the production of worth, drawing on the methods of reflexivity and autoethnography. The focus line of enquiry explores the relationship between colonial eugenic ontologies and geopolitics of disposability. This focus is sub-divided into two, with corresponding illustration points: 1) *ontological violence of academia*, which acts as justification for the production of *worthiness* through academia's valourization of ability; 2) ontological violence of *worthlessness* in periphery locations, as the production of debilitation by way of the spaces and positionalities bodies occupy, utilizing a rural small town as an illustration point which includes a history of institutionalization. This thesis explores how the ontologies of worth operate as a neocolonial technique of power directing body capacities and sentiments.

GENERAL DEDICATION

To anyone who feels worthless or worth-*less.*

PERSONAL DEDICATION

To my late maternal grandfather, Ian Woods (Gramps).

Gramps, I have always looked up to you. It is so rare to meet someone so deeply respected by their community for their moral character as you. You were a kind and generous soul.

Looking back, I think I first chose to attend university in part because of you. I wanted to make you proud. The worst deadline I ever missed was submitting my master's thesis for review just a few months after you had left this world. I wish you could have known I had made it.

You were one of the greatest storytellers I have ever known.

I am so deeply proud to have been your granddaughter and will forever carry you and your teachings in my heart.

Rest In Peace

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I want to thank my *Mom* for teaching me from a very young age that worth is not determined by intellectual performance or grades. Nor is it determined by one's labour class. From an early age, you taught me reflexivity and empathy. Looking back, I realize how hard you tried to expose me to Indigenous teachings during a time when there were hardly any resources available to us settler descendants. Thank you for making me who I am today.

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INTRODUCTION

DISABLING ONTOLOGIES

> [T]he business of knowledge production, like the production of tea, spices, and bananas, has an imperialist history that it has never shaken.
>
> —Grande, Refusing the University, 2018, p. 57

The following thesis is the result of primarily inductive research that came about in response to the systemic violence that I had witnessed and in some instances lived through (on inductive research, refer to Blackwill & Harris, 2016, 17; Seligmann, 2005). At the start of this research, I was at an early stage of naming that violence and the resulting trauma. When I began my MA in Conflict Studies, I had intended to write a thesis on the continued political erasure of ongoing colonialism, especially as it related to public discourses on reconciliation and the legacies of Indian Residential Schools (IRS). Yet, as I was working on course papers focused on the legacies of IRS institutions, my mind was constantly returning to my hometown region of Smiths Falls and the violence and traumas which that space had endured. At first, I did not make a clear connection of why my readings on IRS were resurfacing memories of Smiths Falls, and its various economic crises and hardships. That is, until one day, I was talking with a fellow critical disability theorist when my friend brought up the topic of Hospital School facilities. I then mentioned I was familiar with these institutions, since one of them was housed just on the edge of a nearby town in the region I grew up. I added that most people I encounter in Ottawa have no knowledge of its existence. It was in that moment that the realization hit me like a brick wall collapsing on me. It was Smiths Falls' history of institutional violence and eugenics culture

that was constantly resurfacing in my mind. More specifically, from 1951 to 2009, the town of Smiths Falls housed on its outskirts a governmentally run "Hospital School" (Brown & Radford, 2015; Jinha, 2009). The *eugenics models* that were used to justify the operations of thes violent facilities, enacted similar *colonial logics* of removal, relocation, and institutionalization as that of IRS institutions (refer to Chapter 2). These provincially run Hospital Schools were spaces that housed persons with disabilities who were viewed to be a hindrance to society or seen as unable to exercise independent living on their own (refer to Brown & Radford, 2015; Dolmage, 2017). Rideau Regional Centre was one such Hospital School, known for multiple forms of institutional violence: ranging from chronically overmedicating patients into docility to ongoing physical, sexual, psychological abuse, and hazardous living conditions (Clayton, 2018; Burghardt, Freeman, Dolmage, & Orrick, 2017). Similarly, there are indications that the legacy of these institutions has ongoing harmful impacts on the minds and behaviours of labouring class residents in the region, particularly in how perceptions of biologically determined intellectual capacities are used to rank bodies. While I have never entered the institution, I hold some of the collective memory of this institution through the silences, fractured stories, and behaviours that accompanied the mention of its name in conversations (On collective memory, refer to Sheftel, 2011; Tachibana, 1998; Young, 1993).

As I reflected on my community's histories, I realized that I needed to address my own relationship to the legacy of eugenics in the region before I had any right to engage in any type of collaborative research with Indigenous communities. I cannot hope to ethically approach a research on ongoing harms of colonialism on Indigenous communities when I cannot even address my own cross-generational struggle with the painful legacies of eugenics. Reorienting

my research focus, I decided to work towards *internalizing decolonial theory* as I began the process of facing the legacies of eugenics in the Ottawa Valley region.

I am a descendent of a family from the Smiths Falls region, am an openly identifying student with a learning disability, and am a survivor of institutional violence in higher education. In 2015, the year I entered my MA in Conflict Studies, was the same year I witnessed all of my colleagues and many peers lose their jobs when Smiths Falls experienced its third economic shock of cascade business closures, losing nearly 1,700 jobs in a region of approximate population size of 9,000 (Pearson, 2015). This recent shock, coupled with job insecurity, collective memories of the former Hospital School, my direct traumas from university resurfacing, and the foreboding feeling I had to excel in academia all intersected in 2015-2016. What has resulted is an interweaving of conflict studies theories of political economy with decolonial and critical disability theories on the topic of human value production. This thesis was also inspired by my ongoing curiosity on why so many of my peers from both rural labouring class communities and the middle-class urban academics in the Ottawa Valley region were both *complacent* and more often *complicit* in reproducing exploitable economic systems, even as the majority were seemingly opposed to such systems. The following work explores debility production and ability aspirations as colonial techniques of power over bodily labour in the Ottawa Valley.

As will be covered in Chapter Two, imperial logics perpetuate the disposability of rural labouring bodies in the region as *suited* for manual labour (on disposability, refer to Puar, 2017). Worded another way, rural labourers' mental *lack* of intellect means their worth is located in the *body* and thereby suited for physical excursion. Applying Ahmed's (2010) theories of affect (i.e.

emotions/sentiments), these bodies' perceived intellectual lack can be seen as an affect duty (i.e. moral duty) to endure physical labour, regardless of the state of insecurity that labour incurs. In psychology disciplines, affect refers to emotions, moods, or feelings as they are *produced* and *experienced* by an individual (Ahmed, 2015, 11-12). When employed in critical theory disciplines like feminism, the study of affect can expose the politics underlying how sentiments socially direct populations (Ahmed, 2010, 2015; Puar, 2009; Stoler, 2004). Academia's ongoing glorification of intellectual ability and performance co-constitutes these affect duties, imposing the affect duty of intellectual ability performance on the academic mind (refer to Chapter One). To draw from a favoured quote of mine, written by Dolmage (2017):

> Disability has always been constructed as the inverse or opposite of higher education. Or, let me put it differently: higher education has needed to create a series of versions of 'lower education' to justify its work and to ground its exceptionalism. (p.3)

In this way, the combination of the politics of worth coupled with affect duty can be seen as having profound impacts on directing bodies toward sustaining the ongoing colonial systems.

The concept of debility is approached in this research as the ongoing *process* of being debilitated by structures. That is to say, not the *event* of being disabled, but rather the system of ongoing bodily encounters which impair the body (Puar, 2017). In this way, this research explores systems of debilitation as a colonial technique for pacifying and directing the social body. In overt terminology, one could say debilitation is a structural *weapon* which pacifies, disables, and even directs bodies and their behaviours. Similarly, critical disability studies (CDS) and decolonial studies both contain research streams that explore how state systems classify bodies' worth (i.e., usefulness and disposability) according to their perceived positions vis-a-vis geopolitical aims. For instance, decolonial and political science theories on the production of

disposability explore how bodies deemed obstacles to the state are targeted for debility and death (refer to Mbembe, 2003; Puar, 2009, 2013, 2017; Meekosha, 2011). The intersection point of four disciplines—CDS, decolonial studies, feminist studies, and political economy—illuminates how the production of worth is produced and legitimated. The following research proposes to intersect CDS concepts on the geopolitics of disability with decolonial theories on the production of disposability (i.e. debility and death) to explore ontologies of worth. The research methodology combines a critical literature review with illustrations of the production of worth and ontological violence in my argumentation, drawing on the methods of reflexivity and autoethnography (on methods refer to Griffin, 2012; Gerring, 2004; Hsiung, 2008).

Simply put, o*ntology* refers to the ways in which we classify and perceive the world around us, including the assumptions we make (Gerring, 2004, 151; Scotland, 2012). *Ontological violence* occurs when one or more ontological outlooks is used as a means of power and domination, such as the imposition of a dominant belief system over another way of being and relating to the world. For example, many decolonial theorist have exposed how imperialism is sustained through colonial ontologies that direct our understandings of the world through research and knowledge production (Grande, 2018; Jordan, 2003; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Monture-Angus, 1995/2011; Smith, 2008; Tuck and Yang, 2012). In this way, *ontologies of worth* is referencing the ways we understand worth, which is to say, how we understand the world in terms of value.

This research's focus line of enquiry explores the relationship between the dual politics of worthiness and worthlessness as they produce ontologies of worth. This focus is sub-divided into two, with corresponding illustration points: 1) *ontological violence of academia*, which acts as

justification for the production of *worthiness* through academia's valourization of ability; 2) ontological violence of *worthlessness* in periphery locations (i.e. the production of space and eugenics ontologies), as the production of debilitation by way of the spaces and positionalities bodies occupy, utilizing a rural small town as an illustration point which includes a history of institutionalization. This thesis explores how the ontologies of worth operate as a neocolonial technique of power directing body capacities and sentiments.

Techniques of power refers to the various means (i.e. techniques) by which humans are conditioned into submitting to servitude and self-regulating their behaviours to align with dominant systems (Foucault, 1995). Some examples of such techniques include time systems, repetitive actions and movements, collective behaviours, as well as structural layouts of space (refer to Foucault, 1995, 148-156). Hence, approaching the study of ontologies of worth as a possible technique of power can expose how behaviours and emotions function as one of these self-disciplining mechanisms for sustaining colonial systems. When combined with an analysis of systemic violence, it is also possible to begin questioning this reproduction of colonial systems by analyzing how of chronic insecurities interplay with ontologies of worth. *Systemic violence* is a serious of converging structures that oppress and exploit a body of people. Systemic violence can include the intersection of economic, institutional, social, cultural, psychological, and physical violence (refer to Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011). In other words, the very systems we live within that are violent. Ontologies of worth can be seen as a structure of violence itself which devalues certain bodies, rendering them more likely to be subjected to a myriad of systemic violence.

Many theorists have studied the violence produced from and within educational spaces, academic circles, and knowledge production systems (refer to Catherine Muriel Aubrecht, Jay Dolmage, Patricia Monture-Angus, Tanya Titchkosky, Linda T. Smith). This violence even includes how we are conditioned to view and relate to the world (Smith, 2007, 2008). Expanding on this foundation, the following research aims to contribute to the continued growth of this body of research exposing violent ontologies. Notably, this aim includes further introducing decolonial disability studies into the field of conflict studies by focusing attention on the manners in which violent ontologies (re)produce systemic violence in daily relationships to worth and labour through systems of debilitation. Consequently, this thesis explores the production of worth as neocolonial ontologies. That is, the ways in which people are pressed into directing their bodies, including the mind, toward productive capacities. Bodies in this context refer both to social bodies and the individual bodies that comprise them.

Objectives: The objective here is to generate conceptual frameworks on colonial ontologies' relationship to directing worth. A related sub-objective is to foster conceptual understandings of academia's role in promoting colonial ontologies with a particular lens on the relationship between rural/urban conceptual spaces.

The central outcome of this research is to generate a conceptual framework for exploring topics related to the optimization of worth from an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1993). This research begins filling gaps in the literature on theoretical problems connected to the role violent ontologies play in directing productive capacities, including transforming underproductive capacities into productive ones. An attending outcome includes the development of conceptual

approaches for filling this gap in the existing literature on the intersections of colonial and ableist systems which sustain imperial relations of productivity.

Previous outcomes developed by Jasbir Puar (2009, 2013, 2017) offer an initial first step for addressing the substantial gap in the current literature on the production and optimization of debility by emphasizing the relationship underlying the simultaneous production of debility with ability. Puar (2017: xv) proposes that "the three vectors, capacity, debility, and disability, exist in a mutually reinforcing constellation, are often overlapping or coexistent, and that debilitation is a necessary component that both exposes and sutures the non-disabled/disabled binary." It is salient to develop counter theories that can be disseminated throughout academia when bearing in mind the current lack of knowledge on the production of debilitation. By employing autoethnography as a dual means of reflexivity and triangulation, the following project will offer an alternative methodology from Puar's previous works on the production of debility (refer to the methodology section below).

The primary research question asks: how does breaking down ontologies of worth provide new conceptual frameworks for understanding the politics of value production?

This research argues that contemporary imperialism is in part sustained through ontologies of worth which influence the social body by way of directing, pacifying, relocating (physically or metaphorically), and (re)producing affective bodies (Dolmage, 2017; Grande, 2018). Ontologies of worth enable such systems through a multitude of effects, including directing productive capacities and the repurposing of bodily capacities and roles.

Neoeugenics

There is a significant portion of critical disability research dedicated to the analysis of neoeugenics, yet the bulk of this work is exploring current manifestations of targeted sterilization and pro-natalism (refer to Cranston-Reimer 2019; de la Cour 2013; Dyck & Lux 2021; Jesudason 2009; Leroi, 2006; Somsen, 2009). This is not surprising considering the literal definition of eugenics standardly sites policies, practices, and beliefs related to lessoning the reproduction of unwanted gene pools while promoting the reproduction of desirable human "stock" (refer to Withers, 2012, 13). Yet, there is also a collection of CDS literature that posits that eugenics as an ideology has never truly receded in practice as an *ontological thought,* and that it is fundamental in constructing contemporary understandings of disabilities and human capacity in research and daily social perception (refer to Clare, 2009; Dolmage, 2017; Snyder & Mitchel, 2006). The biopolitical and geopolitical implications of eugenics have had profound impacts on how society views disabilities, and how we relate to ability, worth, and productivity. Hence, eugenics is not only a practice but also an *ideology* and *philosophy* (refer to American Psychology Association APA, n.d.; Withers, 2012 pp.3-4 & 13-15). According to the definition on the American Psychology Association (APA) website (n.d.) Dictionary of Psychology:

> [Eugenics is a] social and political philosophy, based loosely on Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory and Francis Galton's research on hereditary genius, that seeks to eradicate genetic defects and improve the genetic makeup of populations through selective human breeding. **Positive eugenics** is directed toward promoting reproduction by individuals with ostensibly superior traits, whereas **negative eugenics** is directed toward preventing reproduction by individuals with traits that are considered to be undesirable. (para. 1)

For the purpose of this research, the concept of eugenics will be looked at as an ideology and philosophy which holds ontological significance over sociopolitical and geopolitical realms of human interactions and practices.

There are new neoliberal forms of eugenics that attempt to produce something attune to a softer form of eugenics now colloquially and academically called “ableism” and in its more opaque language “disablism.” (refer to Withers, 2012, 13-30). These terms can at times be misnomers for contemporary eugenics. As Withers (2012: 29 & 30) posits: “eugenics often operates under other names and with less open aggression than it did in the past,” but nonetheless it “has not disappeared; it is in our universities, in our courts, in our hospitals, at the border and on television. The eugenics model of disability lies at the foundations of how we think of disability today.” Eugenics has not disappeared, merely, by shifting away from the brutal and opaque forms of “negative” eugenics of forced experimentation, lobotomization, murder, and other genocidal forms; today, the so-called “positive” eugenics of optimizing humanities potential is still prevalent within aspirations of human betterment (refer to Clayton, 2015; Withers, 2012:13). Such optimizations can include aims for academic achievements, daily ritualistic practices of labour that demand ever faster productive capacity, and even the research data that can be extracted from bodies through surveillance technologies (on optimization and surveillance refer to Puar, 2009; Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2015; on ritualization refer to Foucault, 1995). The strength in this language politics is that “ableism” is an albeit useful word for reaching a broader audience not yet ready to engage in discussions on ongoing contemporary eugenics. The downside derives from the same source of its strength: it is a softer word that fits easier into liberal conceptions of inclusion. This is similar to Withers’ (2012: 61) critique of how

"the charity model provides space for a softer side of capitalism," effectively hiding the violence inherent within the system itself. As will be discussed in Chapter One, this neoliberal turn towards inclusion holds geopolitical implications on directing bodies. Withers (2012: 29) has bluntly stated that historically, "Eugenics classified all people in one of two ways: fit or unfit." This raises questions around whether, under a neoliberal worldview, eugenics ontologies may now reflect less binary and more productive and correctional forms.

In this research, the terms neoeugenics and eugenics are used interchangeably in this thesis, as are the terms neocolonial and colonial. The term *neo*eugenics is employed both as a political means of signalling to readers that eugenics is still *ongoing*, and to also hint at the current neoliberal forms it has taken, such as superficial claims of inclusion. Hence, Neoeugenics should not be read in this research as *new* eugenics, but rather the *neo* in neoeugenics is used here to emphasis some of the *latest dynamics* of eugenics. The reason for occasionally employing the term *neo*eugenics in this work was in response to observing how most academics I encountered during my MA studies resisted my use of the word eugenics. This resistance was so reactionary that they would close off to any further open dialogue. When employing the term *neo*eugenics, however, the difference in terminology would spark momentary pause, and somehow opened up space where those academics would be more inclined to *listen* prior to reacting. My use of neoeugenics is therefore *tactical*, and not meant to be read as suggesting a past eugenics and a new eugenics. As such, later chapters of this thesis will explore possible new *forms* of eugenic ontologies, including repurposable bodies. Hence these new forms should be read as new elements of the same ongoing eugenic systems.

Geopolitics of Disability and Disposability

Geopolitics explores how political power dynamics utilize space as a means of control or the accumulation of power. In critical theory, it can be employed to analyze how certain geographies encounter and experience power imbalances. In an unprecedented special issue on the geopolitics of disability, editors Snyder and Mitchell (2010) and scholar Robert McRuer (2010) advance the formative concept of "'ablenationalism'—the degree to which treating people with disabilities as an exception valourizes able-bodied norms of inclusion as the naturalized qualification of citizenship" (Snyder & Mitchell, 2010, 113). This classifying of disabled bodies as other and an exception to the norm enables a normalizing and, more critically, continues to place normative standards of bodily performance on the social body. Generally speaking, the geopolitics of disability is the process by which state systems classify bodies according to their perceived usefulness to economies (Snyder and Mitchell, 2010: 114). Similarly, decolonial and political science theorists Achille Mbembe, Jasbir Puar, and Helen Meekosha all study the *production of disposability*, a related phenomenon whereby bodies deemed obstacles to the state are targeted for death. Relatedly, employing feminist affect theory advanced by Sara Ahmed, Ann Laura Stoler, Jasbir Puar, and Sandy Grande can elucidate how worth is legitimated through affective economies of desire. In the simplest terms, affective economies is the concept that the social body is directed by way of affect (i.e. emotions) to promote the maintenance of certain economic systems. Yet, it simultaneously refers to the economics of emotions, in that affect *influences* economies at the same time as economies influence the social body's sentiments (Stoler, 2004). When approached alone, all of these disciplines are ill-prepared for conceptualizing and dealing with contemporary geopolitics of

disablism within the production of disposability. Each of the foundational theories taken up in this research has chartered the process of intersecting at least two disciplines: the geopolitics of disability (CDS and political economy), affect theory (feminist, decolonial, and critical psychology), and production of disposability (decolonial and political economy, with a few cases of CDS). Accordingly, converging these theories allows for a complex multidisciplinary analysis, which may offer broader conceptual and methodological implications for social and political studies within these various fields.

Contribution: literary gaps exist within the disciplines explored in this research in relation to the topic of study and, more generally, the intersection of these fields. This is particularly the case for CDS perspectives being absent from most other disciplines. At the initial start of this research (2016), political science and decolonial/postcolonial disciplines were both marked by a relative absence of CDS (for a few exceptions, refer to Meekosha, 2011; Puar, 2017). This lack of attention to CDS forces disability theorists to carry the academic weight of expanding into other disciplines, such as literary theorists expanding into political or social sciences (for example, Robert McRuer, David T. Mitchell, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, and Jay Dolmage). When theorists from disciplines such as political science, postcolonial studies, feminist studies, or similar fields did engage with CDS, these theorists were heavily weighted as the voices of their respective disciplines on topics of disability (for example, Jasbir Puar, Helen Meekosha, and Shaun Grech). In view of these gaps, it is perhaps not surprising that CDS lacked extensive research into geopolitical systems until 2015, when a shift could be seen gaining momentum (for exceptions, refer to the *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies, 4(2)* including, Snyder & Mitchell, 2010; McRuer, 2010). As Grech (2015: 12) has noted, “We are still to see a

transnational CDS conversant with issues of transnational politics and capital, power, poverty, colonial histories and geopolitics." These gaps will inevitably impede scholars' and practitioners' ability to conceptualize, expose, and respond to contemporary systems involved in the production of worth.

Furthermore, the production of disposability is part and parcel of imperial systems (Meekosha, 2011). A few CDS theorists have exposed the lack of decolonial theory present in their own field, including the rather uncritical manner in which colonialism has historically been referenced in disability studies (Grech, 2015; Meekosha, 2011). This has led Meekosha (2011: 668) to argue that "contemporary disability studies constitutes a form of scholarly colonialism", and Grech (2015:12) to highlight how some "Latin American academics have started to call into question what they refer to as the domination of 'Anglo-Saxon disability studies.'"

Consequently, the research proposed here intends to open new possibilities for intersecting theories that are grounded in an intersectional analysis of political economy, critical disability, decolonial, and feminist studies as indispensable for conceptualizing the production of worth specifically, and neocolonialism more generally. Continuing the process of filling these literary gaps will encourage the further generating of concepts and alternative methodologies, which could potentially lead to adapted praxis. The implications of this research will also continue the process of exposing the violent elements inherent in the production of worth, offering space to promote social and/or policy transformations if enough subsequent research and awareness is garnered.

Note on Terminology

For the purposes of this thesis, the term debilitation will be used to encompass the concept of disposability, as it is the debilitation aspect of disposability that is primarily covered in the following work. Debilitation in this concept is thereby understood as both the act of debilitation, a system of debilitation issued over a region and/or social body, and a system of disposability used to disable, remove, or even exterminate worth-less bodies. Debility in this context comprises debility up to and including death. This distinction is made in order to emphasize the disability and debility related aspects of the production of disposability, a sub-category of decolonial studies that, at the start of this research, was still under-acknowledged.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis research combines a critical literature review with an autoethnographic approach (Eubanks, 2009; Griffin, 2012; Richards, 2008; Wall, 2006, 2008). This research explores how contemporary colonial ontologies justify hyper-productivity and disposability by valorizing ability (Dolmage, 2017; Grande, 2018). The methods of reflexivity has been employed as a form of triangulation to critically analyze the subject matter and relevant literature (Hsiung, 2008; Jenkins, 1995; McCorkel & Meyers, 2003; Richards, 2008; Tarrow, 1995). As a student with a disability in academia, with a rural background connected to Smiths Falls, I centre my positionality as a method for grounding my analysis of literature and as a form of empirics. This research involves a preliminary historical overview of Hospital School Institutions (i.e. Developmental Institutions) across Ontario as contextual grounding. As noted, these institutions

are now recognized as sites of violence enacted against former residents, yet until recently, they were drastically understudied (refer to Dolmage, 2017).

