LIVING THROUGH IT:
DIGITAL CRIP TIME IN ONTARIO, CANADA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

July 2026

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Abstract

Structural violence is a topic not commonly discussed in the context of Ontario, Canada, and the province's healthcare institutions. This thesis project analyzes the researcher's lived experience as a transgender, disabled student navigating digital administrative systems within the context of receiving care through Ontario's public healthcare, and the digital technologies which administer their life both inside and outside of the healthcare context. This thesis is highly novel, experimental, and current in both methodology and content. This thesis argues that structural violence is inherent to digital technologies which administer the Ontario public healthcare system, punishing the individuals who rely on Ontario's administrative healthcare technologies the most (disabled populations, transgender populations, and other marginalized communities). Results show that community interpersonal engagement, information accessibility, and collaboration across intersectional identities are the starting points for reforming the digital technologies which administer the Ontario public healthcare system. To find the creative component which compliments this paper, please visit http://livingthroughit.com

Dedication

For the fifteen-year-old version of myself that lives inside of me.

I know it's hard to feel like yourself
When they see you and say you're somebody else
But I know you
I know you
I know it's tough, and that you've had enough
But if you feel like nobody does
I love you
I love you
And I won't give up that easily
Let me show you what I know

You're the goddamn king of the universe
Even when it feels like it can't get worse
All you need to do is find your throne
And you'll never be alone, you'll never be alone

- **Origami Angel, Find Your Throne**

Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to thank my supervisory committee, Dr. Casey Mecija, Dr. Andy Weaver, and Dr. Shan Bell for their unwavering support and patience as I navigated this thesis. Your encouragement, advice, and feedback made this project what it is. The learning I did under your guidance was the highlight of my entire degree, and I will carry these experiences forward with me in my career.

To my accessibility counsellors past and present, Courtney Chambers and Stephanie Christopher, thank you for guiding me through my degree and opening doors that changed my life.

To my academic strategist, Tasha Lilliman— thank you for being the grounding centre to my weeks as I completed this degree. My time learning with you has been trajectory-altering, and I will always be grateful beyond words for you.

My gratitude absolutely extends to Dr. Stevie Bell for opening her busy schedule to me and other students, allowing us to collaborate and work on scholarship proposals, statements of intent, and other types of specialized and rhetorical writing.

To everyone at the York University Writing Centre, thank you for the work you do across undergraduate and graduate levels. Your commitment to accessibility and excellence is inspiring. I am proud to have come from the York University Writing Department after witnessing that excellent program across degrees.

Thank you to my course directors, Dr. Angele Alook, Dr. Stephen Cain, Dr. Susan Driver, and Dr. Caitlin Fisher for helping me build knowledge that solidified the foundations of this project and for extending amazing teaching skills and patience towards me.

To the friends that helped me keep my head above water as I was knee-deep in thesis writing, thank you for allowing me to float on.

To my partner, Avi. Thank you for encouraging me every single day without fail. You never let me forget that I am doing urgent work. Even when I was sick of my own internal monologue, you showed up with curiosity and enthusiasm, every single time.

Thank you to my Mama, Nonna, and Nonno for being the reason I can do anything at all. Your love and support have allowed me to grow and keep growing.

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Preface

The thesis project *Living Through It*, in both the creative component (livingthroughit.com) and the analytical research paper, are the original intellectual works of the author, Jules Quinto. No Generative Artificial Intelligence tools were used in the development, writing, or editing of the thesis.

Living Through It was approved as a minimal risk research thesis project by the Office of Research Ethics at York University for the period between June 4, 2025, and June 4, 2026. The certificate number is STU 2025-056.

The news headlines in the creative component were written, sourced, and designed with the help of Finn DeBoer, Avi Lipsyc, and Connor Plant. Kevin Angelus was hired as a design consultant in the early stages of the design process for the creative component's user interface.

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1. The thesis project is meant to be read in the following order:
    a. Livingthroughit.com (creative component) to be read FIRST;
    b. Analytical research paper to be read SECOND.

2. Livingthroughit.com was meant to be viewed on a desktop computer screen. The web design is not optimized for tablet or mobile use.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"We who occupy the bodies of crip time know that we are never linear, and we rage silently—or not so silently—at the calm straightforwardness of those who live in the sheltered space of normative time."

(Ellen Samuels, 2017).

What is wrong with me? Simply put, lots of things.

There is never just one diagnosis in my case; diagnoses are multiple, multiplying, and ever-changing. I started with a depression and anxiety diagnosis at the age of 14. Then it was Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), and Major Depression by the time I was 17. Then the doctors took away OCD, changed Major Depression into Major Depressive Disorder, and added a combination of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and Substance Use Disorder when I was 23. These diagnoses are what remain on my chart. There are also the menstrual problems, chronic and widespread body pains, migraines, moderate sleep apnea, early-stage liver disease, and severe vitamin D deficiency. I also experience some kind of gender dysphoria, which is allegedly a diagnosable medical condition. My doctor has explained to me that my brain is different, not better or worse than the average beautiful, perfect, normal mind. But it's hard to internalize an impartial moral judgement on myself when my psychological condition is described as a deficit, a disorder. In psychiatry, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; DSM–5 TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2022) is a medical text that doctors adhere to for the diagnostic criteria of all mental disorders— this tome exemplifies the pinnacle of medicalized logic, the definitive list of all my deficiencies.

What is wrong with me? I exhibited "an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the norms and expectations of [my individual] culture, is pervasive and inflexible, has an onset in adolescence or early adulthood, is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment" (American Psychiatric Association [APA],

2022) According to the medical dialect, this definition of a personality disorder is medically deviating from a cultural norm and persisting in non-conformity. Where does normalcy lie? In whiteness? Being cisgender? Educated? English-speaking? Male? A combination of all the above? I suppose a normal person has never met diagnostic criteria such as "chronic [and persistent] feelings of emptiness," "frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment," "recurrent suicidal behaviour," and "identity disturbance, [exhibiting a] markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self" (APA, 2022). My condition has been labelled as BPD; at a foundational level, understanding a borderline personality means that you are not normal enough for a psychiatrist or the culture you exist in at large. My symptoms are more under control now than they've ever been, though. Not because of the daily work I put in to get better, but because of the medications I am prescribed to make me more normal. I take 78 mg of methylphenidate every morning to participate in my own life. I take 2 mg of brexpriprazole and 20 mg fluoxetine every night to curb the fact that my brain didn't develop properly.

What is wrong with me? I'm moving at a speed which is deemed unacceptable by the institutions around me; after all, "ADHD is associated with reduced school performance and academic attainment (Zendarski et al. 2017). Academic deficits, school-related problems, and peer neglect tend to be most associated with elevated symptoms of inattention […] (Willcutt et al. 2012). Inadequate or variable self-application to tasks that require sustained effort is often interpreted by others as laziness, irresponsibility, or failure to cooperate" (APA, 2022). According to the institutions I exist within, I am a conundrum of a person— full of so much potential, at times "brilliant," yet a near constant disappointment. I fail to (co)operate because I run on faulty parts. I could never stick to timelines, develop at the "age-appropriate" pace, remember when the test date was or when my library books were due. *Imagine what you would be capable of if you tried*, a constant refrain throughout my formative years in school. I still hear that in the back of my mind as I write my master's thesis, wondering if all this work will be sufficient. I wouldn't wish the difficulty of executive

dysfunction or the shame of deviance and pathologization on anyone. But that's not to say it's impossible to feel better. I'm learning how to move around the immovable obstacles that result from being disabled. I just need some more time. Different time. Slower time.

The logic of medicalization takes moving on crip time, at crip speed, on crip terms, as deviant or pathological. There is an intense conflict between my body and the temporal movement of Big Capitalist Hegemony. Most days, I can't tell how long things take to do—whether that be getting dressed, showering, commuting, or writing, I am always taking a shot in the dark. My days are a patchwork assemblage of temporal movement that switch from slow to extremely fast without discernment. Like Alison Kafer notes, being crip queers my sense of time (2013; p. 34). Despite this temporal orientation being my reality, culpability is constantly imposed on my insufficient body/mind. This is the lesson I have learned with each metagnosis, a term theorized by Danielle Spencer (2020) that implies emotional, mental, and physical labour in terms of renegotiating knowledge about selfhood in relation to a late-in-life diagnosis. By selfhood, I mean two things: my material body/mind, and the metaphysical selfness of my thoughts, emotions, and self-conception. This dual renegotiation through the process of metagnosis is the hardest work I have ever done. I've had to unlearn the lesson of shame multiple times. The effort it takes to exist in a world not built for me is anything but insufficient. Living through the never-ending task of trying to get better, I've had to come to terms with the fact that I cannot pass as normal. Being abnormal, queer, is a tangible and political fact about my body.

Sara Ahmed notes that "norms surface as the surfaces of bodies; norms are a matter of impressions, of how bodies are 'impressed upon' by the world, as a world made up of others" (2014, p. 145). The surfaces of my body are marked by deviance. I've got scar tissue on my liver, fat in excess, body hair and body acne from over two years on HRT. These surfaces, internal and external, come with expectations from the medical apparatus and the people who maintain such a system. My body is not healthy. From a doctor's point of view, health is considered the standard, the assumption, and the goal. Operating under

this logic, my body (which needs support) is a problem that must be solved. To be healthy is to render my body/mind normal and fixed. By solving the problems on the surfaces of my body, doctors use their infinite knowledge to provide a diagnosis and then a treatment.

What is wrong with me? The American Psychiatric Association defines gender dysphoria as "psychological distress that results from an incongruence between one's sex assigned at birth and one's gender identity" (APA, 2022). What is psychological distress? In my experience, the incongruence part is accurate. I have always felt the incongruence, especially when I was living my life as a cisgender woman, and a teenage girl, and as my mother's daughter. But as time went on, I wasn't particularly distressed. Life was tolerable before testosterone, especially as an androgynous nonbinary individual. However, I've never been able to thrive before HRT. Over a year into my medical transition, I see changes in my body that are intentional, a unique chemical response that becomes *me* every day. I choose to modify myself and make this choice; remember, there is a power in choice. Only those who have power can choose freely and fully. I do not fit into the category of male or female, and the medical system imposes medical logic onto my body, a surface largely out of my control. To regain my control, I choose to take 2.5 mg of 1% testosterone gel daily.

What is wrong with me? Simply put, lots of things. Yet this fact doesn't phase me anymore. I don't need to be normal. I don't want to be normal. What I care about is the fact that I persist. I show up for myself every single day without fail. I create. I talk about my embodied experiences as a crip, trans* individual in Ontario, Canada between 2025 and 2026. I write embodied scholarship to humanize the scapegoats of a violent socio-political environment and oppose the bureaucratic violence that is fundamental to the operation of Canadian institutions of care, insurance, and disability. With autonomy, queer politics, and cripistemologies (McRuer, 2006) informing me, I've created *Living Through It* to address the following research questions:

(1) How do digital mediums enforce structural violence against crip audiences?

(2) How do existing institutional digital infrastructures uphold and construct the foundation of neoliberal capitalist social order?

(3) How can crip-trans* creativity incite transformational change in Ontario in the year 2025 and beyond?

The objectives of the research are as follows:

(1) Determine structural problems within Ontario's institutional communication technologies, specifically the virtual systems that administer, quantify, and assign monetary value to disability as a socio-political identity (ex. Appletree Patient Portals, the CRA website, Sunlife Client Portal);

(2) Analyze examples of Ontario's institutional communication technologies by using autoethnographic and immersive research-creation methodologies;

(3) Propose recommendations for the problems diagnosed in Ontario's institutional communication technologies while effectively articulating the researcher's individual lived experiences, perspectives, privileges, and penalties.

Glossary of Key Terms

2SLGBTQI+: An acronym used to attempt to encompass the vast array of queer identities. The acronym stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and the plus to indicate other potentials. This acronym is commonly used in present publication by the Canadian federal government.

Actor: A person with agency capable of performing actions against other actors in a system of social order. This term references the theoretical framework and terminology of Johan Galtung (1969).