> For most of the 20th century, people with disabilities were institutionalized in asylums, 'schools' for the 'feeble-minded' and other exclusionary institutions, locations that became the dark shadows of the college or university, connected with residential schools, prisons, quarantines, and immigration stations in these shadows." (p.3).

This overview is followed by an analysis of the welfare town Smiths Falls which previously housed one of those Hospital School (i.e. Developmental Institution) until 2009 and has suffered multiple economic shocks (Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018d; 2018h; Halfnight, 2010; Pearson, 2015).

Positionality

Following the criticism of positivist frameworks, many theorists draw from feminist standpoint theory in recognition of researcher positionalities as both a valuable method for producing counter theory and inseparable from the formation of ontological and epistemological perspectives (hooks, 1994; McCorkel & Meyers 2003; Monture-Angus, 1995/2011). I come from the standpoint of having been a child in frequent contact with people formerly employed by one of the institutions mentioned above. In my early twenties, I occasionally worked alongside former residents and encountered others in passing. Additionally, I come from the position of being a person with a disability while simultaneously having more access to resources, privileges, and support than most of my peers—disabled or "not"—leading to my current academic career. Drawing from this positionality, the research will develop a conceptual perspective from my standpoint of existing in-between or bordering spaces. This bordering

extends into my positionality of existing in between socioeconomic locations and rural/urban divides. As Clare (2009: 42) eloquently states, “Sometimes I say I’m mixed-classed in a borderland rarely, if ever, acknowledged or defined. Other times I feel like a bridge: one foot rooted in the working class, connected by way of familiarity and allegiance; the other resting in the middle class, understanding what I gained, as well as lost, in my parents’ upward scramble.” Clare (2009: 42) then adds that this “leaves me feeling queer in the queer community.” I, too, have always felt queer in urban queer communities, as though I am a rural informant with a learning disability who infiltrated the academic fortress. The bulk of my energy and drive during secondary and post-secondary studies went into this infiltration and continual performance quest to prove not only my intellectual “belonging” but also the accumulation of exceptionalism to rise into becoming a top-performing student.

In addition to my connection to a small labouring town, I feel even more tied to rural communities, having been reared in a woodland area with a swamp right behind my parents’ house and nearby farmland. I am a descendant of farming families on both sides of my maternal line and visited the family farm nearly every second weekend. As rural people, many of us have deep inseparable connections to the land as it is our life (metaphorically, economically, and physically). Damage to the land threatens our entire existence. I have been directly impacted by damage to the local ecology. As have, I believe, many of my neighbours. However, it is exceedingly hard to generate any causal connection between land development projects, ecosystem disruption, and illness. Such challenges can be magnified when there are few resources to study such shifts, and political will is minimal when the promise of development expansion implies future revenue for municipalities.

I name all of these traits because I now realize how deeply my communities have shaped and impacted the paradigms (i.e. philosophical worldview) I operate under and the researcher I have become. They are, interestingly, also the reason I connected so strongly to Indigenous decolonial theory. My history of being tied to the land and ecology while also being impacted by the violence experienced by community members at the nearby Hospital School led to a very instant and visceral connection to the literature I read on IRS and colonization. While studying Indigenous literature on the IRS system during my graduate coursework, I found it difficult to read. This difficulty was not due to my white fragility, per se. Rather, some of the strategies of governance and discipline used to enact colonialism in IRS were triggering latent thoughts of Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls. It is critical to recognize that in the context of my community, the region is occupied by predominantly white labourer bodies with settler histories and privileges built on colonialism (refer to McCorkel & Meyers, 2003; Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012). As will be explored in Chapter Two, these labouring bodies often gain privileges by acting as colonial agents through socioeconomic and sociopolitical hierarchies akin to governing by proxy. We also lived on unneeded Anishinaabe land, benefiting from the same colonialism that enacted the IRS and 60s scoop (refer to Jinha, 2009; Monture-Angus, 2011). Relatedly, Miller (2016: 7) notes that in terms of farmland, “I have benefited from the removal of Indigenous users of the land and from the regimes of private property. My privilege must be transparent in the analysis and assessment of alternatives. Otherwise, I could not recommend action for others that would be difficult for myself.” (Miller, 2016, 7). Similarly, I recognize my settler colonial experience of growing up on unceded Anishinaabe territory in a house that is title owned by my parents, with relative household security. Such privileges result from the ongoing colonialism of

this land, including violent systems of privet property. I am enraged by these histories and ongoing experiences of Indigenous land dispossession, including settler unwillingness to trust even basic forms of Indigenous leadership and stewardship.

Decolonizing or Moving to Innocence:

When engaging in reflexivity, particularly when attempting to decolonize the settler mind, it is necessary to reflect on how to approach such reflexivity. In there seminal work, Fellows and Razack (1997: 336) critique how many white feminists engage in a "Race to Innocence" by employing gendered oppressions as a means of evading racial accountability which further contributes to a culture of "competing marginalities" within social justice circles. They offer that "When we view ourselves as innocent, we cannot confront the hierarchies that operate among us" (Fellows and Razack's, 1997, 336). Expanding on this further, Tuck and Yang's (2012: 1) influential work "Decolonization is not a metaphor" challenges shifts that have been occurring in social justice circles around decolonization rhetorics, particularly calling out the manner in which settler decedents (henceforth settler) evade or "move to innocence" from recognizing their place within sovereign projects. Tuck and Yang (2012: 1) offer that in the context of ongoing colonialism "The metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or 'settler moves to innocence', that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity." In other words, by employing decolonization in superficial acts of naming, as settlers we still engage in acts of self-soothing while avoiding the transformative action necessary for dismantling colonialism.

To clarify my reflexive approach, I have been attempting to *internalize* decolonial thought throughout the process of engaging with this research. As such, I do not spend much time throughout these pages naming or overviewing my privileges. The practice of naming privileges is certainly a valuable form of reflexivity, and an excellent *pedagogical tool* (i.e. teaching tool) to begin the process of decolonizing our white colonizer minds. This practice has in recent years become rather pervasive as a form of white discursive engagement in critical academic spaces on the subject of colonialism and race, leading to a number of valuable resources contributions already in circulation on privilege (refer to Bailey, 1998; Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010; Jungkunz & White, 2013; Kruks, 2005; Minarik, 2017; Sholock, 2012; Stoudt, 2008; Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012).

However, reflecting on my internal cynical mind, which has developed out of my complicated experience in academia (see Chapter One), I have now reached a point where I am deeply uncomfortable with *ease* at which many white academic voices in social justice circles name their white privileges. That is to say, this ease of naming seems to be shifting into a *ritualistic detoxification* practice instead of a truly self-reflexive act of internal transformation and external action. There is a danger that some of this ritualistic performativity is the latest form of the "settler moves to innocence" which alleviates white settler guilt by naming white privilege. I am certainly not suggesting that all people who name their privilege are guilty of engaging in only surface level practices. Rather, I am merely naming my discomfort with what appears to be a growing culture of *ritualizing* this act of privilege naming in academia, to the point that the act of naming feels watered down, performative, and at times self-serving. That is to say, a form of *knowing performativity* to show off one's wokeness or deflect blame. Similarly,

Tuck and Yang (2012, 2) explain that "One trend we have noticed, with growing apprehension, is the ease with which the language of decolonization has been superficially adopted into education and other social sciences" including claims to decolonial methods, schooling practices, and thought. I have no interest in engaging in furthering the "enclosure" or to "domesticate decolonization" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 3). Therefore, in my discomfort with ritualization of privilege naming I will currently avoid participating much in this act. I may in later years take a very different opinion on this matter, but for now, this is the place I am at in my ongoing struggle to decolonize myself. I prefer instead to draw on decolonial theorists as my literary *teachers* and *leaders* as I navigate this research, especially the teachings of Patricia Monture-Angus.

I also draw from the culture I learned from some folks in Smiths Falls of brutal honesty. Where I learned that claims to innocence or purity is itself an aspect of privilege that labouring bodies are rarely ever afforded. That is to say, rather than denying the stereotype of rural racist— a stereotype which disguises the presence of white supremacy in educated urban middle-class bodies and spaces— it is more productive to recognize our implication in colonialism. While this thesis focuses heavily on debilitation as a system of eugenics, this is tied in with colonialism. The focus on the settler body both exposes systemic violence experienced by these settler bodies while simultaneously exposing the means by which these bodies are disciplined to reproduce colonial systems.

Therefore, part of my reflexivity in this research is to explore the the complex ways in which I and my communities (including academia) are *implicated* in the process of reproducing colonialism including the ways that our being *harmed by* imperialism pushes us to reproduce problematic systems. Not as a means of claiming victimhood, but as a way of exposing

techniques of power. My earlier noted preoccupation with how the rural labourer *and* urban academic settler bodies are disciplined into complacent and complicit reproduction of colonial eugenics systems. This, in and of itself, involves some level of exposing privileges, but it does not assume the same style of naming that is in standard practice in critical white studies. In conflict studies terms, this is the study of how the population of colonial Canada is *pacified* into this continual conformance and reproduction of state systems, including geopolitical and geoeconomics structures (refer to Blackwill & Harris, 2016; Sparke, 2018; Turner, 2015). While this thesis cannot address such a broad topic, it certainly begins the process of questioning certain modes of discipline that contribute to such complacent and complacent engagement in colonialism. Therefore, this thesis endeavours to analyze ontologies of worthlessness in a manner that *internalizes* decolonial theory as best as I am currently able as a white colonizer, in the ongoing process of trying to decolonize my mind.

Autoethnography

I write drawing on autoethnography, a now popular form of methodology in critical theory disciplines, including gender studies and critical disability studies (CDS) (refer to Angrosino, 2007; Eubanks, 2009; Richards, 2008; Wall, 2006, 2008). Autoethnography has a number of strengths: it can promote counter-discourse, challenge the objectification of research participants, respond to the unidirectional research, and even garner solidarity (refer to Angrosino, 2007; Eubanks, 2009; Richards, 2008; Wall, 2006, 2008). I was inspired by Decolonial Indigenous feminists, black feminists, and CDS theorists, the most prominent of which have been Patricia Monture-Angus (1995), bell hooks (1995), and Eli Clare (2009). From

these theorists and many others, I have learned that pain, anger, and rage can be channelled into producing literature that aims to transform (also refer to Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Eubanks, 2009; Johnson & McRuer, 2014; Richards, 2008). The following autoethnography focuses on my embodied experience, which aims to centre the body, particularly the mind, as it comes in contact with years of institutional violence.

Written Style: The Storytelling

The following chapter is written in a different style from the rest of this thesis. This stylistic choice is due to the subject matter and ease of production. While the other chapters deal with the subject of violence that surrounded and impacted my life, Chapter One deals with the subject of violence that I experienced *directly* and was imprinted as trauma on my body. Thereby, I have chosen to write this in my voice. I struggled for years with attempting to write this chapter in a manner that would run consistent with the more detached voice that is typical of the political science disciplines I studied. I mistakenly thought that adopting such a style of communication that is more typical of positivist traditions might persuade some sceptics (on positivism, refer to Burgess-Proctor, 2015; Joseph, 2015, 1025; Smith, 2008, 42, 163-169). To counter the mindsets of those who would believe I was generating this battlefield in my mind. That was until the death of my support dog, which spurred me into finally reconciling the fact that this work is both deeply personal and that I cannot do justice to the violence I experienced, or the embodied nature of it, without writing in my own style and voice (on autoethnography as resistance refer to Griffin, 2012). I have since realized the futility of such an endeavour of using the Master's Tools (refer to Lorde, 1984, 123) when it was only causing me to ruminate in self-harm and blocking

my voice. Such attempts were costing far too much energy and time when in reality, I have always been writing these pages in hopes that my words speak to others who have similarly suffered institutional violence. Thereby, I have chosen to draw more significantly from my feminist and CDS background in taking a narrative approach to the following pages as I communicate how systemic violence can look when embodied (on feminist methodologies, refer to Burgess-Proctor, 2015; hooks, 1994; Scott, 2012; on embodiment refer to Aubrecht, 2012; Viscardis, 2020).

Embodiment

Generally speaking, embodiment refers to the *bodily* experience of existing in relation to the world, including physical and sensory experiences. That is, embodiment is the experience of being in the body and being aware of the body. Embodiment method views the body as a type of positionality for approaching and conceptualize research as well as grounding analysis (Richards, 2008). Embodiment method centres the body with all of its relations to the world, sensory experiences, capacities, and impairments as positions for understanding (Richards, 2008). Embodiment can be employed to expose social systems of oppression when approaching the subject of embodiments of populations (for instance, refer to Berlant, 2007). For the purpose of this research, I will draw on my embodiment of trauma as a means of grounding my analysis of systemic violence. Trauma is the emotional and full-bodied sensory response to an experience that *felt* significantly threatening (Durvasula, 2021; Joseph, n.d.; van der Kolk, 2014). In this thesis, the word trauma is referencing *long-term* effects of impacts of being exposed to threatening environments. That is, not a traumatic *event*, but rather, the focus on ongoing

psychological and physiological experiences of distress caused by having existed in chronic insecurity that imprinted on the mind and body.

I have felt deep relief from reading the words of bell hooks (1994) and Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) as they talked about their embodied experience in academia, as they have named the violence of Western imperial education. I also experienced a deep affinity to the words of Eli Clare (2009: 11 & 31-49) as he described his experiences with leaving a rural logging community to move into an urban region for university, coping with the simultaneous loss of home, alongside the internalizing of and estrangement with a queer "urban sensibility". I hope that by adding my voice, I can contribute to the continued development of counter-discourse to the institutional violence that is our current imperial academic systems.

Engaged Research

While I write on my own experiences, I do so for other people. I write because I was asked and encouraged by many to tell my story. Partly because many who wish to tell this story cannot. Many voices have been silenced and invalidated as a result of the systemic violence produced and sustained by the schooling system. Many youth undergo delegitimization and sabotage in school, preventing them from imagining academia as a space they could gain access, let alone a place to thrive within (refer to Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Deller, & Tomas, 2013; Diez, 2010; Newbold & Brown, 2015; O'Brien, 2014; Veck, 2012; Bruce & Venkatesh, 2014). Barring their voices from gaining the legitimacy academia confers: effectively delegitimizing their embodied knowledge to favour scholarly knowledge. Rising popularity of participatory action research (PAR) is perhaps pushing research methods in the right direction (Eubanks, 2009;

Koster, Baccar, & Lemelin, 2012; Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012). However, even PAR has limits, including the need for third party academic(s) to act as co-authors in the best case scenarios. They are arguably far from fostering healthy intellectual agency and balanced interdependency in the knowledge production system (i.e. healthy distribution of power) (Jordan, 2003). They are more attuned to best practice co-dependency (i.e. dependent and dominant caretaker), which demands some level of benevolence that I am sceptical most academics have, and certainly do not believe ethics boards are bearers of (on research ethics, refer to Dolmage 2015, 2017; Joseph, 2015; Monture-Angus, 2011; Louis, 2007; Smith, 2007, 2008). I was also asked to write on this topic by a few fellow academics who also suffered in academia and hoped I would speak on the topic of the institutional violence of education. I can only offer conjecture as to why they thought it pertinent that my voice, in particular, should be the one to speak on this topic. Regardless of the reasoning, there were multiple people from various locales and socioeconomic backgrounds encouraging me to act as a voice on the subject. In this way, I relate to this work as counter-discourse to the more widely accepted conventional academic discourse, which presents the education system as a benevolent force (on counter-memory and counter-discourse refer to Adelman, 2018; Sheftel, 2011; Young, 1993; Van Aswegen, & Shevlin, 2019).

Keeping in line with decolonial methodologies (Smith, 2008), this project is developed with a critical outlook on the nature of asymmetrical research relationships, design, implementation, and reporting. Earlier plans for this project included participatory action research (PAR) to challenge the asymmetrical direction of the research process, faulting positivist practices for perpetuating colonial ontologies (Smith, 2008; Louis, 2007; Koster, Baccar, & Lemelin, 2012; Stevenson, 1999). The research design was modified following

multiple calls from locals of the region under study and academics alike asking for me to draw from my own positionality and experiential knowledge to develop results that can be more critical in form, and open in reporting, than what would otherwise result from PAR work. Notably, my unique positionality places me in a privileged position to develop the research without involving participants, incurring minimal risk to those who wish the research to be carried forth. While no formal conversations were made on the project, concerns were expressed by people from the region around the high potential that a participant based project would lead to self-censorship or require the prevention of public reporting of research findings, defeating the purpose of the research. Furthermore, my unique positionality has led some CDS and feminist academics to encourage my use of experiential-based research methods (i.e. autoethnography or narrative research) in efforts to centre an underrepresented perspective. Namely, my positionality as a disabled student researcher from a region impacted by ontological violence and with a history of being institutionally sabotaged by academia. Correspondingly, the autoethnographic element not only acts as a form of reflexivity and triangulation noted above but also enables, in this case, the development of counter-theory (on counter-theory refer to Tachibana, 1998; Young, 1993; Sheftel, 2011). Consequently, factoring in the local and academic calls for this research, particularly the autoethnographic element, this project is thereby a form of engaged research.

Structure

This thesis is divided into three chapters according to the respective illustration points. Each chapter and its various parts explore a co-constitutive element of the production of worth, and thereby one section invariably leads to the next.

Chapter One will introduce the concept of production of worth with the exploration of worthiness. This chapter explores how the valourization of ability directs academic bodies towards performance and productivity. The chapter examines the underlying violence inherent in academia alongside forms of epistemological violence that it reproduces. This chapter explores academia's involvement as a vital governance management tool for the production of worth. It employs affect theory to explore how affective neocolonial ontologies legitimate the reproduction and optimization of ability/disposability, and suggests that academic merit is constructed as a worthiness duty.

Chapter Two will introduce the concept of the production of worthlessness in a rural region and how this impacts disposable bodies in Ontario. This chapter devides ontologies of worthlessness into two parts. The *first* introduces the concept of *worthless* bodies as disposable under colonial systems. The *second* will then explore the concept of worth-*less* bodies, as those bodies that still hold a semblance of worth in colonial systems for their labour output. The chapter is explores three phases of colonial logics in the region: phase one) extermination; phase two) institutionalization; and phase three) repurpose-able bodies. The chapter will present the rural town of Smiths Falls as an illustration of how worth-less bodies are subjected to systems of debilitation under the various logics of eugenics and colonialism. The region of Smiths Falls offers a unique example of the intersections and tensions wrought by the production of worth as

it impacts the region, including its relationship to labour relations, economic shocks, and local cultural perceptions.

Chapter Three will conclude the thesis by assuming a more theoretical literary dive into the concepts introduced in earlier chapters, drawing from multidisciplinary perspectives. This chapter will tie together how the quest for worthiness and the production of worthlessness reproduce and legitimate both sides representing how they are part of the same neocolonial framework: an *ontology of worth*. This final chapter will summarize the research and generate final links between chapters and their elements.

CHAPTER ONE

DEADLINE: WORTHINESS & VIOLENCE EMBODIED

I dedicate this chapter to Misty, my support dog.
May you rest in peace on the land you loved.

> [T]he ethic of higher education still encourages students and teachers alike to accentuate ability, valorize perfection, and stigmatize anything that hints at intellectual (or physical) weakness.
>
> — Dolmage, *Academic ableism,* 2017, p. 3

As I write this chapter, I am sitting in one of the most toxic spaces known to me: the campus library of my undergraduate school. It is the space that I studied for five years. A campus that felt like a prison that I could not escape for many years. A space where I felt like I was dying. Little did I know that I was in fact dying, slowly (refer to Berlant, 2007; Puar, 2013); that I would one day face the reality of possible death in another institutional space very similar to this one only a few years later. A sister university.

I sit here again for many reasons. The first is that I came to retrieve a book from the library per my responsibilities as a Research Assistant. I normally do not step foot on this campus alone anymore. Yet I sit here by myself, reliving my past. Re-experiencing some of the feelings of anxiety, confinement, and dread that I used to feel on a daily, even hourly, basis. Today, I stayed because my chronic illness flared up while searching for books, and I was forced to sit at a desk for hours to allow my body to recover. This is the physical damage that has occurred from years of institutional violence coupled with the systemic violence and economic

shocks in my hometown (refer to Baute, 2008; Halfnight, 2010; Pearson, 2015). This is how the embodiment of systemic violence can manifest: chronic illnesses ranging from fibromyalgia to devastating life-threatening diseases (refer to van der Kolk, 2014; on embodiment, refer to Mitchell, Snyder, & Ware, 2014). Recent literature on body-mind barrier and psychosomatic experiences have aided in exposing the dynamic of trauma and physical illness (van der Kolk, 2014). There are also recent shifts in psychology to recognize Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD), a condition that can result from protracted trauma following violence extended over long periods of time with little possibility of escape (whether the perceived inability of escape or physical inability), such as living in violent conflict regions, surviving refugee camps, long term child abuse, or long term sexual or domestic abuse (Durvasula, 2021; WHO, 2021). For me, it was the compilation of institutional violence in university and mass economic shocks in my hometown.

Distribution of Affect as a Technique of Power

In Chapter Three, I will explore the potential political implications of complex trauma on producing pliable biopolitical subjects as a means of directing labour. For now, this chapter lays the groundwork by introducing institutional violence as it is embodied and how embodiment as a method can act as an ontological tool for witnessing how ability performance is elevated and amplified by academia. The aim of this chapter is to establish a groundwork for understanding how the distribution of affect—such as emotions, sentiments, or desires—related to capacity performance is a powerful "technique of power" (Foucault, 1995: 148) for categorizing and ranking human value and aligning productive outputs. This distribution of affect is often

disseminated through discourses of what could be called the ableist dream: an enticing call for the "infinite pursuit of 'improvement'" (refer to Mitchell & Snyder, 2010, 191). These distributions of affect, when coupled with disciplinary techniques of daily repetitions, can act as "compulsory alignments" toward productive capacity performance (Foucault, 1995, 148). This chapter will draw on decolonial affect theorists, including Stoler's (2004) work on affect as a colonial state-building technique, coupled with Puar's (2009, 20013, 2017) various works on affect and the economics of debility as a biopolitical governance tool. This chapter will also integrate Ahmed's (2010, 2015) works on affect desires or "happiness scripts", as it is popularly known. Lastly, this chapter will heavily employ Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary techniques of power, particularly related to the production of docile bodies.