Bodymind: A term used in crip theory (McRuer, 2006) and disability justice scholarship to indicate the inseparable interrelationship between the intangible mind/consciousness and the politicized body/corporeal form. References the fact that the mind is product of the body.

Crip Theory: An intersectional field of feminist inquiry examining the intersections and margins of queerness, race, gender and disability. In its conception and goals, "Crip theory affirms lived, embodied experiences of disability and the knowledges (or cripistemologies) that emerge from such experiences" (McRuer and Cassabaum, 2021, para. 1). A form of critical theory that questions the legitimacy of neoliberal, capitalist institutions, crip theory is a predecessor of queer theory and disability justice that represents modes of living on intersections of identity in opposition with hegemony.

Disability: There are multiple ways to interpret this term, as the meaning of disability changes depending on the context in which it is used and who/what is defining the term. For the context of this thesis, disability is an embodied political classification of Otherness. This term is manifested when institutions categorize marginalized and "unhealthy" bodyminds when said bodyminds deviate from normative, medicalized expectations of wellness, movement, consciousness, emotion, and other modes of medicalized existence.

Disimagination: A term coined by Henry Giroux (2013) to describe a consequence of neoliberal capitalist social order. Disimagination "refers to images [...] institutions, discourses, and other modes of representation, that undermine the capacity of individuals to bear witness to a different and critical sense of remembering, agency, ethics and collective resistance" (Giroux, 2013) (Wilson, 2017, p. 71). Disimagination is what keeps the larger social collective away from critical modes of thinking as these "modes of representation"

uphold how “neoliberal theory regards humans as fundamentally ignorant when it comes it comes to understanding (let alone critiquing) the social totality” (Wilson, 2017, p. 71).

Embodiment: Part of the philosophical inquiry into consciousness and experience, embodiment is “the subjective experience of one’s own body [differing] from the objective or scientific picture of a body in physiological terms” (Blackburn, 2016).

Entanglement: The medical humanities usage of the term *entanglement* refers to the way in which lived experiences and intersections of identity are intrinsically related to one another. There are many interpretations of the term spanning across disciplines, but “what holds together much of the research employing ‘entanglement’ is an intuition that some set of things, commonly held to be separate from one another [… might] not only have something in common, but also, in fact, may be quite inseparable from one another” (Fitzgerald and Callard, 2016).

Hegemony: Mass culture, social normalcy, the cultural elite. What is considered normative in each cultural context.

Neoliberal: The current political order/system that the Global North operates under. This thesis poses the idea that the neoliberal ontological social order reproduces the belief that humans are solely “economic beings,” “ignorant,” and hyperindividual (Wilson, 2017, p. 53, Table 2.1). Neoliberal doctrine centres around the following “’general politics of truth:”

- The individual’s freedom to choose in the market is the highest, and in fact the only, form of freedom.
- Market competition is the best way to order and govern society.
- Individuals are personally responsible for their lives and out-comes, not the powerful structures that govern them.

(Wilson, 2017, p. 52).

Other/Othering: Non-hegemonic bodies, counternormative embodiment. This term takes precedence from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s decolonial interpretation of the concept which articulates how “when one is talking about colonial occupation, the European Subject “worlds” or violently recreates the already inscribed or meaningful world of the native subject, thus making him “Other,” and that this act occurs at all levels of society” (Felluga, 2015, p. 202) (Spivak, 2006).

Phenomenology: "The study of consciousness from the first-person perspective" as experienced in everyday life. This study addresses lived and embodied experiences such as "perception, thought" and other phenomena that compose everyday human consciousness (Woodruff-Smith, 2010).

Trans*: A novel configuration of the world "transgender." This configuration symbolizes multiple possibilities and creates several theoretical connections. The function of an asterisk is essentially that of a "wildcard" with it's meaning symbolizing four main points simultaneously. The asterisk can be used to:

(1) Create "a figurative bullet point in a list of identities that are not predicated on the trans- prefix formulation."

(2) Bring "attention to the word, indicating the possibility of a deeper meaning than the prefix itself might suggest."

(3) "Act as a footnote indicator, implying a complication or suggesting further investigation."

(4) Push "beyond the trans- prefix and opposes it as the only legitimate way to refer to trans* identities and communities." (Thompkins, 2014, p. 27).

Transsexual: A bodymind that is incongruent with their gender assigned at birth and has taken medical measures to modify the physical body to align with internal embodied selfhood (i.e. hormone replacement therapy, surgical interventions, sterilization procedures, etc.).

Violence: Adapted from the works of Johan Galtung, violence is present when potential harm is avoidable, yet human actions are not taken to prevent potential harm. This "decrease in distance" from harm results in a physical, mental, spiritual, or other kind of wound to those impacted, and that impact means violence is present (Galtung, 1969, p. 169).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The concepts central to the research in *Living Through It* are rooted in the family of Critical Theory. As a school of thought, Critical Theory branches and diverges into different paths through the forward progression of time. Beginning with the Frankfurt School, responding to existential questions that "emerged from the crucible of two world wars," Critical Theory has progressed over the last 90+ years to serve different fields of study, social movements, and political goals with the unifying purpose of preventing suffering (Shuster, 2024). The strands of Critical Theory which circle the thesis are ever multiplying. *Living Through It* gestures towards theories like agency, hybridity, autoethnography, biopower and biopolitics, culture, digital humanities, queer theory, Othering, gender and sex, hegemony, intersectionality, and postmodernity. There is no time or space in this thesis to talk about everything that could be spoken on. This literature review homes in on two specific topics under the broad scope of Critical Theory in the present year of 2026: **Structural Violence** and **Queer Temporalities.** We can think of these theories existing in the context of the following quote that well exemplifies the goals of Critical Theory: "Critical Theory starts with the claim that needless suffering ought not to exist. That such suffering is produced in a systemic way because of the way that we have organized ourselves is the motor that drives Critical Theory" (Shuster, 2024, p. 10). The thesis, at its core, examines both theories deeply and personally with the purpose of diagnosing problems within institutional digital communication technologies by taking apart the systemic suffering with humour and realistic experience.

Foundational Theories: Structural Violence and Queer Temporalities

Structural Violence

Violence has not always held the same definition within a Western academic environment. In the context of Peace Studies—an interdisciplinary field rooted in Sociology as a response to war—violence was often discussed by academics as defined by "intentional, physical and manifest violence" (Hillesund & Østby, 2026, p. 3). Prior to Johan Galtung's contributions to the field, violence was a concept that was thought to have manifested only because of singular perpetrators. Galtung brought forward the idea of structural violence in his 1969 essay *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*, moving understandings away from hyper-individualism and fragmentation, and instead turned towards a holistic approach which acknowledged systemic oppression and gestured towards what we now understand as intersectional analysis. Galtung calls his theory an "extended concept of violence," a term that in name alone criticized prior definitions which highlighted cruel intent and somatic deprivation as foundational; Galtung called these ideas unproductive because they produced a "narrow concept of violence" in the field (1969, p. 168). In his article, Galtung carefully articulates six dimensions which create "a typology of violence" (1969, p. 173, Fig. 1). While the author makes many articulate and insightful points in this article, Galtung himself says one of the most important distinctions in framework of the typology of violence framework lies "on the subject side: whether or not there is a subject (person) who acts" (Galtung, 1969, p. 170). At the core of these distinguishing criteria, Galtung separated violence perpetuated by an individual, an obvious singular "actor," and violence perpetuated by ideas and actions that are "built into a structure" (1969, p. 171). This is where the idea of structural violence manifests and develops.

Personal violence, the simpler counterpart to structural violence, took hold of early studies of violence before Galtung's contributions to the field. Galtung notes in his article

that “it is not strange that attention has been focused more on personal than on structural violence” (1969, p. 173). One of the simplest yet most impactful statements Galtung makes about the manifestations between personal and structural violence is that “personal violence *shows*. The object of personal violence perceives the violence, usually, and may complain— the object of structural violence may be persuaded not to perceive this at all. Personal violence represents change and dynamism— not only ripples on waves, but waves on otherwise tranquil waters. Structural violence is silent, it does not show— it is essentially static, it is tranquil waters” (Galtung, 1969, p. 173). The conflation of structural violence to static and an all-encompassing body of water creates a metaphor of white noise. This white noise is a central notion that resounds in the emotional arc of the creative component of *Living Through It.* While structural violence began as static, I have informal reason to believe that most individuals living in Ontario in 2026 know that the state of the environment, of politics, of finances, of living, is antagonistic. Most of us, no matter where we stand, can see the visual snow of inequality everyday in the corners of our vision. This white noise exists because of the current point of late-stage capitalism and neoliberal politics in Canadian and neighbouring American society. The encompassing static is structural violence unobscured and embodied.

Structural violence manifests in a social order as “unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances” (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). Galtung’s language can be described as prophetic, as his theorizing on structural violence is highly reminiscent of Michel Foucault’s later theory of biopolitics (1990). Galtung identifies life chances as “resources” that are “unevenly distributed,” naming examples like “income distributions [which] are heavily skewed, literacy/education [that is] unevenly distributed, medical services [that] exist in some districts and for some groups only, and so on. Above all, the power to decide over the distribution of resources is unevenly distributed” (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). Galtung is also mindful to explain how these inequalities compound to leave certain populations experiencing “aggravated” situations “because these rank dimensions [i.e. income, medical

care, literacy/education] tend to be heavily correlated due to the way they are tied together in the social structure" (1969, p. 171). Foucault talks about how social orders use organizational structures to discipline the body and regulate the population to deploy "power over life. […] As a result, life itself, which for Aristotle was understood as separate from politics, suddenly became political" (Felluga, 2015, p. 32) (Foucault, 1990). The similarities between these concepts lie in how social structures leverage essential bodily resources in exchange for social rank and capital. Both Galtung and Foucault speak in their theories on how essential embodied survival is politicized involuntarily due to the capitalist assignment of value to the means of production. While political entities are theoretically obligated to prevent suffering such as starvation, "if people are starving when this is objectively avoidable, then violence is committed, regardless of whether there is a clear subject-action-object relation, [because of] the way world economic relations are organized today" (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). The violence is not avoided by the social structures due to the structure's foundational directives to maximise profit and monopolize power.

The discussion in the previous paragraph leads into a commentary on how structural violence lends theoretical touchstones from Marxist analysis. To create a model of social order and how systems contribute to said order, Galtung begins the discussion by stating that "Marxist criticism of capitalist society emphasizes how the power to decide over the surplus from the production process is reserved for the owners of the means of production, who then can buy themselves into top positions on all other rank dimensions because money is highly convertible in capitalist society— if you have money to convert, that is" (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). These rank dimensions, and the related conversion of money into upper ranking social capital, sets the scene for Galtung's figure called *The Image of Social Order* and the related mechanisms of structural violence which inform the figure (Galtung, 1969, p. 176, Fig. 3). This figure demonstrates how value is exchanged and distributed in an unequal, late-stage capitalist, Neoliberal society. Key components from the mechanisms of structural violence which inform the conversation brought forward in *Living Through It*

are the following: **linear ranking order**, **acyclical interaction pattern**, and **correlation between rank and centrality**.

Linear ranking order is a tiered system of actors with more or less power depending on their superiority in rank. Galtung says that in a **linear ranking order** mechanism, "the ranking is complete, leaving no doubt as to who is higher in any pair of actors" (1969, p. 176). The **linear ranking order** mechanism is interdependently related to the second mechanism of structural violence, the **acyclical interaction pattern**— Galtung describes this mechanism to demonstrates how power is institutionally upheld. Within the social order and related ranking structure, "all actors are connected, but only one way— there is only one 'correct' pattern of interaction" (Galtung, 1969, p. 176). Essentially, Galtung is describing the way institutions follow a top-down chain of command, where stratified layers of systems obey the commands of an exponentially wealthy and powerful upper strata of actors. This upper stratum is disproportionate in terms of the ratio of size to collected power, usually due to these high-ranking actors holding a monopoly on the means of production by exploiting the labour of lower strata actors to accumulate capital. The monopoly of power and resources held by high-ranking actors directly relates to the third mechanism of structural violence, the **correlation between rank and centrality**. Galtung defines this mechanism as "the higher the rank of the actor in the system, the more central his position in the interaction network" (1969, p. 176). All three of these mechanisms overlap with one another in the structure of the social order in late-state capitalist, Neoliberal society. These mechanisms form the basis for the neoliberal capitalist social order and its stratified layers of control.