Embodied Violence: Pain and Suffering from Institutional Violence

Pain. It is the one word that could, perhaps, come closest to summing up my experiences of the past ten years or so. *Struggle* may be another. Pain permeated my every day and nearly every moment. Albeit, as an undergraduate student, I was so accustomed to the chronic aches and pains with the severe anxiety of my everyday encounter with schooling that I did not recognize it as pain at all. While my narrative is my own, and I use it here as a method, I know I am not alone in relating to academia as pain, as well as "alienation and isolation" when our marginalized bodies and minds come in contact with the colonial education system (refer to Aubrecht, 2012; Battiste, 2013; Dolmage, 2017; Monture-Angus, 1995/2011, pp.16 & 81; Regan, 2010, pp. 4-5, 41-42, 160-162; Sherry, 2004, p. 771). The differing ways in which bodies encounter education has an impact on how institutionalization is embodied. Indigenous peoples of Canada experience

ongoing violence as they come in contact with the many varied structures from colonial curriculum, cultures of white entitlements, and colonial structures of teaching and measurements (Monture-Angus, 1995). As Monture-Angus (1995: 81) explains, “My experience of formal education as painful is not an exception. In all of the conversations that I have had with ‘Indian’ people about their post-secondary education, isolation and alienation are always mentioned.” Interestingly, similar descriptors of isolation and alienation have appeared in conversations in I have had with various students with learning disabilities as they encounter educational spaces, reflecting themes of suffering, and mental illness resulting from their experiences with schooling. More significantly, even, is the level of gratitude and relief many peers would show in response to me talking openly about violence in the education system. I want to emphasis here that it is imperative not to view these as two separate groups: Indigenous and disabled communities. Rather, systems of debilitation are exercised over Indigenous peoples and people of colour in manners that sustain colonial systems through the production of impairment (refer to Meekosha, 2011; Puar, 2017; Howard, 2014). That is, debility can be seen as a ongoing structural “weapon”, or rather, a technology of power that is used to render the colonized body less capable of resistance. That is, to *pacify*. This is not merely a byproduct of educational structures. As Stoler (2004) notes, education was central tool of colonial rule, meant to shape the minds of both the colonized and colonizer subject body in line with colonial sentimentality. What this means is that for white settler descendants coming in contact with these colonial systems, our embodiment of pain, isolation, and alienation are reflections of colonial structures of suppression crafted to school us into becoming docile colonial bodies. That is, to become colonial subjects for reproducing colonial systems. My concern is that if this violence is not continually exposed,

including the embodied pain it generates, such violence will ultimately be written as a thing of the past or a lingering but dissipating legacy rather than a system that is state-sanctioned, state-regulated, and institutionally enacted. The IRS and Hospital Schools may be closed, but the ending of some of the most extreme forms of school violence does not negate the reality of continuations of other forms of institutional violence, whether overt or more subtle, which sustain colonial systems.

My dedication to decolonization and anti-eugenics makes it impossible for me to ignore the very present-day manifestations of imperial systems on the bodies of youth and adults today. What I hope will become apparent by the conclusion of this chapter is how this is not merely about altering curriculum and admissions policies to be more inclusive, though decolonizing curriculum is imperative (refer to Dolmage, 2017; Henry, Dua, James, Kobayashi, Li, Ramos, Smith, 2017). This critique is about the *structure* of the Canadian higher education system. This is about its role within the socio-economic reproduction of worth and worthlessness, which perpetuate conventional imperial systems of thought and practices. These structural systems—institutional and discursive—are embodied. Institutional violence is embodied. This embodiment is what I will touch on in this chapter.

In front of me on the desk's back wall is graffiti written by someone, whom I can only assume was a student here (refer to the appendix for images):

I AM T-I-R-E-D
&
I HATE THIS PLACE

I can relate. The exact sentiments I felt most of my years here too, and what I feel again as I sit here reliving my past. Under the note is another:

Give up while you can!!
(Someone stroked out this last quote with an X.)

I share these quotes as a way to re-centre, to emphasize the underlying drive for propelling this chapter. That is, to highlight the toxic environment that higher education elicits on the student body. An institutional system that demands increasingly time-oriented productivity, performative conformance, and submitting oneself to a system of comparative rankings (refer to Dolmage, 2017; Foucualt, 1995, 178; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011; Mitchell, Snyder, & Ware, 2014). A neoliberal system that uses rhetorics of inclusion to expand its student body in what outwardly could appear progressive (Henry, Dua, James, Kobayashi, Li, Ramos, Smith, 2017; Mitchell, Snyder, & Ware, 2014), regardless of whether those spaces are conducive to the expanding students' mental and physical well being (Dolmage, 2017).

THEORY

Disciplining Docile Bodies Toward Colonial Sentiments

As Foucault (1995: 138) posits, "discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies'… [Discipline] dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase." One of the means of transmitting these disciplinary techniques into the body politic is by way of formal institutional enclosures such as the educational system which operate off of an "administrative apparatus" with various instruments of reform that are enacted over the subject (i.e. individual) to preform labour

conducive of altering minds through repetitive actions and behaviours (Foucault, 1995, 125). It is here that affect theory contributes to further understanding how this process of altering minds functions under discursive clusters and institutional enclosures like schools. Stoler (2004: 5) challenges the pervading assertion in political science that the Enlightenment Era of rationalism and reason with its bureaucratic systems were the primary colonial tool of governance. Rather, Stoler (2004) argues that colonial governance was in large part exercised and legitimated through the "distribution of sentiment" in "discursive density" of public and private writings, schooling, "guides to good health," economic policies, and family systems in the case of colonial Indonesia. Expanding Foucault's (1995: 128) concept of docile bodies further, discipline is the "process of redefining the individual" through "the body, time, everyday gestures and activities" of habits (Foucault, 1995, 128). This ritualistic system of internalizing discipline became one of an economy of the body where "efficiency of movements, their internal organization" were under the observation and supervision of the "process of the activity as closely as possible time, space, movement" (Foucault, 1995, 137). It is precisely the blending of affective colonial sentiment with disciplinary structures of repetition which embed in the body the economics of colonial sentiments.

The Slow Death: Biopolitics of Everyday Labour and the Body Burden

The slow death is a concept developed by Lauren Berlant (2007) which references the long-term "slow" physical degradation experienced by the social body under capitalistic structures. It is a wearing out of bodies which over time develop increasing degradation of health. The slow death points to the underlying systemic violence inherent in capitalistic systems

and how public discourses aid in disguising the system which generates this ongoing dying. Introducing the concept of biopower, Foucault explains the sovereign "right which was formulated as the 'power of life and death' was in reality the right to take life or let live" (Foucault, 1978/1990, 136). This framing is significant. As Berlant (2007: 756) explains, biopower is "the power to make something live or to let it die, the power to regularize life, the authority to force living not just to happen but to endure and appear in particular ways." Biopower is thereby the power to align or put "life in order" for life's ongoing continuity, while the exercise of death was justified as "safeguard of society" but not the sole right of the sovereign anymore (Foucault, 1978/1990, 138). Biopower, thereby, suggests a shift in how the sovereign power operates, directing more influence towards the disciplining, regularizing and ordering of living populous and their daily structures of productivity (Berlant, 2007; Foucault, 1978/1990).

From this theory of biopower, Berlant (2007: 754) developed the concept of "slow death", whereby certain populations are subjected to ongoing slow degradation under the grind of capitalism. She argues that "we need better ways to talk about activity oriented toward the reproduction of ordinary life: the burdens of compelled will that exhaust people taken up by managing contemporary labor and household pressures" (Berlant, 207, 759).

Berlant (2007) explains:

> Biopower operates when a hegemonic bloc organizes the reproduction of life in ways that allow political crisis to be cast as conditions of specific bodies and their competence at maintaining health or other conditions of social belonging; thus this bloc gets to judge the problematic body's subjects, whose agency is deemed to be fundamentally destructive. (p. 765)

The slow death is thereby a concept both for naming the production of debility through slow chronic exposure to laborious output, and also for the underlying biopolitical techniques which enable this continued sovereign system of ordering. Drawing on the example of discursive frames of obesity as a Western epidemic, Berlant (2007) points to how the slow death encompasses all measures of the capitalist structure and framing:

> How do we think about labor and consumer-related subjectivities in the same moment…one cannot talk about these scandals of the appetite…without talking about the temporality of the workday, the debt cycle, consumer practice, and fantasy? Finally, what does it mean that African Americans and Latino/as are especially bearing this body burden. (p. 765)

Adding another layer to this expanding body of work on biopolitics, Jasbir Puar links these theories to explore the sovereign production of *debility*. Puar's (2017) utilization of the term debility is deliberate arguing, "that the term "debilitation" is distinct from the term "disablement" because it foregrounds the slow wearing down of populations instead of the event of becoming disabled." (xiii-xiv). Puar (2017) expands further by linking this concept to labour:

> Debilitation as a normal consequence of laboring, as an "expected impairment," is not a flattening of disability; rather, this framing exposes the violence of what constitutes "a normal consequence." The category of disability is instrumentalized by state discourses of inclusion not only to obscure forms of debility but also to actually produce debility and sustain its proliferation. (xvi)

Hence, debilitation is a system which produces impairments and serves to disable a population in the political sense of pacification. To use a military coloqualism, it is similar to the logic of disabling one's opponent, such as to disable an assailant, which means to remove their ability to resist. In the context of disablement, it is the social body that is suppressed, functioning as a means of disabling resistance to colonialism in everyday practice.

Toxic Affects: Compulsory Alignments Through Ranking Systems.

Education is a system that uses various technologies to direct and discipline the body politic into conforming to, internalizing, and routinizing labour performance and hierarchical rankings. As the classroom became homogenous in the late 18th to early 19th century, it began to shift to a ranking system. Rankings given based on tasks and examinations performed on a weekly, monthly, and yearly schedule with students arranged by age clusters (Foucault, 1995, 147). The educational system became one of "compulsory alignments, each pupil, according to his age, his performance, his behaviour" would be ranked, resulting in a "hierarchy of knowledge ability" and a "new economy of time" (Foucault, 1995, 147). The classroom became one of "supervising, hierarchizing, and rewarding" by way of systematized observations and "classifications" (Foucault, 1995, 147-148). When taking a counter-theory approach to education, we can begin to look at how these technologies include colonial measurement standards and a multiplicity of structures that aid in producing docile bodies in these classroom structures, time systems, tests, comparative rankings (i.e. the accredited system), canon curriculum, and academic culture of intellectual capacity performance (on measurement standards refer to McRuer, 2006, pp.146-170; Battiste, 2013, pp. 32-33, & 140-166; Monture-Angus, 1995/2011; on docile bodies refer to Foucault, 1995, 135-169).

Schooling as a Compulsory Prerequisite for Worthiness

Furthermore, a shift has been occurring throughout the 21st century towards "corporatizing Canadian universities" in a neoliberal fashion of *student consumers*, whereby

education is now a purchasing system with increasingly high levels of university enrolment (prior to Covid-19) (Brownlee, 2016). The increasing numbers of students registering prior to Covid-19 is not surprising considering this shift has come in conjunction with as a push towards higher education being treated as a *compulsory prerequisite* to the good life. As Ahmed (2010) suggests, happiness has become a affect duty whereby the social body is pressured to internalize certain desires, behaviours, and lifestyles to achieve happiness. In this sense, education as a prerequisite to the good or proper life makes submitting to schooling an affect duty. Such student body expansion means a *larger proportion of the nation's body politic* is socially conditioned and economically constrained into literally and figuratively buying into the university system and, more importantly, trained into routinizing self-directed time optimized productivity, and academic sentimentality (Aubrecht, 2012, 178-195; Foucault, 1995).

Schooling thereby operates as an administrative apparatus for disciplining bodies into conformance and internalizing appropriate sentiments or willful desires (refer to Ahmed, 2010; Foucault, 1995; Stoler, 2004). For instance, academic culture promotes what could best be described as "knowing" performance, whereby students and instructors go about demonstrating what they "know" in a highly systemized manner in a phantom quest to prove their expertise or "mastery" of information on a subject. This could be described as a performitivity of academic worthiness. Academics are conditioned into disciplining themselves. Under Foucauldian terms, higher education functions as a panopticon, which is to say, it is a complex system of surveillance and disciplining techniques which conditions bodies to engage in self-surveillance and self-regulating their own behaviours as well as others (refer to Foucault, 1995, 195-228). Hence, higher education is a panopticon for training students into routinizing their mind and

body towards labour. However, if a large proportion of the social body is conditioned into believing schooling is compulsory prerequisite to the good life, and performance rankings determine one's worthiness within those spaces, then academia could be said to hold significant influence over ontologies of worth.

EMBODIMENT OF SLOW DEATH

Suffering can manifest as different forms of pain, sometimes physical, sometimes mental, and when chronically sustained over years, it typically is as a complex full-bodied rewiring of the nervous system (Van der Kolk, 2014). Once the pain was removed and a different possible reality exposed, it was like an embodied paradigm shift. Having the chronic pain removed, even for only a few days, was a shocking revelation for me. I had to wait until I was nearing my thirties to experience this sensation, this light feeling of being absent of pain. Before getting there, I first endured what I thought would be certain death. I was forced to take sick leave from schooling and then assumed full control of my medical research and treatment before I was able to reach this point of experiencing a few days free of pain.

One should not have to face death in order to learn what quality living can feel like. One should not have to experience ten years of slow death in general. Particularly since it was not the dying that enabled the removal of pain, but quite the opposite. It was the everyday rhythm of systemic violence that was causing the pain, and it was the routinization of performance coupled with the associating chronic pain (on routinization, refer to Foucault, 1995). The way it was built into the institutional structure and nature of academic operations and measurements produced that pain and contributed to the slow death I was enduring. Pain and struggle were what

comprised much of my "higher" education. Introduced by Berlant (2007), the slow death is a concept that has been gaining traction in critical theory disciplines, particularly critical disability studies, as a contemporary system of biopolitics (Foucault, 1978/1990; Goodley, Lawthom & Runswick-Cole, 2014; McRuer, 2010; Mitchell & Snyder, 2010; Pierre, 2017; Puar, 2013, 2017: Shildrick, 2015). The slow death that I underwent was the consequence of mental illness resulting from the coupling of community-based systemic violence with years of trying to survive institutional violence, which led to daily hypertension, and what I can only imagine was daily heightened adrenaline and cortisol. A dynamic that vastly increases the likelihood of developing trauma due to the body's inability to relax under continual chronic stress.

I write from a state of deep sorrow, mourning, anger and survivor's remorse for those "left-behind" as well as newfound guilt towards myself for having subjected a younger me to so much suffering in the "upward scramble" (Clare, 2009: 40) and obstinate resistance to discrimination rather than choosing to get out. Academic violence is visceral and lasting.

Mental Affect and Effect: Schooling Harmful Cognitive Beliefs

Learning occurred in spite of the pain. Sometimes I even learned particular lessons that were better left unlearnt. Mindsets that still sabotage me today. Misconceptions like I am broken, a failure, or not capable. At the time of discovering these underlying damaging belief systems of myself (Varma, n.d.), I was working for two separate non-profits in positions as Coordinator for each while also writing my thesis, surviving a severe chronic illness, and recovering from chronic trauma. I know these lessons of my being worthless to be untrue, but this is the psychological damage that I have suffered from higher education. I do not believe I ever

internalized these misconceptions on a conscious level, but subconsciously, the hostile environment that I was continually living within academia took its toll (refer to Aubrecht, 2012). I often take comfort in returning to the words and teachings of Patricia Monture-Angus' (1995/2011) *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* as she names the violence of the imperial education system. For instance, in moments when I sit feeling broken and in pain, I re-read her words "Confidence was not learned because of my formal education but in spite of it" (Monture-Angus, 1995/2011, 78). Indigenous students, neurodiverse students, and labour class students all have histories educational systems damaging their sense of self-worth and mental state, often as early as elementary school ages (refer to Baker, 2002; Brodeur, 2021; Brown, 2009; Frankel & Brooks, 2018; Idan & Margalit, 2014; Lindén-Boström & Persson, 2015; Maloney, Ramirez, Gunderson, Levine & Beilock, 2015; Rosenstreich, Feldman, Davidson, Maza & Margalit, 2015; Sainio, Eklund, Ahonen, & Kiuru, 2019). As Monture-Angus (1995/2011: 78) expands, "First Nation children do not leave that system with a positive First Nation identities." All of these bodies and minds are coming in contact with Canada's colonial education system, which operates on a system that is both standardized in measurements and structures, yet institutionally individualizes students in ranking and ordering. The problem is constructed as being located in the student's body-mind, and is something observable, measurable, individually identifiable, categorized, and managed through a whole administrative apparatus (Foucault, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1995).

The Embodiment of Trauma: Mind Over Body

I entered higher education with disability pride and a strong social support structure (on disability pride, refer to Clare, 2009). Even so, the violence ate at me until I was internalizing ableism unbeknownst to me (on internalized ableism, refer to Campbell, 2008). Reflecting on this, I try to push away survivor's guilt driven thoughts like "what does that mean for students who don't have disability pride entering the system?" (on survivor's guilt, refer to Bryan-Podvin, 2020; Choi, 2018). I still have to remind myself that it is okay to take sick days. Friends of mine joke that I am the type of person who logs onto the work system to tell my colleagues I am taking a sick day and then proceeds to work for two hours. These behaviours are not by chance. Such internalized ableism is the result of having to write academic papers through constant mental and physical illness, seemingly regardless of its severity, which exacerbated my mental illness and often snowballed into lowering my immune system, which would increase the rate of viruses to nearly triple the amount of my more privileged peers. One lesson I learned very well in university without even intending, is how to check out from my sensory body and even disassociate at times (Ho, n. d.-a; van dur Kulk, 2014: 89-124 & 265-278). I recall writing papers late into the night when I ignored every sign of my body screaming it was not okay.

The colonial education system is not conducive to a balanced state of body, mind, and spirit necessary for health (Monture-Angus, 2011). I trained my mind to ignore my body in order to meet deadlines. Even so, my mind was in constant distress every time there was a deadline, and my body would obediently pump out adrenaline to assist. My body now relates writing with danger because of the countless hours spent in hypertension completing assignments, studying for exams, taking tests, submitting every request for accommodation form, navigating student

teacher and student TA power dynamics, and navigating institutional bureaucracy (refer to Aubrecht, 2012; Dolmage, 2015; Grande, 2018). By the time I reached my MA, when I now type a paper, I am not aware of the physical sensations in my body. My immune system knows something is wrong and is doing all it can to try to fight off the phantom danger (refer to Durvasula, n.d., 2020; van der Kolk, 2014). I feel tremendous remorse towards my body for ignoring it for so many years in an attempt to excel at school. Right now, as I write, I realize my legs are in pain, and I only realize this because I queued my brain to check on my body (on chronic pain, refer to Durvasula, n.d.). I now have to set timers on my phone when writing to remind myself to check in to see how my body is doing, to evaluate what needs should be met, and to especially soothe my aching tense muscles, joints, and unclench my jaw. To soothe the body which believes I am in danger every time I write (refer to Durvasula, 2021; Joseph, n.d.). Trauma specialists would recognize this as somatic memory, which is a reference to how the body stores trauma memory throughout the somatic nervous system in order to increase survival chances by rapidly cueing the fight, flight, freeze, and feign response with various bodily signals (Ho, n.d.-a; van dur Kulk, 2014). In this sense, tensing my muscles while I am focused on writing will signal my survival response regardless of my conscious awareness, which in turn elevates my trauma symptoms like hypervigilance, which in turn can further trigger trauma responses of greater muscle tension and adrenaline spikes, creating a cycle of worsening physical triggers that will eventually impact my mental and cognitive state (on hypervigilance refer to Durvasula, 2021; Ho, n.d.-a; Joseph, n.d.). To use a common English idiom, it is now often a chicken and egg paradox of which trauma triggers come first: is the cognitive stress of deadlines with resulting adrenaline spikes triggering hypertension, or is it the physical sensations of

discomfort and distress? At this point, it is merely semantics as the reality is my relationship to academic productivity is one of embodied trauma which extends over time to become one of *embodied violence*. In the following section, I will explore some of the technologies of power which led to this feeling of inescapable threat that I lived under for ten years.

STRUCTURE: TECHNOLOGIES OF POWER

Temporal Performance

Upon reflection, my experience pursuing my BA may be better described as a *daily terror of impending failure* to prove my worth. A performance that was also on a deadline, no less, causing an ongoing sense of dread. Time is a powerful disciplinary system (Foucault, 1995). Schools become spaces for "establishing rhythms" through "cycles of repetition" (Foucault, 1995, 149). As Foucault (1995:151) explains, "Precision and regularity, [are] the fundamental virtues of disciplinary time." Schooled time ensures an "obligatory rhythum" that is enacted by the "collective" student body (Foucault, 1995, 151-152). Certainly, it was not only academia that drove me to illness, but I was living in a hostile environment every day for over a decade (on academia as a hostile environment, refer to Grande, 2018; Hong, 2008; Puar, 2013). I had one recurring ideation (i.e. images) in my mind: I was sliding down a steep smooth surface, having nothing to grab hold of to stop my fall, unable to see the edge but knowing it would come abruptly at any moment. It could be any minute. I did not know what would come after, but I feared I would fall into a black abyss and die. This was not a dream. I was awake but could not stop this reoccurring image. They were likely the earliest forms of suicidal ideation since they

were of impending doom and possible death, yet I had no thoughts of killing myself in them (refer to Ho, n.d.-b). It felt like external forces would ensure my inevitable demise. It was always the same vision and sensation. School deadlines were the primary trigger that spurred these visions. Certainly, this may sound dramatic and fantastical to a healthy mind, but it was the reality of my reoccurring ideation. Reflecting on it now, I can see the clear connection between imagery and reality. That cliff's edge was my dead-*line*. The edge was raising up towards me as I tumbled down with nothing to stop the fall. It was the cliff that marked my desperate struggle for survival and the edge was the inevitability of being flung into an unknown abyss.

For me, *time was a structure of torment*. It was a measurement standard used to Other me from my peers (on Othering refer to Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011, 609; Richards, 2008, 1717). It was an "accommodation" that led to individualizing and locating the problem onto my body-mind, the student, leading countless institutional personnel and peers to feel justified in having opinions on my capacity and worthiness of being in higher education (Dolmage, 2017; Knight, 2016; Mitchell, Snyder & Ware, 2014; Monture-Angus, 2011). A time-centric system that instructors used to pressure me to hand in assignments regardless of how physically ill I was and to imply less status when doctors' notes pushed the extension more than a couple of days. Time was a system that pressed me to write in rooms apart from my peers, forcing me to explain my absence and marking me as different. Time was the justification some peers used to imply I did not earn my grades because I had unfair advantages, that they too could get A's if they had extra time. For political reasons, I never shared my grades with classmates, so these passive-aggressive accusations of A's were assumptions. Perhaps most importantly, time was also a system that led to me living in a state of chronic hypertension, leading to lasting medical

consequences. I constantly feared the possibility of forgetting to request accommodations within the deadlines or forgetting an assignment's deadline. In my first few years, this typically amounted to submitting approximately 12 accommodation requests for midterms and finals, double-checking the times and information for 24 confirmation emails—2 emails for each exam—and navigating the back-and-forth communications when errors were made, which were frequent with finals. I was responsible for ensuring they made no errors, and if they did, I would be held responsible for not identifying the problem and then disciplined by not being provided with my full accommodation. These regulations did not give any leniency when instructors were the individuals that we were waiting on, as they are also required to give a one week notice of an exam. This meant that, in some cases, I had to rush to the accommodations centre that day before they closed to deliver the hard copy of my request. It was a brief relief when an online request form was created, as I could submit the request in the evenings, but this also resulted in the centre becoming even less lenient than they were before. Navigating 12 request submissions and 24 emails may sound easily feasible. In practice, it was overwhelming when also trying to stay on top of weekly assignments, prepping for midterms, tests, and finals, and dealing with multiple viruses per semester (up to even four within the one semester). I did once forget to make a request on time, and when I contacted them six days before, rather than seven, they refused my request, despite my pleading in a understanding and very friendly manner. I remember sobbing in the women's bathroom stalls, knowing I would fail the exam out of pure anxiety if the lack of accommodations did not cause it. While it may be just one exam, the whole experience merely reinforced my terror of missing a deadline and is still a deeply negative memory I cannot forget. A memory of feeling isolated and alienated in a room full of people, while also feeling setup for

failure as punishment for being overwhelmed and forgetting one request. My fear of forgetting to submit a request was strong enough to often cause my body to shake, because I knew the magnitude of consequences forgetting would have on my future. With the cumulation of anxiety from assignment deadlines, exam lengths, and fear of request form deadlines, I was frequently shifting from nervous jitters to hypertension until I would finally fall ill and get some rest. Yet, even when sick, I would still push through the sickness to continue working, albeit at a slowed pace.

At the beginning of each semester, when most of my peers were easing into courses, I was inundated with planning and stress, trying to submit accommodation requests for every single test and midterm that had a date already listed in the syllabus, trying to obtain my hard copy readings in advance of class to have it converted into a pdf format that accessibility software could read (this was before ebook copies became commonplace). I quickly stopped using certain accessible software because they did not improve my academic experience and rather added more stress. This was met with strong push-back from institutional actors who saw refusing an accessibility accommodation as *choosing to be impaired*. Particularly because this accessibility software in question increased my *speed* by reading to me. I was met with a twisted expression when I explained I processed the content far better by reading it to myself, with more depth, and greater memory retention. The rhetorical question that I was met with following this explanation was along the lines of "but it *did* speed you up" in a seemingly unquestionable statement that time efficiency outweighed learning. I suppose I could argue the same for any human that has a computer read something to them. It is feasible to increase the reading speed to double or triple the normal human reading rate to speed through an article. Whether information

is processed and retained is another matter. If processing is not important, then perhaps this is the way of the future. Seeing that my reading rate in English is comparable to most anglophones who read out loud, it did not seem like much of an impediment to me, particularly when I was processing and comprehending the material better that way. Referencing time efficiency over comprehension and retention signalled to me that perhaps my learning did not matter at all to this institution.

Meritocracy

Such valuation of time seems to conform to a very specific measurement standard under a neoliberal version of meritocracy, whereby optimization of productivity and performance is supreme. As defined by Merriam-Webster (n.d.-b), meritocracy is a practice whereby power is afforded "on the basis of their demonstrated abilities and merit." When such standards are used to measure human value, meritocracy can be exercised as a technology of power for disciplining the body politic of the academic world into conformance to certain performative and cultural standards, alongside the output which privileges some while disabling others (Brown, 2009; Foucault, 1995). As Brown (2009: 97) explains, the "[ideal] path is not in amending disability as something in need of fixing, either through fixed definitions or remedial programmes, but in challenging those common sense notions that disability is something to be fixed" (Brown, 2009: 97). Such performance-based valuation of students means that what students gain through the journey of education is irrelevant apart from basic measurements of accreditation: so long as grading is within acceptable parameters for passing, speed does not pose an inconvenience to the institution, and graduation is at least seemingly possible. This is by no means a benevolent

system. It is a system that, at times, is seemingly designed to condition conformance to academic notions of common sense.

Academia sells the concept that we want what higher education offers, only to then spend years degrading the worth of marginalized students, and simultaneously creating discourses and structures that ensure cultures of competition and hostility amongst peers (refer to Collinson & Penketh, 2010; Grande, 2018; Hong, 2008). Biases sustained by an institutional culture that may openly practice some measure of inclusion in admissions but culturally and structurally render anyone with learning disabilities inherently unsuited to be in university (Brown, 2009; Dolmage, 2017). I developed trauma from the chronic stresses schooling posed on me year after year, through these various mechanisms of surveillance, biased measurements, various forms of discipline, inflexibility towards illness, resistance to accommodations, and at times the pure discriminatory beliefs that individuals (particularly from students and TAs) would hold against learning disabilities. Education embeds self-disciplining structures onto the body through rankings and measurements, which classify students but create a culture where students intuitively classify each other and themselves. In this way, the academic system of institutional, social, self-monitoring, discipline, compulsory performance, and ostracism of non-conformers intersect in ways that generate a system of surveillance similar to that of a panopticon (refer to Foucault, 1995). *A panopticon of valuation.*

Hostile Environments

Some readers may argue that this is proof that I and other students like me, who cannot manage the test methods, do not belong in university. I would be inclined to partially agree: the

system was actively designed to privilege some people over others (Brown, 2009) making it a very hostile environment whereby disabled students, must bend to the performative standards of students who were intended to be privileged by these metrics. So, in this sense, I do not belong in academia. It was designed to keep people like me out, and such institutions have not been altered enough to make the space safe for us thrive after entering (Brown, 2009; Hong, 2008; Mitchell, Snyder & Ware, 2014). This is my reality as a non-conforming white body coming in contact with colonial higher school system which were structured to direct my mind. Indigenous bodies on the other hand, encounter an institutional system which was initially built to break the Indigenous spirit (Acoose, 1995). This legacy lives on in university halls that promote white Eurocentric thought and ways of being in canon literature, architecture, classroom layout, teaching methods, academic culture, and even cafeteria or foodcourt menus (refer to Acoose, 1995; Battiste, 2013; Monture-Angus, 1995; Smith, 2008). Monture-Angus (1995: 67) explains that as a Haudenosaunee (Mohawk) woman, "[she has] never experienced the classroom as a safe place." Instead, the system assumes what outwardly may appear like a benevolent charity style approach of inclusion of all students and the generosity of "granting" accommodations. This charity discourse ensures a clear hierarchy of not only institutional but also *moral* implications in their discursive framing (refer to Dolmage, 2017). These inclusion rhetorics and the accommodations they provide help paint the students whom the institutions disables as the problem. That is, those who are sabotaged by the structures, standards, measurements, and academic culture used by the colonial education system are constructed as problem-students (on academia problematizing students, refer to Knight, 2016; Monture-Angus, 2001).

Worse even, these students are not just framed as problem students needing an extra boost of support, but in a comparative system that ranks students against their peers in measurements structures like the bell curve, we are transformed into students who are taking away grades from more deserving students (Dolmage, 2015, 2017). Such discourses encourage the production of hostile environments which pit many self-identifying able-bodied students against disabled students, particularly when the able-bodied student is *struggling*. The irony is that the so-called able bodied student is struggling because academia is a system of debilitation. They are being worn down and debilitated by the structures which cause them to struggle, and displace blame on the already disabled student. If academic institutions transformed their overarching paradigm to one that makes learning accessible to all—forsaking the accreditation system, glorification of ability, and competition as value standards—academia would be transformed into something anyone could benefit from. Yet, such transformation of education would simultaneously render the system no longer viable as a clear ranking system of individual worth. Under a colonial capitalist world, this approach appears utopian in that it would also no longer enable more privileged students as easy a means of gaining an advantage in the workforce, and it would also call into question the entire compulsory nature of attending academia for means of advancement. It could jeopardize the colonizer's assumed entitlement of the good life by way of the promise of higher education. In essence, making academia about learning rather than accreditation would be highly disruptive to our current economic framework. It has the potential to be revolutionary in effect, until another technology of power moves in to reestablish the status quo in regulating human labour value.

Cartesian Dualism

I made a nearly fatal mistake of thinking that as long as I could ride out the mental illness, that I would come out of it alive and would focus on healing my mental state. In my youth, surrounded by happiness scripts and notions of mental strength, I was ignorant of the impact that mental illness has on the body as a whole (on happiness scripts refer to Ahmed, 2010; on physical consequences of mental illness refer to Dreher, 2003; van der Kolk, 2014). I did not know what living with that level of agonizing anxiety would do to my immune system. This was also likely ignorance wrought by the very toxic way mind and body were spoken of as separate in Cartesian Dualism: that somehow intellect made humans different and superior to animals (on Cartesian Dualism, refer to Dreher, 2003, xiii). These mindsets set in the 17th century established some of the groundwork of the 18th century Enlightenment era, which birthed many concepts of race and biological determinism (Myles & Brown, 2006). This in turn established the foundation for the birth of eugenics by Sir Francis Galton in the 19th century, and its rise in popularity during the early 20th century following his cousin Charles Darwin's public support of eugenics (refer to Clare, 2009; Dyer, 1997; James, 2006; Monture-Angus, 1995/2011; Withers, 2012). These destructive beliefs that mind and body are separate are not only harmful to our conception of health but it is tied to a long history of white supremacy.

DEAD-LINES: THE SLOW DEATH

I was never one to believe that my body was invincible or that I would remain healthy. Quite the reverse, in fact, I was an ill child who was sick enough to be left out of many physical activities, such as sports or manual labour, but not ill enough for doctors to take my exhaustion

and lack of energy seriously. Even so, I was ignorant about the embodiment of mental illness and its effects. I thought strong willpower would be able to sustain me. I never expected that living under that mental illness for so long would slowly damage my body (refer to Dreher, 2003; van der Kolk, 2014). I *felt* the whole time of my BA that I was psychologically dying inside but never suspected that I actually was. Even in my fourth or fifth year of BA, when I nearly suffered a nervous breakdown as a result of a severe brachial infection, when a professor placed tremendous pressure on me to hand in my assignment in spite of my inability to breathe. That was a tipping point that initiated a cascade of overwhelming suicidal thoughts. Psychological and sensory experiences I had never felt before were released all at once (on the link between education and suicide link refer to Armstrong, 2011; Aubrecht, 2012; Puar, 2013). After that point, I was assaulted by visceral suicidal ideations (i.e. thoughts) on a regular basis (on suicidal ideation refer to Ho, n.d.-b). Even with all of this, I did not think my body would answer my mind's call. Yet, as psychosomatic theory and practice now reveal, the mind-body network is a fully intricate molecular network that comprises our bodies (Dreher, 2003). The mind and body are the same, and I was dying.

Fast forward to MA studies. The first semester the suicidal ideations returned. The second semester, I suffered a massive emotional burnout from all the external shocks from home combined with the hostility I was dealing with in class, the toxic environments, and the deadlines. *Dead-lines*. By the next fall semester, I was in a full-blown medical crisis. I was suffering anaphylactic reactions every two weeks. Fast forward eight to nine months later, my dietician was threatening to forcefully hospitalize me, because I was so severely malnourished and slowly starving to death from my body rejecting food. Doctors were rushing emergency tests

and could not find answers. One specialist finally diagnosed me with severe IBS when no other prognosis turned up, and confirmed that it was very plausible that I had a rare autoimmune disorder, but he had no training in that field. I was left with still no definitive answers and what some call medical fatigue, whereby, I was so fed up with the broken institutional structure in Western medicinal practice, which failed to find solutions for me. I finally gave myself permission to turn fully to the treatment options I had been researching for over half a year. After six months of carefully testing various treatments, I finally conducted one month of intensive treatment with a blend of natural antibiotics and antifungals, which pulled me out of my medical crisis. I followed this with a blend of natural and standard medicine and slowly improved. I still experience relapses which are typically less severe now that I know what treatments to use. They are often brought on by intense prolonged trauma triggers, and sometimes by exposures to severe food intolerances. My medical issues are clearly not just psychosomatic, yet mental dynamics and particularly trauma has clearly caused shifts in my entire somatic nervous system, which impacts my autoimmune system (refer to van der Kolk, 2014). In Bessel van der Kolk's (2014: 1-3) seminal work *The Body Keeps the Score*, he explains that research from newer disciplines has exposed "that trauma produces actual physiological changes, including a recalibration of the brain's alarm system, an increase in stress hormone activity, and alterations in the system that filters relevant information from irrelevant…These changes explain why traumatized individuals become hypervigilant to threats" and exposes that "even on our biology and immune systems" are altered.

Differentiated Experience

One aspect that substantially differentiated me from some of my more socioeconomically privileged peers was that I had to "fight" to get into university. Due to this fact, I wanted to receive the most out of my education. From the beginning, my motivation for attending university was about learning. It was not about the degree it would confer at the end: a slip of paper I could use to try and get a job. Nor was higher education about career advancement, though I did hope it would provide me with a choice of industry, which itself is a level of socioeconomic "privilege" that most labourers I knew were not provided. University, for me, was never about fitting in or being accepted, which meant peer pressure was not very effective in disciplining my conformity or assimilation in my BA. The only exception I recall was assimilating into a more urban dress code, so I was able to blend in with urban middle-class white women. This was more of a strategic move on my part than an attempt to fit in. I wanted to understand the mindset of a demographic that I perceived to be complacent and even actively complicit in reproducing the status quo, particularly as it related to the education system's involvement in siphoning the body politic to continually reproduce the geopolitical aims of the nation-state (on siphoning refer to Dolmage, 2017; on geoeconomics refer to Blackwill, R. & Harris, 2016; Musacchio & Lazzarini, 2014; Sparke, 2018; Turner, 2015; on geopolitics refer to Puar, 2009, 2017; Stoler, 2004;). Therefore, I assumed the urban dress code and academic dialect.

While my reference to having "fought" for education may seem excessive, it took more resources, energy, and people than I could possibly list here to ensure my mere access to university. Such needed resources were not because I failed to warrant the intellectual right to

access academia, as the colonial grading system entails, but rather because of many structural reasons. This was in part due to the discrimination that is levelled at homeschooled students from some universities but to complicate the narrative, I believe my homeschooling experience was one of the main tactics that ensured my success. I was surrounded by a community of people both inside and outside of the traditional schooling system who believed I was intelligent, studious, and creative. My self-confidence and learning were nurtured in tandem so that, once I reached university, the barrier of thinking I was an idiot did not *yet* exist in my mind. Even with this one tremendous gift of disability pride and self-assurance as an intellect, access to university was never a guarantee for me, and I placed the vast majority of my energy during my last two years of high school into proving my worth as a rural student seeking to be a scholar.

I was also there to prove to the world that rural kids with learning disabilities were not idiots; that location does not dictate intellectual capacity. I witnessed my peers with learning disabilities coping with the effects of being belittled in elementary and high school, to the point where many in the region had internalized violent beliefs before they had even reached high school (on learning disability in education refer to Brodeur, 2021; Brown, 2009; Knight, 2016: Sainio, Eklund, Ahonen, & Kiuru, 2019). Then secondary school cemented such beliefs (Brown, 2009; Dolmage, 2017). I was determined to go to university to engage in counter-theory before I even knew the academic term it describes (on counter-discourse refer to Adelman, 2018; Shaftel, 2011; Tachibana, 1998). As a result of my political conciseness, I knew my peers with learning disabilities were not “stupid”, and I was also aware that the system was rigged to condition them into believing they were unsuited for academia (refer to Brodeur, 2021; Brown, 2009; Dolmage, 2017, 21; Knight, 2016: Sainio, Eklund, Ahonen, & Kiuru, 2019). Disability pride is what led me

to university. It is also what carried me through ten years of institutional violence. While pride can be a powerful motivator for resisting oppression (Clare, 2009), it can also be damaging when used to push through one's own experience of embodied violence. In this case, ten years is a long time to sustain violence to prove a point. Even if that point was to produce counter-discourse.

Alternative Pedagogies and Ways of Learning

Unlike many of my peers, I grew up being inspired by knowledge and learning. I was known as a bookworm and was just as happy to sit outside under the trees reading a book as I would be to play video games or do other common activities. This was not because all homeschooled children are academic geniuses, as one common stereotype has it, but rather that I thirsted for knowledge and had accrued a healthy relationship with learning as I grew. A healthy relationship to learning that many of my peers were not granted. While my peers had to spend those few moments they were granted away from school and work avoiding anything that resembled scholarly work, learning for me was a holistic experience that spanned the day and many common activities. This was not the case for all homeschooled students, but it was my positionality in regard to learning as a child in a rural space, and it impacted my relationship to knowledge profoundly. I had become a self-teacher by the time I reached my first year of high school, if not earlier, and by that point I had assumed primary control of my learning. I achieved a level of autonomy and intellectual actualization that few people I have known have been fortunate enough to experience. This relationship to self-directed learning had served me well ever since, particularly when I first entered university. The independent learning style of

university was not a culture shock to me, as it was for many of my first-year university classmates. However, academia's assimilatory culture was a culture shock.

Calling Out Academia's Institutional Violence

This deeply entrenched disability pride, coupled with my strong thirst for knowledge, meant that I was so confident and comfortable with my mind and how it worked that I employed my disability diagnosis as a reason to approach each professor at the beginning of the semester. I did this because even though I wished to talk with them, as an introvert, I wanted a reason to approach them. I also felt guilt for taking up their time when most of these classrooms were full of approximately 80-100 students in that program. It was my excuse for introducing myself, but our conversations typically centred around the class content. I came from a childhood where independent learning was encouraged, and I could openly seek my teachers' support, explanations, and opinions without fear that it would be interpreted as a lack of intelligence. In my homeschooled life, learning was never treated in the sense of already knowing and proving that pre-existing intake of information. Rather, it was a process of learning and dialogue. If I did not fully comprehend a concept, it was never a sign that I did not do the work, it was a sign I was engaging with the work and coming up with questions as a result. I quickly discovered that in my program, most of these professors were *thrilled* to have a student approach them and express such genuine interest in learning. I realized over time that these professors were also institutionalized in a different way than I (refer to Dolmage, 2017; Henry, Dua, James, Kobayashi, Li, Ramos, Smith, 2017). My classmates would complain that they felt like numbers in these classrooms, while meanwhile, after engaging in genuine dialogue with many of my

instructors, I realized that some of them felt like robots dictating the same information every year to 100 plus students while not being sure if any were listening. I imagined that the masses of students felt insignificant and invisible, and the lecturers felt likewise unappreciated and alone. What I observed was that somehow most people I encountered on both sides of those large lectures style classes felt used and insignificant.

I bonded professionally with many of my professors. Enough that I would talk with some of them for a few minutes after many of our classes, being cautious not to intrude in the rare cases when other students had questions. It appears to me from my instructors' body language that the vast majority were happy to talk to me and that many even looked forward to me approaching them with questions, and even hoped I would continue to do so. Overall, this was healthy, but it became apparent to me that it happened *in spite* of the structure and culture that was established in these academic spaces. Rather, it was my insider-outsider identity as having been homeschooled as a child and bringing with me a culture of one-on-one relationships with my teachers, that I had the *nerve or audacity* to approach these professors with virtually no fear, but rather an eager interest to learn. I was operating counter to the established passive intake culture of academia. At this level of first and second-year BA, the conventional system is arguably one of consumerism, where students pay the institution in order to receive a degree or other academic qualification, while they in turn take part in a whole series of performative acts so they can be measured and ranked against their peers and internalize such conventions of performativity (refer to Dolmage, 2017; Foucault, 2995; Veck, 2012). This capitalist system is what Paulo Freire (1970/2021: 71-86) and bell hooks (1994: 40) refer to as the "banking system" of education, which has the impact of halting genuine dialogue by creating environments that

encourage passive intake of information, digesting information long enough to perform the intake, but removes the union of words and action that allows for transformation.

I do not regret reaching out to my professors. In fact, I consider my conversations with instructors to be one of the greatest decisions and actions I made in my early years of university. Looking back, I believe it is what allowed me to develop a complex perspective on the relationship instructors had with their own institutionalization, and that they too were entangled in the banking system, many trying to survive. Yet there is a painful story here.

I lost this healthy connection to instructors. It was abused out of me by a TA, and many other actors of the institution who chose to gaslight me out of convenience, or perhaps to guard their institution (on gaslighting, refer to Druvasula, 2020).

By the end of my undergraduate degree, I no longer trusted educators, and by the time I reached my master's studies, I found it difficult to approach any professor in a genuinely open way. I had been psychologically and institutionally maltreated by so many TAs, administrators, students and some professors during my BA that by the time I reached my MA, I had sworn off ever trusting any actor of an academic institution. I still had no trouble speaking up in class and even openly agreeing or disagreeing with instructors' opinions. I even somehow gained a reputation for being fearless around professors among my classmates, which in and of itself says something concerning about academic culture when students see open discussion as something to shrink from. Yet, I could not seek those instructors out in the open one-on-one context of learning like I once had. Instructors had shifted from being my educators to being actors of the institution in my mind. I had to work to mend this broken student-teacher relationship to function

effectively with my supervisors, but apart from these exceptions, I rarely ever developed the type of warm regard I used to have for those professional relationships I used to have with instructors.

This is what institutionalization can do to the mind and spirit. This is what trauma can do. I should add that the experiences of abuse I noted earlier, would have all happened regardless of if I approached my professors directly or not in those early years. How did this shift occur? I believe a key semester was responsible for sparking mistrust, yet it was the constant microaggressions, gaslighting, and hostile environment I lived under for the years to come that reinforced and solidified it. It was not just one person. It was not even just instructors and TAs. In fact, administrators were a far more frequent force for generating struggle in my attempt to learn. It was the entire system designed to function in a way that sabotages students with disabilities and those who do not conform to Occidental thinking and measurements. Students are seen to be the "problem" (refer to Knight, 2016; Monture-Angus, 1995/2011; Smith, 2008). Students who are exceptional. Students that are exceptions.

How Institutional Walls Can Feel Like a Prison

I have spent the entire ten years of academic schooling in a mental battle against stigmas and structures that constructed me as less capable or even *incapable* of belonging in academic halls despite consistently maintaining academic excellence. As Dolmage (2017) explains:

> so-called invisible disabilities are particularly fraught in an educational setting in which students with disabilities are already routinely and systematically constructed as faking it, jumping a queue, or asking for an advantage. The stigma of disability is something that drifts all over—it can be used to insinuate inferiority, revoke privilege, and step society very freely. (p.10)

For me, academia felt like a prison, and for a few years, I had the sense it was a battlefield that was being waged over my mind. I recall once thinking I would rather die than let "them"—whomever they were—assimilate my mind. At that moment, suicidal ideation was the interlinking of mental illness and determination to resist full domination. I tried to mentally push back against the constant assimilatory culture that was beginning to make me feel like I was losing control of my mind. It was then, when I realized how deeply assimilated and implicated I had already become. Death felt like the last resort. Yet, I was just as determined *not to die* for academia. I knew pulling out of schooling was far more tactically sound of a move against the machine of academia than to add myself as another casualty. Another body that would soon be erased from the institution's consciousness into statistics (Aubrecht, 2012); following perhaps a brief announcement of sorts to encourage the student body to seek support if they feel distressed, as the institution had done each time a student committed suicide during my BA.

I had sought out those resources multiple times, long before having ever developed suicidal ideation (on suicidal ideation, refer to Ho, n.d-b). The student counsellors who person those centres were ill-equipped to provide support to me and, at times, made matters worse as opposed to better. I spent a number of counselling sessions feeling like I had to dodge stereotypes of rural labours, staying vigilant of everything I said, and once questioning if I should spend my hour contradicting my councillor's racist white-feminist statements. These student councillors certainly did not know how to provide adequate support to a queer student from an economically struggling welfare town, who was trying to survive institutional violence for being disabled, and living through nearly weekly sexual harassment on transit and campus. Unfortunately, it is quite common for the university mental health resources in North America to

be comprised of student councillors in-training who have the student body as their training ground for the initial years of their career advancements (Dolmage, 2015). While university settings should be spaces of learning, including for psychology students, it is not appropriate to use students as a band-aid in place of structural change designed to remove institutional violence (refer to Dolmage, 2015). It raises questions about how these student councillors are to handle the complexities and intersections that come with the institutional violence many of their clients must endure in academia, let alone coupled with systemic violence caused by racism, colonialism, and economic insecurities? I consider myself fortunate for not having experienced suicidal ideation until my later years of BA, especially when accounting for the chronic stressors that I was confronted with on a daily bases during my schooling.