The imbalance of power which constitutes structural violence has become so overwhelmingly and blatantly unjust that the average individual can no longer be persuaded to look away. What marginal bodyminds have long witnessed and endured at the hands of structures is flooding into the lives of the petite bourgeoisie. The upper stratum of the social order has power and capital incomprehensibly far above the average actor in late-stage

capitalist, Neoliberal societies. This imbalance has reached the point where middle-class individuals can barely make meet their basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, and other bodily necessities. Precarity has become the baseline in Ontario, as made evident by the 165 percent increase in Ontario food bank visits since 2019-2020 (Feed Ontario, 2025) and the average basic cost of living ranging between $3,300 to $4,000 per month in Ontario (Hamilton, 2026) despite the average full-time wage—across all levels seniority and professions— being $4,418.65 after federal and provincial taxes (Canada Revenue Agency, 2026) (Statistics Canada, 2026, Table 14-10-0417-01). This feeling of anxiety, this encompassing static of injustice circles back to structural violence and the exponential gluttony of the upper strata. In the world of Ontario, Canada, 2026, the average individual can no longer ignore the static of structural violence. This existential crisis is critical to the story arc of livingthroughit.com because the creative story I've shaped clearly demonstrates how background noise becomes ringing in our ears. When material conditions inflate, they cannot expand infinitely. The bubble must pop, and when that happens, the lower strata majority must be on the same wavelength as the white noise. The purpose of this research is to attune the working class into the frequency of structural violence.

Queer Temporalities

Time is an interdisciplinary topic that spans a wide array of fields. While the foundations of temporality are not limited to the humanities, several social science disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology, and psychology take a great interest in the metaphysical relationship between the body/mind and time. For this literature review, time and temporality borrow definitions from the field of human geography to ground the concepts. The standard model of temporal movement is organized into an ever forward line delineated into past, present, and future. Time is commonly understood in a quantitative sense of clocks and calendars, of hours and minutes and seconds. Instead, for the purpose of this thesis, time is a phenomenological concept that "can take on different meanings in

different cultures and be experienced in multiple ways" (Rogers et al., 2013, para. 1). Temporality, a related definition to time, can be simply understood as concepts relating to phenomenological time. Temporality is often pluralized and written as "temporalities" to further affirm that the term "indicates [how] time is multiple, heterogeneous, and/or social rather than fixed and natural" (Rogers et al., 2013). This idea of multiplicity is important when thinking about temporalities and their entangled relations to the spaces in which they exist. After all, time cannot exist without space to contain it.

Although this thesis work is not explicitly concerned with space, temporalities cannot be fully separated from spatialities when considering the goal of "expressing actual life in terms of existence" (Hroar Klempe, 2015, p. 4) (Kierkegaard, 1980). The entanglement of space and time spans back to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and his phenomenological assessment of subjectivity. A reductive analysis of Kant's theories of space and time poses that the subjectivity of time occurs because space lacks absolute reality. Every human being is living in their own manifestations of space (location, height, weight, relational experiences, cultural landscapes, countries, geographies, etc.); therefore, time is experienced differently in every individual with infinitely variable manifestations of space being a large contributing factor to these equally numerous variations in the embodied experiences of time. In the space I choose to analyze in this thesis— the digital landscape of 2026 in Ontario, Canada— my experience of temporality is very queer. Nothing seems to work for me according to a standard trajectory. There is a tempo to the social order that I cannot seem to adhere to, and that standard rhythm has been labelled by Elizabeth Freeman as **chrononormativity.**

Late-stage capitalist, Neoliberal social orders weaponize time's linear trajectory and fashion chrononormativity "to organize individual human bodies towards maximum productivity" (Freeman, 2010, p. 3). Chrononormativity is assumed to be natural and ancient, yet the experience of normative time is a result of "implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts. Schedules, calendars, time zones,

and even wristwatches inculcate what the sociologist Evitar Zerubavel calls 'hidden rhythms,' forms of temporal existence that seem natural to those whom they privilege" (Freeman, 2010, p. 3) (Zerubavel, 1977). As an architect of modern social science, Max Weber also "regarded the clock as the key technology of capitalism" as the hours and seconds of a day became "common measures" of labour, therefore rendering time a commodity (Rogers et al., 2013a, para. 1). In the context of Postmodernist theory, David Harvey (1990) argues that chrononormativity is the phenomenological condition of the postmodern era— this embodied state can be attributed to both the exponential acceleration of time-space compression (Rogers et al., 2013c) and the "enhanced simultaneity afforded by information and communication technologies" (Rogers et al., 2013a, para. 1). The simultaneity and acceleration of postmodern temporalities, combined with Weber's theorizing of time as a commodity, informs the creative component of this thesis in several ways which will be expanded upon in **Chapter 4** of this paper.

With ideas of chrononormativity and related theories firmly established, next comes the task of outlining the term's antithesis. Queer temporalities/queer time are the resistant approaches to temporal movements, embodied practices that refuse assimilation and champion resistance of hegemony. The use of "queer" comes from the ideologies of Queer theory, a practice and study of "nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 6). Queer theory emerges from two "paradigm shifting texts" published in the early 1990s, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) (Pramaggiore, 2013, para. 1). These books coincide with the defining historical moment of the AIDS epidemic, and the queer lives cut short by *structural violence*. This wave of discourse in the 1990's illustrates the first cultural shift towards defining queer time. Scholarship was revisited when scholars focalized on experiences from what Michael Cunningham calls "the shadow of an epidemic," namely the "lives of women, transgenders, and queers who partake of this temporal shift in

less obvious ways" (Cunningham, 2000) (Halberstam, 2005, p. 3). This thesis calls for a third revisiting with a similar view on stories left out of the conversation, particularly experiences of bodies that are "simply considered 'expendable'" in the eyes of institutions that deprioritize disability as a condition not quite worth spending money on (Cohen, 1999) (Halberstam, 2005, p. 3). Halberstam's orienting quote defining temporalities reminds us that queer time roots from the idea that "queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 2). In other words, I reiterate the opening sentence to this paragraph by saying that resistance to chrononormativity is a fundamental, defining characteristic of queer time. The idea of queer time as resistance will be revisited while talking later in this chapter about the closely related concept of **crip time**.