Loss of Dialect and Culture

Losing the rural labouring dialect from my hometown was perhaps the final part of this story, a deeply painful experience for me (on language, refer to hooks, 1994). Throughout my BA, I had chosen to continue to work part-time in Smiths Falls in order to keep myself grounded. I was cautious against becoming an arrogant academic (albeit I had my moments as a young adult) and was concerned if I lost my connection to the region, I might become swept up in the potential socioeconomic climb (refer to Clare, 2009). I feared losing touch or, even worse, being corrupted into turning my back on rural labourers. Some locals would talk about youth going off to university and behaving like they were superior to the townsfolk. By the time I was a year into my MA, I had realized I had lost much of my local dialect, with its idioms and the amazing adaptability of common vernacular, in place of expanded vocabulary focused on precision.

Looking back, I can now marvel at the ability people back home had at making one common word take on multiple nuanced meanings. To have this adapting, shifting, and complex mode of relating to language be replaced by academic English *hurt*. Particularly with academic English's obsession with precision and vocabulary accumulation, which enables a type of dialectical performance in academia: upholding the claim that each word conveys its own nuance and specificity (refer to Clayton, 2015). My embodied relation to it felt increasingly like a marker of socioeconomic positioning: the highly overeducated versus the so-called undereducated. I internalized this academic language to survive, which enabled me to excel. However, since language holds culture, it also assimilated my mind into the academic thought while simultaneously pulling my intellect out of the fluid labouring dialect I had left behind. Seeing as this occurred the years following Smiths Falls' latest economic shock, this loss of hometown dialect felt more attune to my last rural footing being ripped from under me. It is for this reason and in response to the particular form of intellectual abuse that I was subjected to in my BA that I actively chose to break some grammatical rules in this chapter. This form of resistance, while potentially meek, is healing for my mind and spirit.

Worse even, I lost my ability to express humour, since years of working in a welfare town led to me adopting a very dark sense of humour that was too political and startling for most of the middle-class primarily white urbanites I was surrounded by in my MA classes. Such shifts left me unable to share in the camaraderie such dark humour carried for me, as the underlying political messages of resistance to repression were entirely lost on the confused and often appalled faces of my academic peers (on dark humour as politics refer to Sheftel, 2011). I was ostracized as seeming mean-spirited within that urban woman-dominated space, whereas back

home, it would have been a normal innocent banter between women. Thankfully the few men in the same class understood I meant no offence by my comments, leading to me finding myself in an unexpected situation of finding solace in the male demographic that caused so much insecurity during my BA years. Furthermore, the urban cultural gender norms coupled with a foreboding sense of insecurity that naturally emerged from being a queer student in a Catholic university, which at the time lacked any clear queer representation, meant I was experiencing gender dysphoria on a nearly daily basis. All the while, I was uncertain if this dysphoria was resulting from my queerness, or my cultural relocation into urban gender norms (on cultural dysphoria, refer to Edwards, 2015; Sharma, 2017). I hesitate to appropriate the concept of cultural dysphoria, but it holds some resonance for describing the cultural split between urban-rural gendered differences. Just being rural somehow queered me in that predominantly straight white cis urban space (refer to Clare, 2009). My experience in MA enabled me to become acquainted with another form of academic assimilation, exposing the multiplicity of technologies that comprise academic assimilation (on technologies of power refer to Foucault, 1995).

SURVIVAL AND SUPPORT:

Discovery of Embodied Violence & My Unexpected Teacher of Self-care

Living with a support dog impacted my learning in ways that enabled me to function when I otherwise would have likely suffered a mental "break." No one can possibly know the intricacies of what it is to have such a deep bond as the one I had living with my support dog unless they have also lived with one. Support animals fulfil a need, and may even enable a form of independence that the individual would not have otherwise had without them (Michalko,

2011). In this way, the relationship between support dog and person has the potential to be one of the truer forms of interdependency, as opposed to dependency and co-dependency that so often occur between owners and pets. It can destabilize, at least in part, the power relationship that exists between human and their furry companion since both are dependent on each other. At least, that was the relationship I had with my support dog, Misty. As I write these pages, my family is laying to rest my support dog, one of my dearest friends who, if not for her being by my side through my undergraduate studies, I am not sure if I would have survived.

My relationship with my family dog did not start with her as a support pet. In fact, I foolishly tried to talk my mother out of getting her. I was preparing to begin my undergraduate studies in a year or two, and we already had another dog. I told my mother that I would not be able to help care for the two dogs, that it would be too much work. Now looking back, I realize how selfish I was in my youthful pride, and how truly fortunate I became when my mother chose to take on that added responsibility in spite of my refusal to offer help. Misty, my mother's dog, learned on her own how to monitor my mental and physical state and intervene when needed. It would be impossible to know the number of times she pulled an all-nighter with me, as I attempted to finish assignments. She would follow me into whatever room I was working and listen to my breathing and any other noise I may emit. She would watch me intently and grunt complaints if she became concerned.

At first, I did not realize what she was doing. I would be typing my essays in a heightened state of stress and— imagine this—a mid-sized golden retriever comes up next to me and physically places her head under one of my arms, lifting up her head so as to physically separate me from the computer, including the paper that was due the next morning! And she kept

doing it! I was so annoyed at first, thinking she merely wanted attention. Despite this, I loved that dog so deeply that I rarely would get mad at her. My mother had instilled in me a respect for animal companions that parallels that of humans. What this meant is that we talked to her the same way as we would talk to any other person, just making sure to use everyday vocabulary, avoiding obscure words that she would have never encountered. Consequently, I try to acknowledge them every time they enter the room, and I "listen" to them even when they will not stop complaining (and I do not give in to every complaint).

So when our family dog was staring up at me with body language that was pleading, and she made it abundantly clear she did not need to be taken out to pee, or have me fulfil any other of her standard wants and needs, it took only a few of her interventions on my essay writing that night for me to realize that she was genuinely worried about me. I tried to reason with her along the lines of, "Alright, I really need to write this and I am on a roll, but I do realize I need a break. How about this, you let me write for 10 more minutes and I will take a break. Okay? I promise I will take a break" Then she proceeded to lay down, but not without a little grunting, and allowed me to continue writing, only to come back to sit next to me and stare me down, only a little while later. I took the break as I had promised, and this pattern continued. I started to notice that every time she interrupted me, my anxiety was so high that I was no longer breathing properly, and my whole body was in pain. I started listening to her, following our agreement. I would always take a pause within 10 minutes of when she would ask me to. She stopped physically separating me from my computer. She would just sit next to me and stare when she wanted to tell me to take a breather. If I continued working too long after, the staring would turn into the grunting, then the head would finally come down, this time on top of my arm with her looking up at me as only

dogs can manage. Finally, if all else failed and she thought I was completely disregarding her, she would physically separate me by putting her head under my arm and then pulling up. The more I followed her direction of taking breaks, the rarer that last technique was used until, eventually, she ceased using it entirely, because I had learned to listen to her. I let her advise me when I was going too far. I learned how to start practising self-care while writing. Eventually, I became accustomed to taking breaks without her prompting. While I love all animal companions deeply, I have never respected and trusted one as deeply as her. She was my guide in learning how to practice self-care when I was living through intellectual and psychological violence. I did not know how to do so alone, as much as I tried. My support dog taught me how to take care of myself, even as I survived an institution that was teaching me the opposite: to push until I had produced everything demanded on a set schedule. My support dog was my first teacher to guide me through my learning somatic trauma therapy, I just did not know it at the time.

When I considered returning to academics to study for my MA, my mother begged me not to return. My support dog grunted a lot of complaints every time I spoke about university. Perhaps I should have listened to them. Then my support dog might have known the person I could be outside of institutional violence. Unfortunately, she was never able to meet that version of me.

REFLECTION

This style of institutionalized schooling disciplines the student body—that is, our youth—into internalizing performance standards that sustain the status quo of optimizing time efficiency, product output, and able-minded performance. In other words, by the time of graduation, the

student body is disciplined into internalizing *labouring sentiments, including the glorification of ability performance and optimization*. As such, under the systems of meritocracy which establish a culture of human valuation based on ability performance, particularly intellectual ability, this valuation is heavily integrated as the pervading sentiments of academic life and achievement. This glorification of ability performance can be used as a worthiness comparison between peers in the microcosm of academia, particularly through grade scoring. Yet even more concerning, after years of internalizing academic sentiments, these valuations extend beyond academia as sentiments of worthiness. This neoliberal structure of inclusion is place these marginalized worth-*less* students under mental and physical debilitation as they struggle to belong, while more privilege students engage in the unattainable quest for worth*full*ness. Through the internalizing of neocolonial sentiments coupled with the routinization of performance, the body is conditioned into habits and rituals that inscribe a psychophysical urge towards performative acts. The compulsion towards worth-*fullness* is thereby inscribed on the body's memory and desires through years of disciplining affects that they produce *visceral somatic urges* to avoid any risk of appearing worth-less, such as underperforming. *Thus Canada's colonial educational system inscribes on the social body through its institutions a compulsory worthiness struggle*. Marginalized students who do not easily conform to the structures, curriculum, or architecture are the most likely to feel this economics of worth, whereby those who align with imperial structures are least likely to *feel* this valuation, and may even celebrate the "infinite pursuit of improvement" (Mitchell & Snyder, 191).

The academic student body is thereby disciplined into *complacent* internalization and *complicit* reproduction of these capitalist imperial ontologies and systems (refer to Battiste,

2013; Grande, 2018; Smith, 2008). Perhaps the most radical opinion I may have developed after these ten years of schooling is that it is true that students with disabilities do not *belong* in this university school system. We deserve so much better. Rather, all bodies subjugated by imperial systems deserve better. Particularly those living through the more extreme forms of violence, racism, persecution, surveillance, discipline and imposed order. An order which is so often disguised as bureaucracy (refer to Aubrecht, 2012; Dean, 1994, p. 188; Foucault, 1995; Shahjahan, 2011). I refuse assimilation. I refuse to believe my intellect is better or worse than another's. To echo Sandy Grande (2018: 51) I "refuse the university." I believe learning and research can be healthy and holistic (refer to Battiste, 2013; bell hooks, 1994; Monture-Angus, 2011). That it can nourish the body when done in balance with the mind, body, and soul (refer to hooks, 1994; Monture-Angus, 1995/2011). The years in academia were the dark years of my life. It was a time when virtually every day was a struggle. The institutional violence has been deeply embodied within my physical, mental, and intellectual being, with lasting scars on my immune system. The damage to my body is likely permanent. I am now looking to the future in more hopeful terms as I start the process of unlearning academic sentiments and decolonizing my mind.

Returning to the Library (figuratively):

I would like to bring your attention back momentarily to the desk I had sat at when starting this narrative journey, as I found an emotional connection to statements of struggle and suffering. I was inspired that day to check the other desks that were in close proximity. The library was relatively quiet, so it was not difficult to inspect empty desks, although it did spur a

few glances from nearby students. I was curious to see if I could find other statements that I could relate to. In my quest to feel less alone, I looked at 14 desks in total. I discovered sentiments that felt common to my own experiences in academia. Many sentiments of suffering. I choose to share some of these additional graffiti quotes below as a way to tie my above narrative back to the core reason I am writing this work (refer to appendix).

Goal = Pain + work + Patience

This chapter may be my narrative, but the topic of embodied violence in the education system far exceeds my singular experience (refer to Aubrecht, 2012; Grande, 2018; Hong, 2008; Knight, 2016; Monture-Angus, 2011).

They don’t wanna see you succeed.
(The word “They” is circled with a line stroked through it.)

I write because, in my position of power and privilege, I am able to speak to this when so many of those I have known cannot. I know so many who would never even imagine accessing those academic halls. Academia is unachievable for most of my dearest peers back home due to sabotage in their early years. This is why I was so stubborn and ignored my body’s calls to quit.

Here lies my hopes & dreams RIP

One of my favourite quotes by far was simply the word “Borg” written in permanent marker. The Borg were a fictional species in the Star Trek universe who were bent on universal domination through forceful assimilation of all other species into their hive-mind network. Their goal was to achieve perfection by way of optimized order, efficiency, knowledge acquisition and “the consumption of technology” (refer to fan blog by Memory Alpha, n.d.). The Borg’s opening tagline before they would attack any species was simply “We are the Borg. You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile.” (CBS, 2021; Memory Alpha, n.d.). In one simple word written on a university library desk, this piece of graffiti made a clear reference to assimilation.

Stay strong ♥

I do not believe it was merely the abuse that led to the trauma. It was the institutional nature of chronic insecurities, including: ongoing gaslighting from actors of the institution (professors, administration, student staff); ostracization from peers (stemming from and reinforced by ableist academic culture), surveillance systems imposed on disabled students, victim-blaming, and physical insecurity (generated from structurally where disabled students were placed) (on gaslighting refer to Durvasula, 2020).

I saved one desk quote to share here at the end of this chapter as it seems to sum up my experience in academia:

Keep going
- dying student :)

CHAPTER TWO

PRODUCTION OF WORTHLESSNESS

DISPOSABLE BODIES IN THE OTTAWA VALLEY

We have already explored in Chapter One the dynamic of worth*full*ness as bodies schooled to internalize ability performance, in the context of urban higher education in Ottawa, Ontario. Now it is time to delve into the production of worth*less*ness on labouring bodies and the regions they occupy. The Ottawa Valley region of Ontario, Canada, has been chosen to illustrate ontologies of worthlessness. The region of Smiths Falls shaped my understanding of value politics. I was someone who grew up surrounded by discourses of intellectual lack, which pervaded the region and the labouring bodies it was attached to including identity defining words like stupid, idiot, dumb, and worthless. When later engaging with academic settings in Ottawa, I encountered what would initially appear to be the opposite, whereby urban middle-class sentiment in academic spaces attempt to at minimum feign a sense of intellectual excellence. Yet, when approached together, these sentiments of intelligence are two sides of the same cultural thinking: value based on human intellectual performance. Intelligence seemed to me to be one of the primary standards of measurements of worth in the region, which was then used to explain the *lack of worth* of most labours, including their socio-economic insecurity. Over time, I came to the realization that a eugenics culture pervaded the region. As noted in the Introduction Chapter, eugenics thought was an underlying justification for the operation of Hospital School institutions across Ontario. This included the Rideau Regional Centre which was located on the boarder of Smiths Falls (discussed more in depth later in this chapter). This facility was one of

the main employers in a region marked by cycles of economic volatility. Consequently, the town *relied economically* on the continuation of eugenic ideologies including the adoption and internalization of its sentiments into local mentality. Eugenics pervaded the culture of the town, impacting generations of what it means to be of value to society. What will follow in this chapter is a historical overview and theoretical exploration on the topic of politics of worthlessness, to begin to articulate the co-constitutive nature of worth and worthlessness.

The region of Smiths Falls was chosen as it offers instances of both extreme and very subtle examples for how these ontologies of worthlessness are enacted over time and within geographical locations. The rural factory town of Smiths Falls and surrounding region is located just less than an hour's drive from Ottawa, Ontario and has a population of approximately 9,000 (Jinha, 2009). This region was marked by its militarily strategic location during early colonization, it housed a facility where persons with disabilities were institutionalized, and is a region economically reliant on factories, small scale agriculture, and other manual labour industries (Jinha, 2009). In this way, this chapter explores how ontologies of worth have been a tool of governmentally that has evolved with and enabled ongoing colonial expansion, occupation, and disciplining of the settler body politic into engaging in colonial governance of Ontario, Canada. A concept developed by Foucault, governmentality is an approach to viewing governance as a system of power that conditions populations into being pliable and governable (Dean, 1994). That is, rather than looking at sovereignty as the exercise of force, it looks at governmentality as a system which elicits population submission through techniques of power. Simply put, it could be described as a *mentality* of governance that is infused within a nation-state systems and structures which train bodies into subjugation, including their own self-

surveillance and self-regulation. This chapter broadly explores how social bodies are subjected to devaluation and are otherwise deemed "worthless", thereby acting as a justification for subjecting these bodies to institutionalization, debilitation, or even death. Thereby, this chapter draws on the history of this Smiths Falls and surrounding rural region as an illustration of how colonial ontologies of worthlessness can impact the governance and labour of a region.

Outline

In this chapter, the focus will be particularly on labouring bodies and non-productive disabled bodies in this rural region of Smiths Falls. This chapter historically situates ontologies of worth as a discourse that influences social perceptions of human value. As will be briefly discussed, these discourses historically functioned as a system of discipline for legitimizing and enacting colonial expansion and state-building in the Americas, including what is now called Canada. The chapter then presents three phases of colonial logics in Smiths Falls as they shift in relation to technologies of power for managing and directing worthless bodies: *phase one*) removal and extermination; *phase two*) institutionalization (removal), extraction, and governing through proxy; and *phase three*) repurposing worth-less bodies towards productive means.

Note on Terminology

As noted in the introductory chapter, the term debilitation will be employed in reference to the production of debility up to and including death. The study of debilitation can be seen as part of the study of disposability and can be subsumed under the studies of biopolitics, necropolitics, decolonial theories on extermination, and critical disability theories on disability as

geopolitics (Berlant, 2007; Grande, 2018; Mbembe, 2003; McRuer, 2010; Meekosha, 2011; Puar, 2009/2013/2017).

Worthless & Worth-less Bodies

I split the concept of ontologies of worth into two broad groups of "worthless" and "worth-less" bodies for ease of communicating the tensions that arise as bodies with varying positionalities encounter colonial eugenic systems. The first grouping of *worthless* bodies are those subjected to the more extreme forms of disposability, including the colonial logics of removal, institutionalization, and extermination. Indigenous peoples have arguably experienced some of the most extreme and heinous forms of these colonial logics throughout the Americas as their bodies have been subjected to genocidal practices for centuries (Freeman, 2002). Included in this is how Indigenous peoples and people of colour have been subjected to systems of debilitation as a weapon of domination and suppression (refer to Meekosha, 2011; Stoler, 2004; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Conditions which ranged from genocidal acts of assimilation, dispossession, extermination, and slavery to that of being subjected to hazardous living, labouring, and food system structures (Freeman, 2002; Howard, 2014; Grande, 2018; Meekosha, 2011; Regan, 2010; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Following industrialization, bodies that were so called *severely* disabled were also marked as worthless and subjected to disposability in the form of institutionalization, including bodies that were less pliable to factory work or bodes that did not conform to Eurocentric conventions of etiquette, behaviours, and sentiments such as female trauma survivors (i.e. hysterical women) (Brown, I. & Radford, 2015; de la Cour, 2013; Dolmage, 2015, 2017; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Thereby, those marked as *severely* disabled

have often been treated as worthless for their non-pliable bodies (refer to Dolmage, 2017; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006).

The second grouping of worth *"less" bodies* (henceforth worth-less) are those who's subjectivity happens to position their bodies as still holding a level of usefulness for sustaining colonial interests, often through their labour output. As will be seen, the precariousness of this status of worth-*less* bodies produces sociopolitical environments that make this group more pliable as colonial subjects as they struggle to survive. For instance, rural labouring class settler/ decedents have existed in this fluid state of being worth-less bodies, marking them as potentially disposable but not placing them under the more severe logics of extermination. Their positionality as white labourers makes them useful to colonial interests, yet this groups is still subjected to systems of debilitation. As will be explored, it is precisely this system of debilitation enacted over these worth-*less* bodies that disciplines and suppresses them into reproducing colonial structures. That is to say, structural violence and exploitation experienced by these rural labouring bodies coupled with affective economies of *fear, dread, or apprehension* of slipping into worthlessness serves to direct this worth-less group into exploitative labour systems.

The Settler Subject

I have chosen to focus much of this chapter on the white settler/descendant subject, in part, as a means to explore how ontologies of worthlessness have operated as colonial techniques of governance both *through* and *on* these white bodies. That is to say, this focus on settler descendants is a way of interrogating the various fluid and sometimes extreme positions white colonial subjects take: from bodies for governing *over geopolitical land* interests, to

administrators governing over *institutionalized bodies*, to the other extreme of bodies *subjected to debilitation* or even *institutionalization*. The colonizer body is both subjugated by the imperial system, while simultaneously enacting the role of imperial subject (i.e. colonial actor) for the reproduction of colonial systems in everyday repetitions of life (Foucault, 1978/1990). As such, in the process of introducing the concept of ontologies of worthlessness this chapter also explores how these ontologies intertwine with colonial logics of governing through proxy, extermination, and removal. As will be seen, this is a system that deeply harms labouring bodies even as they are pressed into participating in reproducing these structures.

Qualifying the Worthless Other:

Historically situating capacity performance as a value qualifier.

It is first critical to understand the logics which underly much of colonial history in order to begin to understand the ontologies of worthiness as a biopolitical technique of discipline and governance. Some early roots of measuring worth on performative ability can be seen in the construction of the racialized Other. Representations of the Other as having less intellectual capacities and lower virtues historically span back to the Greco-Roman classical era, when concepts of the "barbarian as Other was seen to lack the capacity of intelligible speech and reason, capacities that were considered to be the quintessence of Greco-Roman culture" (Miles & Brown, 2006, 20). As Ahmed (2010) explains:

> [s]ince classical times, the role of education as a form of orientation has been explicit. In *Republic* education is described as 'the art of orientation'. Education should 'devise the simplest and most effective methods of *turning minds around*.

> It shouldn't be the art of implanting sight in the organ but should proceed on the understanding that the organ already has the capacity, but is *improperly aligned* and isn't facing the right way. (last emphasis added, p. 54)

This reading of an influential classical text by Plato points to the blatant manner in which education was utilized as a tool for moulding citizens. Education as a system for affecting populations in order to "turn minds around" which are "improperly aligned" clearly points to the foundation that would later form the bedrock for eugenics and colonial thought (for discussion on eugenics, refer to Dolmage, 2015; Withers, 2012, 13-30).

Moving to the Medieval European era, representations of the Other began to apply these depictions of intellectual incapacities through discourses of animalistic characteristics to signal lower mental capacities. Various religious pseudoscientific discursive imaginings of the racialized Other from India, Africa, and Caucasus were depicted "with various physiological and cultural characteristics: the Cynocephali were dog-headed humans, and the Sciopods had a single very large foot, while the Anthropophagi were represented as eaters of human flesh" (Miles & Brown, 2006, 21). The production of the Other functions as a discursive technology that, through language and imagery, exercises authority over what can be said and imagined of the Other (Said, 1978). These discourses of the Other operated as techniques for validating European superiority in the Occidental social consciousness while legitimizing imperial expansion. Notably, these examples expose how the assumed and imagined lack of capacity were seen as markers of less human worth, and were assessed under European ontological perspectives and standards of value measurements.