Intersectional Perspective on Structural Violence: Patricia Hill Collins' *The Matrix of Domination*

Critical Theory and its related disciplines operate on the simple principle that, broadly and existentially speaking, things should be different (Shuster, 2024). Looking back on Galtung's observations, I realize the scholar is not only aligned with the goals of Critical Theory but uses his desire for change to step into foundational ideas of intersectionality. This is not to say Galtung is a foundational scholar of intersectionality. What I am saying is that Johan Galtung was thinking in ways that echoed intersectionality's goal of entangling politics and the bodymind. Black Feminist scholars after Johan Galtung perfected this goal of entanglement by "explain[ing] how systems of power are configured and experienced," a task Galtung was unable to achieve in his work due to his structural privilege as a European white man (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020). Black Feminist scholars like Kimberlé Williams

Crenshaw and Angela Davis used their intersectional experiences of sociopolitical penalties such as misogynoir, to theorize the term intersectionality itself. The theorist who takes *structural violence*, intersectionality, and the entanglement of the bodymind and politics, and theorizes these concepts in ways that inform this thesis the most is Patricia Hill Collins. In her groundbreaking book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990), Hill Collins culminates her analysis of Black women's experiences of politics and consciousness in the United States of America to construct a framework of overlapping socio-political domains which dictate power relations in her social order.

The landmark intersectional theory from *Black Feminist Thought* is called **the matrix of domination.** This matrix of overlapping domains within a social order can be" viewed through the lens of a single system or through that of intersecting oppressions" (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 349). What the previous statement means is that oppression can function through the penalties of one specific marginalized experience, or through compounded and convergent points of marginalized identity. In the context which Hill Collins theorizes intersectional marginalization, she speaks from the lived experience of being a Black cisgender woman in America. However, marginal intersections of identity can converge at more than two points, such as being a Black disabled woman, or a Black disabled lesbian transgender woman. No matter how many intersections are converging, Hill Collins states that "any particular matrix of domination is organized via four interrelated domains of power, namely, the **structural**, **disciplinary**, **hegemonic**, and **interpersonal** domains" (1990, p. 349). To briefly summarize the definitions of the four domains and how they uphold systemic oppression, "the structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues" (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 349). Each of these domains needs to be briefly

expanded upon to be fully understood in both their original contexts and the context of this thesis project.

The **structural domain** emphasizes the creation of "large-scale, interlocking social institutions" which rely on "multiple forms of [categorization and subsequent] segregation—by race, class, and gender" to enforce systemic privileges and produce systemic penalties (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 351). A point worth noting is that Hill Collins does not name dis/ability as one of the categories of subjugation within the structural domain. This note becomes important in the following section titled **"Crip Time: Disabled and Queer Temporalities Entangled."** However, I will also emphasize that race, class, and gender are deeply entangled criteria when speaking on social institutions, especially systems which involve legality and healthcare. The structural domain is fabricated by the codified laws, policies, and social systems which foundationally constitute structures of power such as "the U.S. legal system, labor markets, schools, the housing industry, banking, insurance, [and] the news media" (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 351). An entangled yet distinct domain which serves to enforce policies and "manage power relations" codified by the structural domain is the **disciplinary domain** (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 355). This domain constitutes "a way of ruling that relies on bureaucratic hierarchies and techniques of surveillance" which are not explicitly discriminatory but instead perpetuate structural violece "through the ways in which organizations are run (Foucault 1979)" (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 355).

Patricia Hill Collins echoes some of Johan Galtung's theorization of structural violence with her conception of the disciplinary domain. The mechanisms of structural violence outlined in Galtung's article relate deeply to Hill Collins' theorization of the disciplinary domain, as Galtung describes political power as "a chain of interlocking feudal relationships" with a top-down hierarchical organization that causes depravation because of how "the structure deprives [individuals] of chances to organize and bring their power to bear against the topdogs, as voting power, bargaining power, striking power, violent power – partly because they are atomized and disintegrated and partly because they are overawed by all

the authority the topdogs present“ (Galtung, 1969, p. 177). This quote from Galtung describes the formation of mechanisms and structural interactions. Hill Collins can explain why “bureaucracies, regardless of the policies they promote, remain dedicated to controlling their workforces and clienteles […] the goal remains the same—creating quiet, orderly, docile, and disciplined populations” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 355). Hill Collins highlights this bureaucratic structure, the same one theorized by Galtung, as a key mechanism towards the creation and maintenance of oppressive systems. Galtung also posits that bureaucracy is vital towards the maintenance of structural violence. This thesis agrees with both Galtung and Hill Collins, concentrating the most on ways in which the **disciplinary domain** of Ontario’s social order uses bureaucratic methods of internal regulation and administration within mass communication technologies to administer oppression.

Another key element to the matrix of domination which speaks to Galtung’s model of social order and the congruence between levels of systemic and interpersonal hierarchies he describes (1969, p. 176) lies in the **hegemonic domain**. This level of power is a metaphorical membrane that “aims to justify practices [of structural violence by] manipulating ideology and culture [to] act as a link between social institutions (structural domain), their organizational practices (disciplinary domain), and the level of everyday social interaction (interpersonal domain)” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 359). I call the hegemonic domain a membrane because it acts as the connective tissue which encompasses all the different realms of power within a social order. In relation to the other domains of power, “the significance of the hegemonic domain lies in its ability to shape consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 361). This manipulation occurs by the constant motion of “oppressive ideas circulating through societal elements” such as “school curricula, religious teachings, community cultures, and family histories” along with the twenty-first century reality of “the growing sophistication of mass media” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 359). The pervasiveness of “hegemonic ideologies concerning race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation [would not] remain so deeply entrenched” without

the hegemonic domain— as Hill Collins made clear at the beginning of her theorization, the hegemonic domain is what justifies structural violence (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 359). The way "dominant groups create and maintain a popular system of 'commonsense' ideas that support their right to rule" is by perpetuating hegemonic beliefs "[that] are often so pervasive that it is difficult to conceptualize alternatives to them, let alone ways of resisting the social practices that they justify" (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 359). The challenge of resisting the pervasive nature of "commonsense" and normative ideologies is of great importance to this thesis. By looking at temporalities through the lens of the disciplinary and hegemonic domains, recommendations begin to crystallize and conversations begin to flourish within my research (see Chapter 4 for more).

Crip Time: Disabled and Queer Temporalities Entangled

The synthesis of all the theories previously analyzed culminates with ideas presented in theorizing crip time. To understand crip time, there first must be a foundational understanding of crip theory. A preliminary understanding of crip theory means that one must understand that crip represents a specific intersection of identity. Simply understood, crip theory rests at the intersection of queer and disabled embodiment. On a theoretical and cultural level, however, "crip theory questions—or takes a sledgehammer to—that which has been concretized" (McRuer, 2006, p. 52). Crip theory begins when we understand compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006) as the concrete expectation of a person, the default assumption that is always made of bodies. This assumption is what "produces disability"— the same way that compulsory heterosexuality "produces queerness"— rendering these factors contingent on one another, thereby creating an "interwoven" systematic relationship between queerness and disability (McRuer, 2006, p. 20). These compulsory ideas are upheld and produced by the "dominant economic and cultural system" of "neoliberal capitalism" that "embodied and sexual identities have been composed in [and against] over the past quarter century" (McRuer, 2006, p. 20). In relation to the social order

in which McRuer speaks of, the neoliberal capitalist structures of North America, compulsory able-bodiedness and compulsory heterosexuality have been internalized as a "mythical norm" (Lorde, 1984) "by covering over, with the appearance of choice, a system in which there actually is no choice." (McRuer, 2006, p. 26). This lack of choice is a mystified narrative born from the binary between born-this-way essentialism and the belief that homosexuality is a personal choice. However, the reality of embodied identities cannot be reduced to binary thought.

Crip theory argues that "able-bodied identity and heterosexual identity are linked in their mutual impossibility and in their mutual incomprehensibility" (McRuer, 2006, p. 27). These sentiments of impossibility and incomprehensibility root from Judith Butler's assertion that normative identities are constantly evaluated through repetitive performances (2008). The sheer number of normative assumptions made in the social order are impossible to comply with entirely. The political system which defines the neoliberal capitalist social order champions the building of financial capital as the focal centre of existence and human purpose. With this definition in mind, disability can be thought of as a label for bodies who cannot produce capital through labour. There are countless social definitions of disability, having to do with physicality, visibility, and legality. For this thesis, I use the model of disability that Alison Kafer coins as a political/relational model. Kafer challenges the medical model of disability (framing atypical bodies as pathological, deviant, undesirable, and defective) and the individual model of disability (framing disabled experiences as a knowable fact about a body) to "focus […] more on the political experience of disablement" (Kafer, 2013, p. 9). One way to situate the political experience of being disabled is by analyzing the socio-economic implications of disability and queerness, especially in the context of neoliberal and capitalist social order.

2SLGBTQI+ individuals are disproportionately more likely to be disabled, and this observation makes the most sense when thinking about what Galtung wrote about structural violence and the ways in which penalties intersect. When individuals are "low on

income[…], low in education, low on health, and low on power— as is frequently the case because these rank dimensions tend to be heavily correlated due to the way they are tied together in the social structure" they experience specific versions of reality which reflect the compounding of penalties and the related experience of poverty (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). Returning to McRuer's assertion that disability and queerness are "interwoven," I extend that notion by arguing queerness and disability are not only intrinsically related but entangled, a concept that renders the relation as inseparable and borderless. There are many interpretations of entanglement spanning across disciplines, but as noted in the foundational text *Meeting The Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning,* Karen Barad suggests that when it comes to humanity and how we create meaning, "what often appear[s] as separate entities (and separate sets of concerns) with sharp edges does not actually entail a relation of absolute exteriority at all" (2007, p. 135). Entanglement symbolizes how, down to the smallest atom, bodies and minds are what make up politics, culture, location, and socialization (Barad, 2007). With this idea of entanglement in mind, I think about how disability is a common reality in the queer community. I know this through the countless mutual aid posts I see daily, and the friends I've made who have told me stories about the indignity of surviving in poverty on ODSP or Ontario Works wages. Upon analyzing the data of post-COVID 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada, I know my experiences are not simply anecdotal.

In a study done by the Government of Canada between November 2020 and February 2021, 27% of 2SLGBTQI+ community members surveyed across Canada identified as living with a disability (Statistics Canada, 2023, para. 2). This proportion is staggering when considering that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals only represent 4% of the total Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2021, para. 2). In 2021, Statistic Canada reported that 41% of 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians "had a total personal income of less than $20,000 per year," meaning that the 41% of the 2SLGBTQI+ individuals surveyed lived below the poverty line as outlines by multiple metrics such as the Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT) and the

Market Basket Measure (MBM) (Statistics Canada, 2021, para. 13) (Gibson, 2025). This problem of income inequality for 2SLGBTQI+ and disabled Canadian represents a canary in the coal mine, as Galtung points out that income inequality horizontally translates to several rank dimensions, namely health and access to healthcare. Galtung's statement remains true in the present circumstances of Ontario. According to data from 2022 illustrated in the Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Data Tool, Canadians ages 15 and older reporting the lowest income (first quartile) experienced almost 25% more instances of disability than Canadians in the second, third, or fourth quartiles. While the intersections of penalties can be discussed in countless ways, this small amount of data analysis loudly reveals how manifestations of neoliberal capitalism entangle experiences of disability and queerness.