Colonial Discursive Representations of Other

There is considerable decolonial research on the various technologies of colonization over what is now referred to as Canada (Freeman, 2002; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Levander & Mignolo, 2011). One such technology has discursive representations of the Other as primitive, savage, childlike, and inferior sub-human race (Freeman, 2002). These representations were used as justifications for many of the genocidal colonial practices in order to bring "civilization" to Indigenous peoples of the Americas (Freeman, 2002). In turn, these pervasive representations of Indigenous peoples as a sub-human race were wielded as a discursive weapon to justify claims of "terra nullius, or vacuum domicilium"—meaning empty land— as a means of justifying colonization and settlement (Freeman, 2002, 440). Yet, as Miles and Brown (2006: 23) explain, some representations of Indigenous peoples from the Americas were not entirely negative such as reports of "original harmony and egalitarianism" leading to conflicting representations of the Other. As a result, the concept of the "noble savage" was born, whereby Indigenous peoples were depicted as primitive yet pure in their connection to nature, having not yet been graced with civilization and Christian virtue, and thereby in need of saving (Miles & Brown, 2006, 23). Resultantly, the sub-human depiction of the noble savage marked "Europeans [as] superior by virtue of their 'civilization' and in turn imbued the European man white saviour status (Miles & Brown, 2006, 23). The imposition of colonial science during the 18th century Enlightenment era solidified the concept of "race" as an object of study which could be subjected to classification according to their varying biological, psychological, social, and intellectual characteristics (Miles & Brown, 2006, 25).

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the blending of Christian theological influence, Enlightenment based science, and colonial politics converged to produce a period of profound geopolitical colonial expansion in the global landscape, and entrenchment of European sentiments of the ideal society and moral character (refer to Coulthard, 2014; Freeman, 2002; Levander & Mignolo, 2011; Miles & Brown, 2006; Stoler, 2004). Grech (2015: 8) explains that through the colonial body and occupying force, "what arrived in the Americas was not only labour and resource abstraction but a wider power structure: "a European/capitalist/military/ Christian/patriarchal/white/heterosexual/ableist male', establishing 'simultaneously in time and space several entangled global hierarchies." This period saw the birth of eugenics and a shift to greater use of state-run institutions, which embedded routinized technologies of power in socioeconomic systems disciplining settler subjects, but also trained them into internalizing colonial sentiments, and self-disciplining ritualized performance (refer to Foucualt,1995; Stoler, 2002). Representations of the Other serve a political purpose of elevating the image of the audience through these negative constructions of the Other, which have "defined and legitimated the 'positive' qualities of author and reader" (Miles & Brown, 2006, 23). They disciplined the European colonial subject who comprised the audience of these textual writings and images to *internalize sentiments and virtues* that were aligned with imperial systems, while simultaneously acting as justification for colonial expansion and assimilation (Stoler, 2004). In this vein, colonial sentiments were powerful political mechanisms.

By the 19th century, concepts of intelligence as a moral character were also entrenched in places like "the USA, [where] this classification was combined with an argument that human intelligence was fixed and hereditary in order to produce a hierarchy of acceptable and

unacceptable immigrants" (Miles & Brown, 2006, 27). The IQ test was invented as a border control mechanism to block racialized bodies and white labourers from immigrating into the USA (Quigley, 1995). In all of the above examples, such representations of the Other serve a dual purpose of elevating the imagined virtue of one social body through the devaluation of another.

What can also be seen is this value-devaluation dichotomy has historically many cases where various markers of capacity, under the colonial measurement standard, weave tales of multiple lessor capacities: in speech-dialect, intellect, sentiments and moral character. Some of these markers would, in contemporary standards, not clearly fit into conceptions of ability and disability; yet, capacity is a fluid ever-shifting category that, in the context of value, can be moulded over time and place as it suits political interests (Withers, 2012). Such histories expose how the intersecting of capacity and race in representations of Other enable territorial expansion alongside further entrenching *suitable sentiments* in the minds of colonial subjects (Stoler, 2004). The concept of ability can be seen from the above to be inextricably tied to the history of race and racial representation. This holds significance for how geopolitical power-plays enable imperial expansion. Included in this would be capacity representations which continue to influence our present-day conceptions of human value.

Ontologies of Worth-less-ness

The colonial significance of such established discursive representations of the Other cannot be overstated. As Coulthard (2014: 16) posits while drawing from Fanon's analysis, "colonized subjects" are produced through "specific modes of colonial thought, desire and

behavior that implicitly or explicitly commit the colonized to the types of practices and subject positions that are required for their continued domination." Colonial logics and paradigms are so pervasive within Canadian thought that Battiste (2013) refers to our education system as "cognitive imperialism" echoing other Indigenous decolonial theorists from Canada and abroad such as Patricia Monture-Angus (2011) and Linda T. Smith (2008) who have written extensively on the violence of Western research and education systems. In this way, history of human valuation is built on an "expansive racial taxonomy" concerned with justifying colonial expansion (Grande, 2018, 50; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Ontologies of worthlessness are produced by and infused with colonial production of knowledge, thought, and discourses around the notion of human value and virtue.

Colonial Logics

These discursive systems of power with their imperial knowledge taxonomies were coupled with colonial logics of removal, accumulation, and "elimination" of Indigenous bodies found to be in the way of colonial interests (Grande, 2018, 50; Tuck and Yang, 2012). These logics are deeply informed by and exercised over the regions they are meant to govern. As Tuck and Yang (2012: 5) explain, "Settler colonialism operates through internal/external colonial modes simultaneously because there is no spatial separation between metropole and colony" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 5). Grand (2018: 53), Tuck and Yang (2012) caution against some of the shifts that have occurred in social justice circles and academia around the use of watered-down decolonization rhetorics, as it is now leading to another layer of colonial logic: that of *recognition* which sidesteps discussions of land dispossession and sovereignty. As Tuck and

Yang (2012: 5) explains, “the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation.” Drawing from this above discussion, the logic of extermination when brought into a contemporary world of debilitation, rehabilitation, reinsertion, and “inclusion,” manifests as a logic of worth-less-ness. In other words, colonial logics of worthlessness include systems of debilitation, relocation, removal, extermination, and/or now an increasing trend towards repurposing.

THREE PHASES OF ONTOLOGIES OF WORTH IN ONTARIO

The following will now explore ontologies of worth as they apply to 20th-21st century Ontario, Canada. This discussion will be broken down into three phases of colonial logics of worthlessness. The first will include the colonial logic of removal and extermination, which comprises the blatant eugenics and genocidal period which saw Indigenous dispossession of land, forced relocation to remote regions, and the rise of insane asylums and Indian Residential Schools (IRS) (1831-1996). The second phase explores the rise of factory-style institutionalization in former Hospital Schools (1876-2009), and the ways in which worth-less bodies were pressed into factory style work and governenace. This period marks the rise of institutionalization as a means of white labour class employment. Phase three will explore the present-day reimagining of worthless bodies as repurposable. This chapter will expand on the regional illustration of Smiths Falls as an illustration of how this logic of repurposing manifests in contemporary contexts. These three periods are not clearly distinct, rather overlapping periods that would bleed into each other and feed the systems of thought and practices that follow from

the former even while certain practices were falling out of favour. The subsequent shifts in colonial logics on how to handle worthless and worth-less bodies in each period will be explored. I would like to take a moment to reiterate that the focus is on white subject bodies and thereby these colonial logics as they have been experienced by Indigenous bodies and people of colour would be dramatically different, including the defined periods (for discussions on these colonial logics exercised against Indigenous peoples refer to Tuck and Yang, 2012; Grande, 2018).

19TH CENTURY

Phase 1) Removal, Extermination, and Colonial Fortification:

1. Removal & Fortification

Smiths Falls presents a key example of a geopolitically vital location during early colonial expansion, only to later undergo waves of transformations as the region's geopolitical worth shifted with colonial and capitalistic changes. The town is currently on unceded Annishnabee territory, with "Smiths Falls and the Eastern Ontario watershed [included in] part of ongoing treaty negotiations between Ontario, Canada and the Algonquins of Ontario" (Sam, 2020, n.p.). Its original geopolitical importance was due to the Rideau Canal River system that connected Kingston to Ottawa, with the Smith Falls site located nearly halfway between both points. The construction of the Canal infrastructure system during the 19th century was built as a military infrastructure to control the movements of ships within the region during the conflict between the British United Kingdom and the United States of America (Jinha, 2009). As such, the land that is now called Smiths Falls was a militarily strategic space for colonial fortification in the region. Jinha (2009) explains:

> In 1783, the colonial government negotiated with the Mississauga, their allies in conflict with the Americans, to acquire a large portion of Eastern Ontario in return for a handful of insignificant items. The European settlers interpreted this as extinguishing all native rights to the land, though they had never reached an agreement with the Algonquin or Iroquois Nations. (pp. 97-98)

In this way, the construction of the Canal was the birth of Smiths Falls township, which "originated as a work-camp of immigrant labourers who built a system of locks to allow navigation past the rapids at Smyth's Falls in defense against possible American invasion in the 1830s" (Jinha, 2009; UNESCO, 2007). Its founding was established through colonial laws exercised to expel Indigenous bodies from living in the region and the exploitation of labouring bodies to transform the waterway infrastructure to control the movements of ships in the region. The Canada-Pacific Railway was then built through the town in the 1880s, making the town a thriving port (Jinha, 2009). Colonialism across the lands of this rural regions is largely reflected by how it is now populated predominately by white bodies, that their landscapes were substantially altered to create an agrarian landscape that was inspired by European farm systems (refer to Miller, 2006). With this said, it is critical to note that Indigenous peoples do still reside in Smiths Falls and the region, as the lack of such naming contributes to ongoing erasure.

Decolonization is particularly needed in spaces where absence or erasure has been forcefully imposed (on erasure, refer to Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2018b). It is in these predominantly white spaces, where Indigenous bodies have been displaced, that decolonial knowledge needs to be most centralized. These rural spaces exist as a reflection of violent imperialism enacted on Indigenous communities. They also stand as a reflection of imperialism on and through white bodies (individual and collective) of our predominately settler peasant

ancestors (Clare, 2009; Withers, 2012). These white "subjects" of the crown were pushed—often out of desperation, forced economic migration, and other survival reasons—-to take up the role of settler colonizers. Settler farmers, in this way, became actors of the crown by way of settling the land to transform it into something governable (Miller, 2006). In this way, there is a substantial and diverse system of what could be described as the crown ruling by proxy in a colonially coordinated state-building system that combined property rights and agrarian systems to use settlers in a complex system of land governance (on proxy governance, refer to Meehan, 2015). State building was enabled through not only military means but, as has been well-documented, settler families ruled over their assigned plots of land and enacted governance over the space with community members and through slavery (Miller, 2016: Tuck and Yang, 2012). In this way, the legal system of private property became a geopolitical tool of control and state-building used to colonize the land via the settler bodies (Miller, 2016). It is a system that could be described as decentralized proxy-management through desperate people rewarded if their ruling over property worked successfully. In this way, systems of exploitation and deprivation in their homeland enabled white bodies that would have otherwise been worthless to be repurposed into useful actors of the state through migration, settlement, and land title governance.

Simultaneously, Indigenous bodies were deemed in the way and subjected to the logic of erasure, removal and extermination to legitimate colonial control of the land through dispossession, relocation to remote reservations, the imposition of the Indian Act, and then the theft of children through the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) (Tuck and Yang, 2012; Grande, 2018). As Tuck and Yang (2012) posit, the colonial system also relied on the logic of *excess* by kidnapping and forcing black bodies into the region through enslaved labour to transform the

landscape. Slave labour under this context of excess was perceived to be productive and conducive to colonizing the land (refer to Tuck and Yang, 2012). The colonial eugenic logic of removal and extermination also led to the creation of violent institutions where unproductive, disabled, or deviant bodies would be relocated to spaces like Insane Asylums (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Asylums targeted Indigenous peoples, people of colour, and white bodies deemed deviant for not conforming to colonial society. This included persons with disabilities, the poor, female trauma survivors (then labeled hysterical) and individuals deemed morally questionable such as homosexuals (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). They were spaces where the deviant subject who contained "undesirable" traits could be removed from colonial society and confined, studied, ranked, and have their under-productive bodies marked as validation of their "cultural devaluation" (refer Snyder & Mitchell, 2006, p. 20). As part of this same colonial logic of removal and extermination, IRS institutions took indigenous children, often by force, from their families and communities and placed them in violent assimilatory institutions in an effort to "kill the Indian in the child" (Harper, 2008). With the rising exposure of gravesites on and around IRS institutions across Canada, they can now be seen as akin to death camps for many of those stolen children (Gilmore, 2021).

20th CENTURY

Phase 2) Extraction: Rise of Institutionalization

2. Institutionalization

During phase two, industrialization took hold and the factory style labour extended into the logic of institutionalized bodies. Research Hospitals served as a similar means of removing

problem bodies and those deemed worthless from the geopolitical landscape. The scaling up of industrialization also saw a shift towards worth "less" labourers shifting from peasant roles of land title governors to now serving as factory-style labours, including the mechanized operations of institutionalization (on mechanized institutions refer to Foucault, 1995).

2.1 Hospital Schools (i.e. Developmental Institutions)

Hospital Schools (early 1900s-2009) were government-run facilities meant to replace insane asylums and were otherwise known as Developmental Institutions, "idiot schools," "schools for the feeble minded", and care facilities for the disabled (Dolmage, 2015; Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018d). The Rideau Regional Centre and Huronia Regional Centre were among the first wave of institutions of their kind to open in Ontario in the early 1900-1950s, and were the last two to close their operations just over a decade ago in 2009 (Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018d). As the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (2018e), "These were places where people with a range of intellectual disabilities, including people with a developmental disability, were sent to live. These institutions were known as asylums for idiots, lunatics, imbeciles, the feeble-minded and epileptics." They typically housed people with cognitive disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and those who were deaf/blind (Asylum Projects, 2020; Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018j). Keeping with the legacy of their asylum origins, these institutions are now recognized as having been spaces of severe institutional violence (Burghardt, Freeman, M. Dolmage, Orrick, & Freeman, 2020; J. Dolmage, 2017; Office of the Premier, 2014; Attorney General, 2014; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006; Wynne, 2013). The Orallia facility was originally opened as an asylum in 1876 under the title of the "Orillia Asylum

for Idiots" (Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) and became the first Hospital School facility:

> More institutions followed, often due to an increase in demand. In 1905, the government opened the Oxford Regional Centre in Woodstock. D'Arcy Place in Cobourg opened in 1920. By the mid 1970s, the government operated 16 institutions for individuals with a developmental disability. At their peak in 1974, more than 10,000 people lived in them, both children and adults. (Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018d, para. 5)

There are increasing records of multiple forms of abuse, neglect, overmedication, and other forms of institutional violence conducted at these institutions that are increasingly coming to light following an inquiry in 2014 (Attorney General, 2014). For years, residents of these institutions were over-researched (Dolmage, 2015, 2017). These institutions have been compared to Canada's Indian Residential Schools, prisons facilities, and of course, their asylums predecessors (refer to Dolmage, 2015; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006).

Despite the Government of Canada issuing public apologies, with small commemorative plaques and lawsuit payouts (Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018h) there is still a culture of erasure. From what I have witnessed, very few people outside of the towns that housed these institutions are aware that they existed, pointing to a systemic erasure from public consciousness. In some of the more infamous cases like Huronia Regional Centre in Oralia, there are 377 nameless gravesites on the grounds that display residents' "registration numbers only" from residents who passed between 1899-1958 and another 179 tombstones with names and dates following that period until 1971 (Ministry of Children, 2018a). As a result of the settlement agreement, there is now a cemetery registry of the names of 1,379 former residents buried on those grounds (Attorney General, 2014; Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018a; Ministry of

Children, 2018c, 2018g). As the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (2018a) once stated on their website, the use of nameless gravestones with registration numbers "was to protect the privacy of the resident and their family," which points to the level of shame and stigma that existed that led to this level of erasure. Furthermore, the Ministry website also claimed that during that period of history, "residents were interred at the cemetery either at the family's request or when no other arrangements were made by family or friends." (Ministry of Children, 2018g). This statements raise multiple sociopolitical questions, including the culture of disposability towards institutionalized disabled residents, stigmas on families' gene pools according to eugenic culture, and the socioeconomic backgrounds of the families which may have resulted in the individuals being institutionalized in the first place (refer to Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). These individuals were removed from society both because of the disabilities which marked them as unproductive and a drain on the economy. It is interesting to note, that all these official Government webpages on these facilities that were freely accessible from 2018 to 2021 on the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services have now suddenly been removed in early 2022. It is my hope that this is the result of either factual updates or the result of an archival transfer to another open access government ministry website. However, the sudden disappearance of all this information from official government pages with no clear marker of why or where the information is going is, at minimum, a cause for concern.

2.2 Industrialized Bodies: Factory Style of Institutions & Worth-less Bodies

Following the above discussion, it could be said that disabled bodies that are deemed ineffective or even in the way of industrialization were institutionalized in facilities that mimic

factory-style structures and operations (refer to Dolmage, 2017; Foucault, 1995; Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018h). The Rideau Regional Centre was opened in 1951 in Smiths Falls during the first factory wave of Smiths Falls (Baute, 2008; Jinha, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018f). Only a decade after its opening, Smiths Falls experienced one of its first major economic shock as waves of factory layoffs in 1964 (Jinha, 2009). This lead Rideau Regional Centre to become a primary employer during a time of job loss. This is not just a dark irony. Through the process of institutionalization, disposable bodies became objects of institutional industrialization: employment of thousands of workers, generating an endless well of research objects and source data, while creating what possibly was some earlier foundations of patient consumers (Dolmage, 2017; Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018f; Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018i). As Dolmage (2015) has pointed out, there is a pattern in that many of these institutions were geographically built in rural regions generally within one hour's drive of an urban centre, but still far enough outside of these bustling centres to be rendered remote and invisible (also refer to Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018b). In the case of the institution closest to Ottawa, it was literally placed on the edge of the *factory* town of Smiths Falls. Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls employed 2,200 workers in 1971 (Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018f). Placing Hospital Schools facilities in rural locations such as Smiths Falls to be run by local residents who were previously desperate, in effect, amounts to placing "worthless" individuals under the proxy governance of worth-less labouring bodies desperate for work.

2.3 Institutionalization & Labour Conditions

There is still very little research available on the impacts these institutions had on the many labour class staff that worked in these facilities, nor the lasting impact the institutions have had on the surrounding regions. This is understandable, as the violence that was committed against the residents must be first and foremost at the forefront of discourses on these institutions. It is necessary to bear witness to the violence that was experienced in those halls, often at the hands of staff, medical personnel and researchers. Even so, there is a relative absence of lower-ranking labourers' voices in this public discourse influencing the town's collective memory (on collective memory, refer to Sheftel, 2011; Tachibana, 1998; Young, 1993). There were many roles that employees fulfilled, having ranged from management all the way down the hierarchical ladder to groundskeepers and maintenance workers. According to the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (2018i), work roles included the following:

> medical, dental and nursing
> rehabilitation services, such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy
> counselling
> recreation and physical training
> spiritual and religious support
> pharmacy
> cooking
> housekeeping
> laundry and sewing
> gardening
> maintenance
> transportation
> administration, and
> grass cutting and snow removal.

Interestingly enough, the first six categories would have been involved in the process of overseeing, governing, and medicating residents. What can also be seen from this list is that eight to nine of these services are labour-class positions, leading to questions on how these individuals were institutionalized in the day-to-day encounters with the regimented systems of these spaces? Drawing from Foucault (1995), a number of questions related to disciplining the worth-less labouring subject into docile servitude through daily labour repetitions and classifying of performance. What were the experiences they encountered as they assembled and came in contact with institutionalized technologies of discipline, including economies of time, classifying of speed and skill, and relation to the functional structure of the space itself (refer to Foucault, 1995, 141-145)? These institutions were run under formal hierarchical standards. It is fair to assume that many of the stigmas, beliefs, and behaviours which stem from the eugenic ideologies that were used to justify the institutions' operations were also applied in some measure to the employees' status vis-a-vis one another, which in turn, would influence their worldview. That is, in Foucauldian terms, their rank and file in these formal institutions likely led to "compulsory alignments" determined by a "hierarchy of knowledge or ability" and the "values or merits" that are accorded as they are subject to a "machine for supervising, hierarchizing, [and] rewarding" (Foucault, 1995, 147). These are institutional systems of discipline which have become pervasive in educational institutions and correctional facilities (Foucault, 1995) and no doubt pervaded the grounds of these Hospitals Schools (refer to Snyder & Mitchell, 2010). In the next section, I will briefly touch on the possible harmful legacy that these institutions have had on the region and some underlying geoeconomic implications.

For worthless settler bodies, phase two marked a shift away from logics of extermination towards this logic of institutionalization. A shift was occurring towards the logics of removal and extraction that these factory style institutions could afford. Institutionalized bodies could be researched as though they were objects that could be tapped for data, and their institutionalization offered employment opportunities for urban medical personnel, academic researchers, and local worth-less rural labours. Yet, it is important to note that while Phase Two shows a shift away from Asylum towards a rise in factory style institutionalization as a mode of confinement, the logics of extermination seen in phase one were still clearly employed against Indigenous peoples at this time in IRS institutions across the country in an effort to dispossess, assimilate, and remove Indigeneity from the land (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2018a). This is apparent seeing as this shift from Asylums to Hospital Schools occurred within this period while IRS institutions were still in operation. Between 1905 and 1996, IRS institutions were operating across Ontario primarily located in remote regions (Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2018a), while an influx of Hospital Schools were opening across the province (Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018c, 2018d). Furthermore, it can be argued that while Phase One marked the height of the logic of extermination for the disability community in the period under examination, this genocidal logic had not ended for Indigenous communities as they were then subjected to the 60s scoop where children were taken by the Children's Aid Society and placed in non-Indigenous families (refer to Monture-Angus, 2011). In the process of highlighting some shifts in trends of colonial logics used throughout these periods of confinement, it is important to not oversimplify these periods nor to imply that a certain logic like extermination is over, merely because another logic has grown in predominance. The ongoing atrocities of Missing and

Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIW) is a blatant case in point (It Starts With Us, 2017; Smith, 2005). It is also important to not conflate hospital schools with whiteness, as systems of debility are disproportionately exercised against racialized bodies (refer to Meekosha, 2011; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006) Hospital Schools were just one form of an array of structures and systems which enabled imperial systems. In relation to their usefulness over the settler body, they served to institutionalize non-conforming settler bodies, while disciplining worth-less settler bodies in the region into internalizing eugenics thought and systems.

2.4 Industrial Prospecting: Struggling to Maintain Geopolitically Worth

From 1957-1960 the town of Smiths Falls experienced sweeping factory closures (Jinha, 2009), marking the beginning of the decline of its geopolitical usefulness in the region. During this economic shock, there are records of the town actively stopping cars with license plates that were not local in a prospecting attempt to entice investors to place their factories in the town (Jinha, 2009: 99). This method is how Smiths Falls landed its Hershey factory, with its ensuing tourist industry (Jinha, 2009). While it may sound like a quaint story of perseverance, more importantly, this reflects the level of desperation the town was in that circumstances would lead the Mayor and police department to resort to these strategies to buffer against a collapsing industry. The Hershey factory coming to town generated at least a façade of an economically booming town. The income generated by the Hershey Chocolate Factory, the tourist industry that it brought, and the Rideau Regional Centre created a semblance of a comfortable lifestyle in this labouring class town. As Jinha (2009: 99) explains: “Hershey Canada in Smiths Falls at its peak in 1990 employed 750 people - the largest chocolate factory in Canada. The Hershey Visitor

Centre, with the Hershey Museum and Chocolate Shoppe Hershey Museum was a tourist draw for decades, doubling its size in 2001 to accommodate the 300,000 visitors per year." Notably, even with all of those visitors, I have only met one urban person in Ottawa who is familiar with Rideau Regional Centre, and it was because his father frequently visited the facility for his work in the medical field. The Rideau Regional Centre was located on the outskirts of town, slightly further past the Hershey Factory. In this way, tourists could come to tour the factory, walk through the downtown shops, and return home, having never known of the developmental institution's existence. Such behaviours reflect a public erasure of Rideau Regional Centre to the outside world. To give an idea, I grew up visiting the town nearly every weekend and am familiar with its layout stretching from the former Hershey Factory all the way to the other end of town where a Walmart now stands, I worked in town for half a decade, and yet I have never seen Rideau Region Centre. I only know the road to take to get there if I wanted.

21st CENTURY

Phase 3) Repurposing worth-less bodies

Now, this chapter will take a look at how ontologies of worthlessness impact rural labouring regions from the period 2008 to 2019. The small town of Smiths Falls was known for most of the early 2000s as a dying town following sweeping factory closures, including Hershey's Factory closure in 2008, followed by Stanley Works manufacturing, and the simultaneous closure of Rideau Regional Centre, which employed approximately 1700 locals (Baute, 2008; CBC, 2008; Halfnight, 2010; Duffy, 2015; Jinha, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Children, 2018i; Pearson, 2015). It was mass job loss for the town, "constituting almost 40% of

its active labour force" (Jinha, 2009, 96). The economic volatility and legacy of violence continue to have profound effects on the region. Smiths Falls was known for the bulk of my youth and throughout my twenties colloquially as a welfare town. Long term systemic violence in a region can lead to community violence including sweeping rates of trauma and chronic heightened insecurity (Woody-Falconer, n.d.). The town of Smiths Falls has experienced ever-present cycles of mass job loss, alcoholism, suicide, unsafe workplace environments, and multiple forms of violence (Tam, 2011). In the region, the accumulation of disabilities in the labour force is the norm and anticipated by employees: both physical and mental (on workplace insecurities in Ontario refer to Mojtehedzadeh, 2016). Without having researched the statistics,[1] there also seems to be high death rates from both workplace accidents and illnesses in the town and surrounding region. Furthermore, there are strong fears in the region that illnesses like cancer are so prevalent, that some suspect it is due to local factories producing toxins, ecological damage, or toxins from construction sites failing to follow code. These fears are spread by rumour, which dilutes the legitimacy of the statements to outsiders, leading to very little support. Many refuse to drink the town's drinking water—which tastes distinctively different from the water I have consumed anywhere else— instead some draw from household incomes to purchase clean drinking water on a regular basis. For many, this extra expense constitutes a considerable amount considering their low earnings. There are certain patterns that hint to the likelihood of cross-generational trauma especially stemming from Rideau Regional Centre, and/or complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD) resulting from systemic violence and economic volatility in the region (on economic instability refer to, Jinha, 2009; Tam, 2011). The town is surrounded

[1] I am upholding a promise to two dear friends of mine by not researching suicide statistics while conducting this research. They were deeply concerned of the mental tole it might have on me.

by farmland and is known in the region for being a rural labouring town. It is thereby a key example of agrarian periphery spaces located nearby the core urban centre. The economic volatility is not only concerning for the livelihoods, health and safety of workers, but the heightening of job insecurities may be part of affective economies of desire (refer to Stoler, 2004).

3.1 Producing Pliable Subjects: Heightening Insecurities

The agrarian system in Canada is an example of a colonial economy that has been structured in a way that presses rural labourers, including farmers, towards adopting dangerous and sometimes exploitative practices. The Ontario agricultural system thrives off of a debt economy and exploitative labour relations (Miller, 2016). As Miller (2016: 18) notes, in Ontario,

> Farmers will often tell the joke about the farmer who wins the lottery. When asked what he plans to do with all the money, the farmer answers, 'I'm going to keep farming until the money's gone.' Farming itself is in a trap that cannot be solved by freeing one element, one fly caught in the web. (p.18)

This debt economy confronts small scale farmers and farm labourers with even more heightened livelihood insecurities to an already dangerous industry. Debt economies further magnifies pressures to subject their worth-less and worthless bodies to workplace hazards to survive. It is a system of debilitation whereby rural labouring bodies are subjected to the production of impairments (on production of impairment refer to Meekosha, 2011; on agrarian labour refer to Miller, 2016; on debilitation refer to Puar,2017). These systems of debilitation are most dangerous towards migrant labourers as their positionalities afford them even less security then the already insecure rural farm labourers. The interrelationship of formal and informal economies working in a complex co-constitutive system of production is not the cause of exploitation per se,

but rather the geoeconomic shifts that are occurring which heighten insecurity (on geoeconomics, refer to Blackwill & Harris, 2016; ; Sparke, 2018; on informal economies Swanson & Bruni-Bossio, 2018). If a given migrant worker or informal labourer is legally implicated, disabled, or otherwise prevented from continuing their work, they are almost always replaceable in the operation of the system. These are disposable bodies in a neocolonial capitalist system (refer to Meekosha, 2011). Land has also been treated in the same extractive way. As Miller argues, "A mining mentality is encouraged as if agriculture was a version of resource extraction, removing nutrients until soil, water, and environment are depleted" (Miller, 2016: 5), leading to the treatment of both land and labourers as resources that can be extracted until depleted of viable sustenance and energy. Yet, in contemporary contexts, once bodies are depleted of worth, and thereby rendered worthless, these bodies may no longer be disposed of so much as repurposed.

3.3 Surveilling Labouring Bodies: Optimizing Tools

In this gig-economy system, labourers are pressed to adapt to multiple industries and labour roles, forced to continuously develop new trade skills to repurpose their labour potential for employment (Jinha, 1995; Mojtehedzadeh, 2016; Tam, 2011). For a population that is stigmatized as undereducated, rural labouring bodies accumulate diverse skillsets to try and survive labour insecurities. In this sense, labourers are not under-skilled, they are just less academically *schooled*. In regions of scarce jobs, the phrase job "opportunities" starts to look like dark humour when individuals are pressured to take any work in any industry to pay for food and shelter.

In a rural labouring community such as Smiths Falls and the surrounding region, neo-eugenics can manifest as a constant push against bodily limits for productive means (refer to Puar, 2009/2017). In fact, technology have created new manifestations for positive eugenics, generating new landscapes and modes of being. Today's neo-eugenics labour industry can look like transportation drivers under constant tracking surveillance through GPS systems by their employers, under the threat of incurring fines or no payment if deliveries are later than forecasted, that even rest stops are tracked and penalized (Manokha, 2019). Drivers are increasingly at the mercy of Google's time estimates regardless of the reality of traffic conditions. Meanwhile, customers can also monitor their orders now through tracking systems by employers and customers alike, turning the consumer into the surveiller (Manokha, 2019). The panopticon (Foucault, 1995) is now digital, and the labourer's self-policing results from multi-angle insecurities. From what I have witnessed in the labour region, heightened pressures placed on bodies and minds under these surveillance conditions push for constant optimization of performance even if it is at the detriment to labouring bodies as they lose sleep, rest periods, and even pee breaks to make up for delays and deadlines.

Labourers are constantly trained to do more, push further, and overextend until that overextension becomes the norm, and are pushed to extend even further. The optimizing of bodily capacities does not exclusively look like an academic, technical, and intellectual performance to feed the knowledge economy. Optimization can look as straightforward and seemingly age-old as the back-breaking labour of exploited labouring bodies and imperial subjects (refer to Clare, 2009). Exploitative and abusive employers can use heightened job insecurities—both perceived and real—to pressure and intimidate workers into pushing their

bodies and risking their safety (Stasiulis, 2020). The transportation industry and construction industries are two examples where workers live in such precarious situations in terms of health, employment insecurity, extreme policing of time, surveillance, and broader social disregard for worth (Barber & Breslin, 2020; Clare, 2009). Yet, if any of these bodes get into an accident due to these states of exhaustion, it is easy for the individual to be blamed, rather than the violent system of debilitation.

REFLECTION

As noted in the introduction, this research advances the argument that contemporary imperialism is carried forth, at least in part, through ontologies of worth: a system of thought that pacifies, relocates, and reproduces imperial systems of being and acting in often daily mundane repetitions of being, through its spread throughout the social body. Phase one) represented the logic of removal and extermination marked by bodies deemed in the way of colonial expansion and thereby forcefully displaced and relocated, or killed, to serve imperial geopolitical goals. This period was marked first by the establishment of colonies and towns, and then by IRS and Asylums (1831-1996). Phase two) saw a shift towards the logic of removal and extraction, as Asylums fell out of favour to be replaced by Hospital Schools (i.e. Development Institutions), which resulted in a vamping-up of research conducted on problem bodies housed in confinement spaces (1905-2009), often under the guise of searching for cures, treatments, preventions, or merely the sake of knowledge production. The following chapter will now further explore phase three) with the rise in the logic of repurposing worth-*less* bodies into directing their capacities

toward productive outputs. This chapter also explores how colonial logics exercised over white bodies simultaneously debilitates and directs labour output through ontologies of worth.

Phase three has seen a rise in the logic of repurposing, whereby problem bodies which impede geopolitical aims are subject to multiple disciplinary systems to realign them into offering productive means. The period from 2000 to 2019 marks an interesting shift for bodies that exist under the constant threat of incurring worthlessness, as social bodies are pressed to adapt, push, and reimagine their capacities and redirect labour roles under constant shifting economic compulsion. It is in this third phase that worth-less bodies are suspended in the constant threat of slipping into worthlessness with the fear of resulting consequences. The period of repurposing bodies is one of a constant scrabble for adapting and ability performance to display one's worthiness, even minimally, to ensure livelihood survival. The "upward scrabble" that is experienced by bodies in worthless regions pursuing the nearly imposable ableist dream of accruing worthiness, to get out of economic struggle through higher education, as Eli Clare (2009: 40) notes. Yet, worth-less now bring in a scrabble to prevent the downward fall for rural white labourers as they rapidly try to adjust to shifting demands. Furthermore, with higher education facilities being located in urban spaces, the spacial splitting of intelligent-coded bodies to urban spaces and unintelligent bodies occupying remote spaces, the region of Smiths Falls is pervaded with a geopolitical localization of worth-less bodies: further coding rural labour with stupid. This period also marks the shift where academia is no longer the guarantor of advancement or maintenance of social status, but rather the mere offering of the possibility of success under the ever-pressing reality of economic constraints.

Intelligence, in this way, appears to act as a justification for the disposability of labourers. This is coupled with hyper-masculinized pressure to physically press labouring bodies' capacities to the limit. Local ontologies of worth*less*ness thereby construct an affect duty on labourers to overcompensate for the lack of intellectual worth. Contrast this to the academic pressure to demonstrate intellectual excellence, to the point where many students press themselves towards intellectual performance, often at the cost of mental and physical health. As a young adult, I had felt like a bridge between those who felt worthless and those who felt they had to prove their worth, and I had internalized the very unhealthy need to prove that worth-less rural "idiots" are, in fact, intellectually capable. I was determined to prove wrong the cultural belief that rural labours and students with learning disabilities were incapable of academic excellence. Thus, a secondary aspect of this chapter is a reflection of how affect desires resulting from witnessing the biopolitics of worthlessness on labouring bodies can press certain bodies like mine to overextend the mind towards able performances of excellence. The value placed on bodies is thereby fluid: shifting as the body's purpose is *re*-purposed, reconstituted, reinvented, rediscovered, or reimagined in the value that can be placed on the metaphorically heavyweight of able-bodied performance.

Note on my positionality:

Having grown up near this Smiths Falls region which housed the Rideau Regional Centre, I encountered many individuals who were impacted directly and many more indirectly by these institutions, including former residents, a number of past employees and many of their descendants. As such, I am a descendent of what one could colloquially coin an eugenics town. While I will not speak on any of their experiences directly, I have tried to learn from these many encounters as a means of practising reflexivity and holding myself accountable. Often this accountability has been survivor's guilt operating in disguise and leading me to self-sabotage. Other times, it has led me down dark paths which prove to be triggering and unproductive. I am still learning to not carry the heavyweight on my shoulders. I hope that, at the least, I do not continue the legacy of research exploitation but instead that this following work aids in honouring those who have suffered and those who still struggle with recovery.

Even within the town, there were so many different titles and ways of referring to Rideau Regional Centre that the inconsistency and lack of clarity have contributed to its erasure. Outside of families directly affected by it, the most common description that I have encountered appears to be a "care facility" for the disabled. As of 2015, I left the town and cannot speak to any developments or changes to these opinions since that point in time. Notwithstanding, the production of intelligence can offer a glimpse of the processes involved in modern dynamics when placing value upon bodies/minds and communities.

CONCLUSION:

REPURPOSING WORTH

The preceding chapters first touched on the *production of worth* as a system of discipline and compulsory ability performance, followed by discussions on the *production of worthless* and worth-*less* bodies by way of colonial logics of racialization, removal, extermination, extraction, and proxy governance. This chapter now builds on these foundations to look at how neocolonial logics of the 2000s seek to *repurpose* worth-less bodies (i.e. worth "less"). Following previous chapters, here I explore in greater detail the concept of repurposable bodies in the sense that their labouring potential if redirected, or can offer up a semblance of biopolitical use*fulness.*

Contemporary Systems of Social Body Extraction, Optimization, and Repurposing.

Combining both preceding chapters, we can see that worthiness affects coupled with systems of debilitation has lead to the reinvention of bodies' productivity *potential*. In particular, Puar's (2009; 2017) concept of optimization and debilitation, coupled with decolonial theories (Grande, 2018; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Lawrence and Dua, 2005) on the logic of removal and extermination, were instrumental in exposing this element of *repurposing*. The term *repurpose* spurred on questions related to the usefulness of bodies and the potential dark side of repurposing rhetorics and thought. *What would it mean for a disposable body to be made useful again: repurposed or up-cycled?* The culture of treating people like "trash," "junk," or "garbage" can lead to the usefulness of a term like repurposing, as it hints at both questions on whether something is truly junk once its assumed purpose is no longer viable, and the ways individuals

are treated as objects when encountering geoeconomic and state institutional systems (on geoeconomics refer to Blackwill & Harris, 2016; ; Sparke, 2018). For instance, worthless subjects can be rendered useful by building entire industries around the research, "care", discipline, and management of these subjects (Titchkosky, 2003; Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2015). What can be initially elucidated from earlier chapters is that worth-less bodies are ones that are in best service when labour and resources can be extracted from them. In particular, when that resource is in service to geopolitical gains such as maintaining regional governance such as proxy governance, natural and agrarian resource extraction, or labour extraction. Processes of systemic violence imposed on bodies as their usefulness is made anew. Similarly, as colonial imperialism has shown for centuries, repurposing bodies could take a worthless body and repurpose it into something viable for geopolitical aims, such as research extraction from DNA (refer to Smith, 2007) or redirecting labour potentialities. This repurposing of worth-less and worthless bodies is not necessarily a new phenomenon, but the intensity and scope of pressing bodies to self-regulate their repurposing may be. When a body is unfit, it can be trained, pressed, directed, pushed into something new and hence is repurpose-*able*. Such repurposing into something new, or more often than not, it could translate into the perpetual state of repurposing: the pursuit of a new purpose. Of improvement. In this sense, at the very minimum, the body is *aspirationally-fit* and can represent hope for betterment or inspiration for perseverance (refer to Clare, 2009; Withers, 2012: 69-72). This is where society gets its supercrips, inspiration porn, and the rapidly expanding self-improvement industry (on supercrips refer to Clare, 2009, 2-13; Withers, 2012, 69-72; on self-improvement industry, refer to Dirth, 2019; Schwartz, 2018; Taylor, 2011). These are the bodies which merely need to self-actualize*,* exercise*, or repurpose*

themselves in some manner. Retrofittable bodies which need new additions such as technology or training.

Pursuit of Improvement

In their work on "Disability as Multitude: Re-working Non-Productive Labor Power", Mitchell and Snyder (2010) discuss what it means to be a body that is non-productive within the bounds of capitalism. Introducing the concept of "cultural rehabilitation", Mitchell and Snyder (2010) describe it as:

> [the] normalization practices through which non-normative (i.e. non-productive) bodies become culturally docile. This process accomplishes its task of adjustment through the exercise of neo-liberal power that is both benign and disciplinary… [for instance, disabled people increasingly represent "research opportunities". (pp. 179-180)

Clearly falling under the phase three of *repurposing* discussed in Chapter Two, this shift towards cultural rehabilitation offers profound biopolitical implications as it reframes the ableist dream away from the impossible reach for perfection typical of traditional eugenics, towards a more *adaptable* neougenics ideology for contemporary times: a *recognition of imperfection* (refer to Mitchell & Snyder, 2010: 190). As Mitchell & Snyder (2010: 190) further explain, "[t]he body has become a multi-sectional market… [whereby] postmodern capital divides us within our own bodies" to analyze the various imperfections of our corporeality to determine optimal improvements and treatments. In this sense, "The imperfect is our standard" and "disability rapidly becomes synonymous with a humanity we already seek to overcome" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2010, 191). Under this new biopolitical framework human bodies are pressed towards the betterment of their well being. In this way, Mitchell and Snyder (2010: 191) argue that "the

therapies have now gone cultural and encourage our mass dedication not to perfection but to the 'infinite pursuit of 'improvement.'" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2010, 191). An ontology of worthiness that can be extended over the enter social body, regardless of their schooling.

Optimization of Worth-less and Worth-full bodies

Repurposing then raises questions about what a given body is deemed suitable for, as well as how worth-less/worthless bodies are re-*aligned* in ways that make them useful again. Rather than halting the theoretical exploration of this realignment of bodies into renewed purpose, the inevitable next question is what is the *optimal purpose*? How are bodies then redirected towards that purpose? As was seen in Chapter Two, labouring bodies that are placed in contentious and volatile situations are directed through their heightened livelihood insecurity. Whereas, the academic mind is directed through perceived threat of lose of worth impacting future livelihood potentialities, coupled with the affect desire of accumulating worthiness. The politics of space has a significant impact on the directionality that bodies are placed under.

Mitchell and Snyder's (2010) offer a strong theoretical lens into the biopower of improvement by analyzing how non-productive bodies are reworked through cultural rehabilitation. Yet, what of the production of debility? Drawing on their work, Puar (2013, 2017) offers a few discussions on this biopolitical turn toward the *debility production*, a concept touched on in earlier chapters. The politics of debility and the slow death are significant to the understanding of politics of worth, particularly as it relates to the repurposing of bodies. It is precisely this biopolitics of debility that teeters between disciplining worth-less bodies towards capitalist labour even as it is hazardous and harsh working conditions: demanding a lifestyle of

slow death as these bodies incur debilities over time, but just as significant, risking possible future disablement which could permanently halt their work, force them out of their career, and even risking death. It is in this space that Puar (2013) has tackled the topic of suicide in how the framing of such deaths as an event located in time—instead of the reality of slow degradation of mind-body over years of violence—in effect disguises the underlying biopower that enabled such deaths. Disguising the biopolitical production of debility, including the slow death, effectively enables the continued reproduction of normative claims towards individual's responsibility of well being. Berlant (2007, 2011) notes that it is this individualization of responsibility that underlie structural violence of capitalism, alongside the compulsory demand to pursue "improvement" noted earlier (Mitchell & Snyder, 2010, 191). An affect duty to pursue self-improvement. This biopolitics of repurposing coupled with debilitation is perhaps the new form of what Stoler (2004: 18) calls "imperial interventions in the emotional economy of everyday" labouring class, subproletariat, and the now "patient consumer" bodies (Snyder & Mitchell, 2010, 115). Debility acts as a technique of producing docile subjects by way of this new coupling of slow death with the emotional economy of every day (refer to Berlant, 2007; Puar, 2013, 2017). This is a biopower of slowly accumulated mental and physical impairments on worth-less bodies.

Affective Economies

The theory of affect economies draws from Foucauldian conceptions of governmentally, to look at how emotional affects direct routine behaviours, performance, and beliefs in ways that lead the population to self govern (Stoler, 2004). Stoler (2004: 8) explains that the linking of

colonial sentiments and administrative apparatus of routine and order continued to operate in tandem as colonial techniques for disciplining the colonialized and colonizer bodies into "late colonial form." Stoler, (2004: 8) expands on this, "If sentiments may be taken as 'settled dispositions," and reason as 'internalization of public procedure'…then both shared a coveted space of governance" as these sentiments were internalized in "officials and their families that colonial regimes reordered relations within those families themselves" including the late colonial. Such systems included educational institutions with explicit goals of realigning the sentimental dispositions of European children (refer to Stoler, 2004). She posits that "[k]ey terms of the debates on how best to support poor whites and alter their child-rearing practices through the 1930s… make that point again and again." (Stoler, 2004, 8). Education with various measures and examinations were increasingly used as a state tool to siphon who would be permitted into governance positions (Stoler, 2004). The content covered in earlier chapters of this thesis would suggest the possibility of these affective economies of colonial disciplining continue in contemporary colonial Canada. Particularly with education still functioning as a syphoning system and disciplining administrative apparatus.

McRuer (2006:18) has noted that under popular discourses of diversity, neoliberalism has reconstituted certain disabled bodies as symbols of a tolerant and progressive Western culture. Within this "ablenationalism", Snyder and Mitchell (2010: 113 & 115) also note that despite most disabled subjects being actively barred from the production economy, the contemporary neoliberal model has shifted many into capitalist consumers, regardless of whether they hold "purchasing power"; creating a new highly lucrative category of "patient-consumer". McRuer (2006), Snyder and Mitchell (2010) all caution against the increasing risk that Western disability

pride may open space for commodifying disability further—privileging certain disabled bodies through individualism while exploiting other less privileged bodies (Johnson & McRuer, 2014, 128; McRuer, 2006; Snyder & Mitchell, 2010). Consequently, these contemporary shifts suggest that neoliberal systems are domesticating disability into a new complicit form and potentially widening the divide between the able-disabled (those able to work within neoliberal confines) and those whose mere existence challenges capitalist structures (refer to Snyder & Mitchell, 2010, 122; Withers, 2012, 109).

Juxtaposed against these contemporary ablenationalist performances is the ever-present production of debility and disposability, with the ensuing geopolitical implications. Ablenationalism distracts and hides the production of disposability, fixating attention on the valorizing of ability by constructing cases of rise-above narratives, inspiration porn, and progress-centric discourses which disguise the operations of debilitating, decaying, and dying experienced by strategically disposable bodies and geographies. It is a simultaneous production of affective ability and debility to enable governmentality which optimizes bodies' productive and performative capacities while keeping them in check. An ableist dream of achieving worthiness through improvement, while at times even glorifying the struggle. In the neoliberal context, bodies can now be subjected to the logic of repurposing, whereby they are transformed into something useful once more, and the logic of extraction can be reapplied. In this sense, the increasing discursive trends I have witnessed lately towards glorifying emotional resiliency risk sidelining the systemic violence inherent in the slow death. Individualism plus affective ontologies of worth can now manifest as the internalization of one's own hero's tale of struggle and perseverance. This is not to diminish individuals encounters with struggle and survival. I

have even been emotionally moved by others recognizing my resiliency. Yet, I personally would rather forgo claims of resiliency if it could mean a life where I am thriving.

Repurposing Worth-less Spaces: Deruralization of Periphery Rural Small Towns

In writing this thesis, the topic of connectedness to land consistently resurfaced in ways that was unexpected at the time. Once intersecting these theories, particularly decolonial works with the discussions around the rural/urban divide (Chapter Two), these ties become apparent as deeply imperial. Divorcing humans from land, nature, and communities is a deeply violent process for anyone who has had significant ties to nature. It cements an urban colonial logic of productivity and functionalism that is intended to optimize human desires, behaviours, and directions which sustain the operation of colonial systems (on affect desires refer to Ahmed, 2010). Extracting the most from human energies as possible (refer to Berlant, 2007; Puar, 2009, 2017). In Chapter Two's discussion on qualifying the Other, one additional take away is the simultaneous devaluation of nature, and delegitimization of racialized bodies as animal-like and thereby lesser than white European subjects. This is a deeply entrenched colonial ontology that still influences how settler society view existence, right down to how our colonial languages of English, French, and Spanish transform the bulk of living things into inanimate objects by making them nouns (Kimmer, 2013). As Kimmer (2013: 55) explains, an ocean "bay is a noun only if water is dead… But the verb wiikwegamaa—'to be a bay'—releases the water from bondage and lets it live." Indigenous languages like Potawatomi expose the Othering of natural life itself. Is the problem that Europeans compared racialized bodies to nature, or rather that nature was devalued into inanimacy so long ago in our histories, such disrespect is imbued

within the very sentence structure of our colonial languages? Devaluation based on intellect has roots so far back in our history that our present colonial society passively internalizes it in our everyday interactions with the world, including how we name and perceive natural life around us. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that representations of the Other became complex images of intellectually simple sub-humans. This translates into nature as being worthless to the colonizer unless it is in service to colonial interests or can too be repurposed. This is an arguably longstanding European imperial viewpoint on nature and the colonizer relation to the world.

Neo-imperialism's most recent phase of colonial expansion in the region is seeing an extending of urban spaces outwards, as cities like Toronto and Ottawa grow rapidly. The rural towns are increasingly transformed into commuter towns for urban workers to sleep, or otherwise called a bedroom towns (Merriam-Webster. n.d.-a). More concerningly, farm and woodland areas are being transformed into subdivisions in the surrounding fertile region. Fertile land is being bought out for redevelopment into subdivisions and condominiums at an alarming rate (Miller, 2016; Nelson & Hines, 2018). This next wave of imperialism no longer finds substantial benefit from the small to midrange farmer and replaces their systems with mass food production industries (Miller, 2016). This is not a process of retuning land back to Indigenous peoples. Rather, instead of removing the colonial farmer who settled on Indigenous lands and stripped the forests and wildlife to remodel the landscape; instead, this next wave of imperialism is removing rural farmers as the proxy governors, transforming them back into worth-less or even worthless actors in need of repurposing. Meanwhile, the role of proxy governors is shifting towards *investors, developers, and large corporations* as the landscapes are increasingly viewed as untapped for prospecting development (Miller, 2016; Nelson & Hines, 2018). Far from

reconciliation that would lead to land being retuned to Indigenous peoples, this is just a new wave of capital expansion.

Following these mass housing developments, the once small rural towns like Stittsville (now part of Ottawa), Carleton Place, and Almonte are having subdivisions, box malls, and franchises built and expanded to attract urban middle class to move to the "quaint" conveniences of small towns. The problem is not that the urban populous is increasingly moving further out of the city, but rather the ways in which the entire landscape and culture of the prospected spaces they are settling into are transformed. It is not a blending of rural and urban, and certainly not a form of decolonization. Rather it is an urban cultural and structural imposition over rural locales that continues to disrespect nature. One may argue this is karma for the white descendants of farming settlers, yet when approached from a more careful examination of colonial logics, the continued lack of respect for the land and ecology exposes that this is the latest phase of neocolonialism. Particularly when it involves a cultural and structural transformation that enables more pliable minds (i.e. schooled minds) and landscapes. It is merely the shifting of power from one colonial body (settler farmers) to other colonial bodies (investors and developers). This is a *repurposing of worth-less spaces* into worthfull geographies that can be tapped for capitalist accumulation purposes once more.

Rendering Neoeugenics Visible

I noted in the introductory chapter that I employ the *neo* in the term neoeugenics primary as a tactic. Here I would like to note one additional use of this term. One shift which I have noted in present day eugenics that may warrant the distinction of *neo* is the way in which it is now so

embedded in cultural perceptions of capacity that eugenics thought is now seen as normal ways of relating to the world (refer to Withers, 2012). It is infused in much of our interactions all things related to ability and performance, while its normalization serves to transform it as indiscernible (i.e. not visible). In this way, neoeugenics *appears* covert. It is infused within our societies entire capacity driven economy (Dolmage, 2017; Withers, 2012). Those who have internalized eugenics thought are most likely to find neoeugenics imperceptible (i.e. not visible), particularly those who are privileged by it or have bought into the ableist dream. Yet, like capitalism and colonialism, when one is aware of its functioning and affective form eugenics ongoing nature is blatantly apparent. Ontologies of worth are a case in point. Its functioning is so obvious to people harmed by these systems, yet for others who benefit from these ontologies, or aspire to, these systems of violence can appear as normal state of being in the world.

Conclusion

Ontologies of worth enable the continuation of the status quo by reproducing the social body's capacities and roles, including a push for optimizing and repurposing the capacities of social bodies. It is not a system of brute force in the simplest terms, but a repetitive continuation of often banal practices such as reoccurring thought, action, and even a slow degradation of bodies and minds that sustain these systems of violence. Desires have an influential way of directing what behaviours and actions (or inactions) the social body will assume on daily processes (refer to Ahmed, 2010; Puar, 2017; Stoler, 2004). This coupled with the systematic functioning of daily practices for maintaining economic structures, a very powerful directional path is generated for bodies to continually optimize or reinvent their worth. It is a system which

may look inspirational but, upon deeper scrutiny, holds very structural forms of coercion and even violence, which social bodies must survive within in an effort to maintain their social worth and livelihoods. In moments where bodies lose worth, or suffer the *threat* of lost worth, they may be subjected to the logic of repurposing. As discussed, this is when a body's worth is rendered precarious, in cases such as a newly incurred disability, an economic shock forcing changes in industries and livelihoods, or simply falling prey to sudden undesirability (such as small rural farmers) when compared to other more desirable options or outcomes (financial speculation and land acquisitions). These politics of worth-less and worthlessness in rural spaces are inseparable from institutions and the metropolitan centre, which accumulates and extracts the rewards of this value politics. Not only is the devaluation of periphery bodies and spaces conducive to the increased valuation of urban bodies and sentiments, but the privileges accumulated and extracted out of the periphery enable the continued sustaining of the status quo in current geoeconomics systems.

These dynamics thereby hint at how ontologies of worth function as a means of divide and concur, as the insecurities experienced by worth-less bodies positions this group to enact colonial systems, even as those systems harm them, in order to avoid being marked worthless and risk worse forms of disposability. Meanwhile, the geographical and structural separation between overeducated urban middle-class bodies from the locality of these more severe forms of colonialism, coupled with affective economies, distracts and hides how implicated those aspiring for worthiness really are in reproducing such exploitative systems. In this sense, the so called "undereducated" rural labourer is positioned to do the colonial dirty work of sustaining its systems; while the overeducated urban middle-class can continue to engage in reproducing those

very systems of ontological violence that justify these systems, while still engaging in performative race to innocence. Ontologies of worth thereby function as a very powerful technique of power and governmentality over bodily labour in the Ottawa Valley region, particularly as it disciplines and sustains productive ability aspirations and labour optimization in the face of debility production.

GLOSSARY

Ablenationalism	The normalization of a nation's citizenship as able-bodied while simultaneously depicting disabled bodies as the exception, or as abnormal citizens.
Affect	In psychology disciplines, *affect* refers to the emotions, feelings, or sentiments an individual experiences. However, affect is not merely referencing an emotional state, but also how our emotions are effected by something and how our emotions have affects. When used in feminism and social sciences, affect theory can expose the politics underlying socially directed sentiments.
Affect duty	An emotional urge that feels like a social or moral duty which must be enacted by the person experiencing the feeling. See **Affect.**
Affective economies	The concept that a social body is directed by way of affect (i.e. emotions) to promote the maintenance of certain economic systems, such as capitalism. For instance, if a social body is emotionally driven into behaviours that support colonialism, it could be said to be a colonial affect economy. See **Affect.**
Biopower & biopolitics	Biopower is the concept of the power over life. It is the power to align or put "life in order" (Foucault, 1978/1990, 138). Biopower, suggests a shift in how sovereign power operates, directing more influence towards the disciplining, regularizing and ordering of living populous and their daily structures of productivity (Berlant, 2007; Foucault, 1978/1990).
Collective memory	The shared memory or experiences of a group of people such as a community. In conflict and post-conflict studies collective memories can be seen as power laden with competing social and political power struggles over collective memory. Memory erasure is a sub-study of collective memory studies which looks at how certain social memories are suppressed for reasons of power imbalances, politics, and taboos.
Complex post traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD)	CPTSD is a type of trauma that develops during or following long term exposure to experiences that *feel* like they threaten one's safety or livelihood and also feels *inescapable* (Durvasula, 2021; WHO, 2021).
Counter-discourse	A discourse or rhetoric that runs counter to a dominant discourse. Counter discourses are often created in response to oppressive discourses. For instance, decolonial theory is counter theory in response to Colonialism.

Debility and debilitation	This thesis approaches the study of disability as a system of control. Debility is approached as the ongoing *process* of being debilitated by structures. That is to say, not the *event* of being disabled, but the system of ongoing bodily encounters which impair the body (Puar, 2017). This research explores systems of debilitation as a colonial technique for pacifying and directing the social body. In overt terminology, one could say debilitation is a structural *weapon* which pacifies, disables, and even directs bodies and their behaviours.
Embodiment	Embodiment references the body's physical and sensory experiences in the world, and specifically the *awareness* of such experiences. Embodiment is the experience of *being in the body* and being aware of the body. Its opposite is to be disebodied or disconnected from bodily experiences. Disassociation could be described as disembodiment, yet it is still a deeply embodied experience as it often occurs in response to sensory overload and involves emotional dysregulation (i.e. distress). See also **Embodiment method.**
Embodiment method	Drawing from the body as a type of positionality for approaching and conceptualize research as well as grounding analysis. Embodiment method centres the body with all of its relations to the world, sensory experiences, capacities, and impairments as positions for understanding. Therefore, when used in conjunction with autoethnography, embodiment method runs counter to positivist frameworks as it centres the subjective experience of the author and rejects the notion of a disembodied (i.e. unbiased) voice. Embodiment can be employed to expose social systems of oppression when approaching the subject of embodiments of populations, such as Berlant's (2207) research on the slow death. See **Embodiment.**
Geopolitics	The politics of space. That is the interconnectivity of politics and geography. Geopolitics explores how political power dynamics utilize space as a means of control or the accumulation of power. It can also be used to analyze how certain geographies encounter and experience power imbalances.

Governmentality	A concept developed by Foucault, governmentality is an approach to viewing governance as a system of power that through various tools conditions populations into being governable (Dean, 1994). That is, rather than looking at sovereignty as the exercise of force, it looks at governing as a system which elicits population submission through techniques of power. Simply put, it could be described as a *mentality* of governance that is infused within a nation-state systems and structures which renders bodies governable subjects. See **Techniques of Power.**
Hospital Schools	Institutions that went by multiple formal and informal names including Developmental Institutions, idiot schools, schools for the feeble minded, and care facilities for the disabled. They were provincially run government facilities meant to replace insane asylums and housed persons with disabilities. They operated from early 1900s to 2009. Biopower is thereby the power to align or put "life in order" for life's ongoing continuity, while the exercise of death was justified to "safeguard of society" but not the sole right of the sovereign anymore
Institutional violence	Violence which is exercised, sustained, and enabled by an institutional structure or system.
Neocolonialism	Ongoing contemporary colonial systems, attitudes, and practices. Neocolonialism is at times employed to emphasis the *contemporary* form of colonialism. In this work, neocolonial and colonial are employed interchangeably and the neo is used only to emphasis recent aspects of colonialism.
Neoeugenics	Ongoing contemporary forms of eugenics. In this work, neoeugenics is employed both as a political means of signalling to readers that eugenics is still ongoing, and to also hint at the current neoliberal forms it has taken, such as superficial claims of inclusion. Neoeugenics should not be read in this work as new eugenics, but rather seen as referencing the latest dynamics of eugenics. Hence, the terms neoeugenics and eugenics are used interchangeably in this work.
Neoliberalism	In this work, neoliberalism is approached as both an economic system and political ideology that preferences capitalism, privatization, and competition. It is also treated as one of many ongoing colonial tools of governance and accumulation.

Ontological violence	Exercising a dominant ontology over another as an act of power and domination. Such as the imposition or forced assimilation of a dominant ontology on another without regard to other otological ways of being. For example, imposing colonial conceptions of being and knowing onto Indigenous peoples. See **Ontology.**
Ontology	The ways in which we classify and perceive the world. How we go about understanding the world.
Slow death	A concept developed by Lauren Berlant (2007) which references the long-term "slow" physical degradation experienced by the social body (i.e. population) under capitalistic structures. It is a wearing out of bodies which develop increasing degradation of health over time. The slow death points to the underlying systemic violence inherent in capitalistic systems and how public discourses aid in disguising the system which generates this ongoing dying.
Systemic violence / structural violence	A serious of converging structures that oppress and exploit a body of people. Systemic violence can include the intersecting of economic, institutional, social, cultural, psychological, and physical violence. It is a whole system that oppresses and exploits a group of people.
Technologies of power / Techniques of power	Technologies of power are the various means (i.e. techniques) by which humans are conditioned into self-regulating their behaviours to align with dominant systems. Under Foucauldian (1995) terms, technologies of power are techniques that direct a body (i.e. person) to submit to productive servitude. Some examples can include time systems, repetitive actions and movements, collective behaviours, as well as structural layout of space (refer to Foucault, 1995, 148-156).
Trauma	Trauma is the emotional and full-bodied sensory response to an experience that feels threatening (refer to van der Kolk, 2014). In this thesis, the word trauma is referencing *long-term* effects of impacts of being exposed to threatening environments. That is, not a traumatic *event*, but rather, the focus on ongoing psychological and physiological experiences of distress caused by existing in threat.

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APPENDIX A: IMAGES

IMAGE 1) I AM TIRED AND I HATE THIS PLACE.

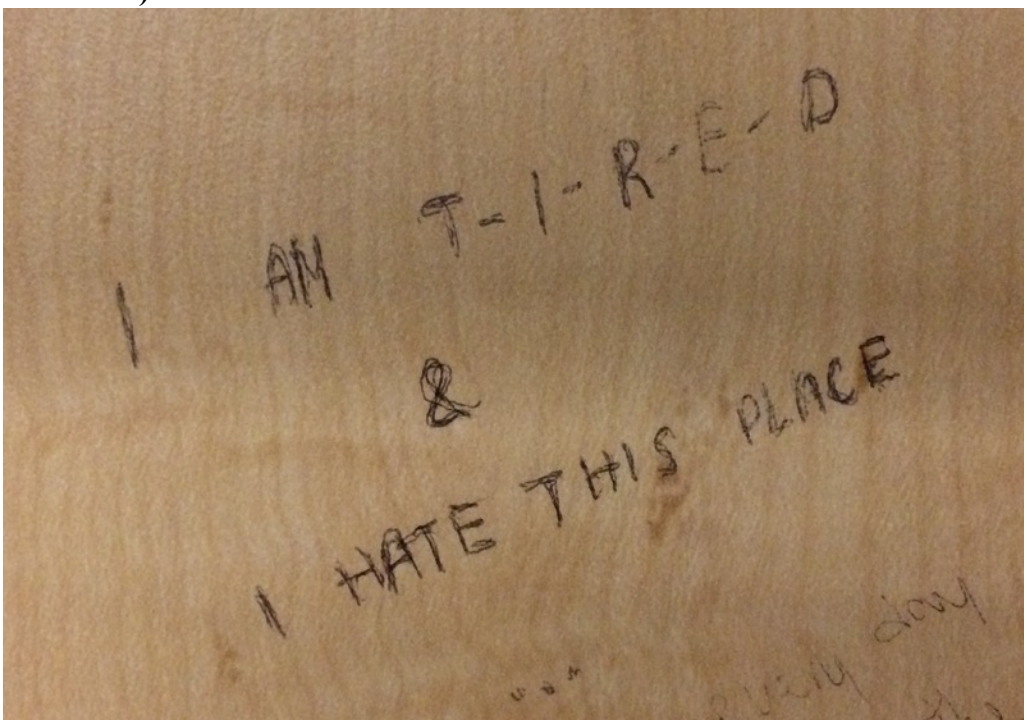

IMAGE 2) GIVE UP WHILE YOU CAN!

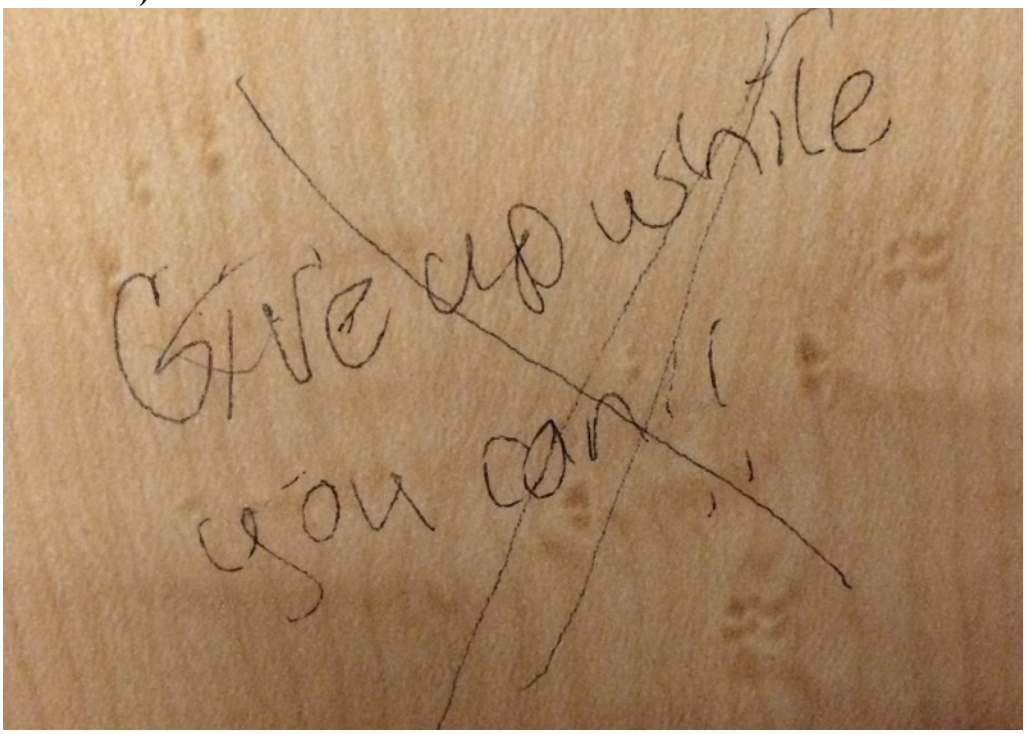

IMAGE 3) GOAL EQUALS PAIN PLUS WORK PLUS PATIENCE.

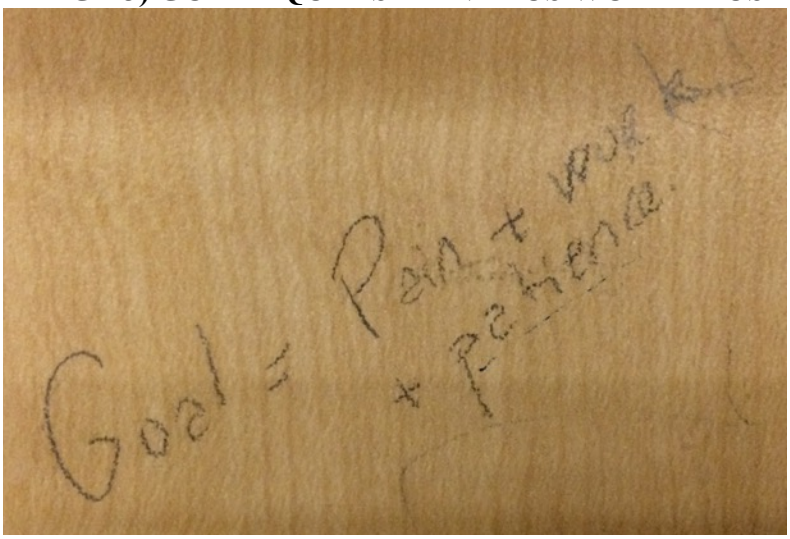

IMAGE 4) THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO SUCCEED.

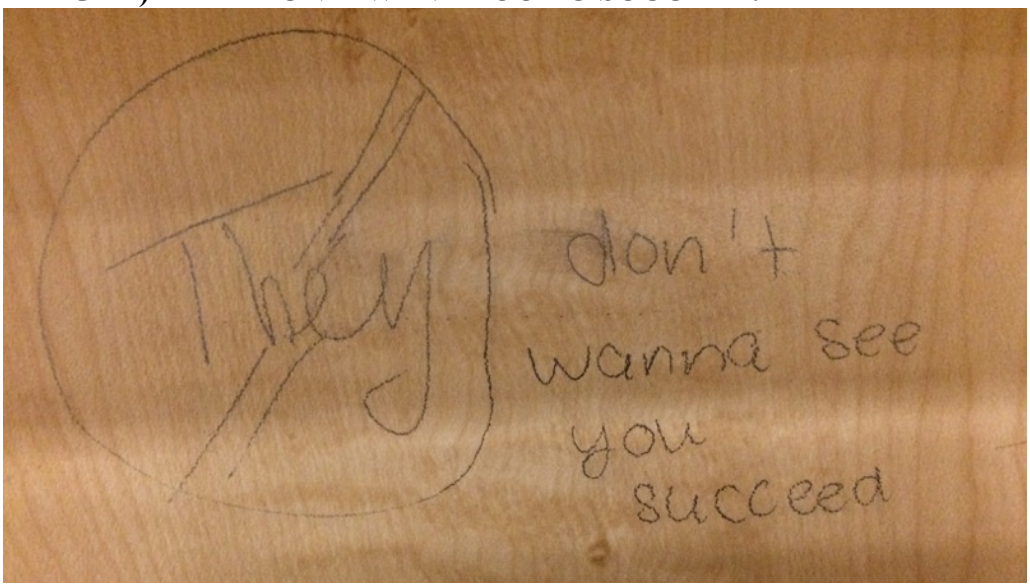

IMAGE 5) HERE LIES MY HOPES AND DREAMS.

IMAGE 6) BORG.

IMAGE 7) STAY STRONG.

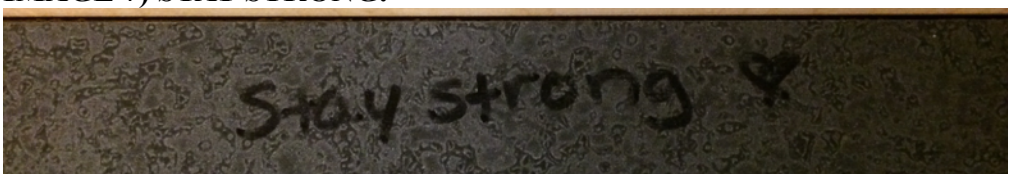

IMAGE 8) "KEEP GOING." - DYING STUDENT,

Note: All images taken by Sinfield, M. (Jan. 30 2019), located at Morisset Library, University of Ottawa Biblioteque Ottawa, Ontario