Neoliberal capitalism profits from normativity. This system also creates the conditions of oppression in Ontario by rewarding compliance to normative ideas and punishing any form of dissent. Quoting the work of J. Jack Halberstam, Alison Kafer says that "for Halberstam, queers are queer not only because of their objects of desire but also because they do too much of the wrong thing at the wrong time" (2013, p. 35). This quote poses the questions of "who is defining the moral criteria of right and wrong?" and "what happens when you are deemed wrongful?" The restriction of financial security is a type of structural violence that punishes crip individuals for moving on crip time. When talking about noncompliant bodies, crip bodies, "oppression is [often] simply understood in the mind— [yet] it is felt in the body in a myriad of ways" (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 348). Oppression can feel like hunger. Anxiety. Depression. Hopelessness. Entrapment. Exhaustion. All these embodied conditions result from the ways in which neoliberal capitalist social order perpetuate structural violence in all levels of their systems. Queer and disabled bodies move through space and time in nonnormative ways. Whether those bodies defy chrononormative logics of labour, reproduction, or family, or those bodies are diagnosed with chronic fatigue, or one simply cannot meet strict deadlines due to wheelchair accessible buses running late, crip time intersects with ideas of queering temporalities. In fact, Kafer

says that “one could argue that queer time is crip time, and that it has been all along” (2013, p, 34). Transgender and disabled embodiments intersect with crip theory and crip time because our bodies are labeled, whether we like it or not, as strange. Different. Pathological, even, depending on which periods of history one is referencing.

When thinking about queering as acts of resistance against neoliberal capitalist normativity, crip time is described by Kafer, as influenced by the work of Ellen Samuels, as “resistant orientation” (2013, p. 40). This resistant orientation is unwillingly saddled into crip experiences. Whether the bodymind is willing or not, “critical queerness and severe disability are about collectively transforming (in ways that cannot necessarily be predicted in advance)— about cripping—the substantive, material uses to which queer/disabled existence has been put by a system of compulsory able-bodiedness, about insisting that such a system is never as good as it gets, and about imagining bodies and desires otherwise” (McRuer, 2006, p. 49). The insistence of transformation is a matter of survival when it comes to crip existence. While the illusion of choice is given to normative bodies, usually regarding the options of either participating in the labour force or starving and dying slowly, crip bodies are denied that façade entirely.

Upon even roughly observing systems such as ODSP, Ontario Works, and the Canada Disability Benefit, the amount of money allotted to disabled lives conveys a very different binary choice: die slowly in abject poverty or die quickly through the expedited process of Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD). There is no future for disabled bodies in the neoliberal capitalist mindset (Kafer, 2013). This point is slightly tangential and will be expanded upon in **Chapter 4: Discussion and Findings** with concrete examples from Ontario government publications and budgets. However, for now I will clarify that this point is made to justify why my project is about myself, a queer and trans bodymind, refuting the idea that normativity, that existing systems, are “as good as it gets” (Rossiter & Rinaldi, 2018). *Living Through It* challenges authority by proposing micro-level transformations to the system that are so reasonable, they cannot be denied without high-power actors admitting that denying

crip futures is not a matter of budget deficits, but more along the lines of the following options; at best, a punishment for bodies that consistently do the wrong things at the wrong times, and at worst, a silent eugenic project to eradicate the cost of crip bodies from the provincial budget's bottom line. As Alice Wong has said time and time again, disabled people are oracles, and disabled futures are critical for the futures of us all. At some point, our bodies will falter. Chrononormativity will no longer be an option, sooner or later, for anyone reading this. Therefore, I take it upon myself to start conversations and continue cripping the narrative.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Multiple methods are employed in *Living Through It* for the purpose of conveying analysis and recommendations in ways that are accessible. This project aims to affect the current socio-political environment of the Ontario public healthcare system's bureaucracy, drawing focal attention to institutional communication technologies administered by Canadian systems that centralize on disability (for example, the disability certification processes with the Canada Revenue Agency). The main research methodologies used in this thesis to achieve the research goals are research-creation, autoethnography, and autotheory. These methodologies will be examined in terms of historical contexts and practical applications to this thesis. Within the creative portion of the thesis, literary strategies are also used to serve artistic and rhetorical purposes. The literary techniques are hypertext literature and paratext, and both terms will be defined and contextualized through the parameters of this thesis.

As part of the design vocabulary for the creative portion, my methodology outlines the tool (graphic user interface) used to design the creative portion, ReadyMag. The other tool used to create assets for the website is the content creation platform called Adobe Express. Both tools and the depth in which they were used for the creation of livingthroughit.com will be outlined. In the final section of the methodology, *Living Through It* acknowledges the ethical limitations and monovocality of autoethnography, especially in the style which the thesis employs by having no formal collaborators or interlocuters involved. The main interlocuter is myself, and I examine my relationships to other people and systems through a veil of generalizations and the creation of a composite character. However, the rhetorical purpose of each methodology helps to fuel a research goal— using trans* creativity to inspire transformational change. This section will expand on the

potentials of limitations and how self-awareness surrounding limitations creates opportunities for community dialogue and transformational change.

Methods

Research Creation

Research creation is a qualitative research method that eludes one exact definition. There are multiple approaches to the method of research creation, and the approach I take for this thesis is practice-based. A fundamental tenet in practice-based research creation is the notion that "the creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge" (Skains, 2018, p. 86). This thesis project, while prioritizing the creative artefact, uses scholarly discussion through the tandem use of a "creative artefact [that] is accompanied by a critical discussion of the significance and context of the claims, and a full understanding can only be achieved through the cohesive presentation of the creative artefact and the critical exegesis" which is writing "that accompanies the creative work [which allows] knowledge that has remained implicitly within the artist [to be] made explicit and seated within the context of the scholarly field" (Skains, 2018, p. 86). *Living Through It* utilizes contextual practice-based research creation to guide readers to socially charged conclusions.

Fundamentally, my project falls under what Skains says is an effective use of practice-based research; the thesis falls under the "category [of] *contextual* [because] the practice is an effort to bring about social change" (2018, p. 86). This thesis has centred on creating a digital artifact since the first proposals I created to enter my master's program. While the type of creative production has changed dramatically since inception times, I always knew creation and interactivity would hold rhetorical and theoretical potential in achieving the project's research goals. Using both the creative artifact, livingthroughit.com, and this analytical research paper, I am not only able to theorize and academically write about my topic. Instead, I use the process of creative writing and self-reflexive

autoethnographic methods as part of the research creation process to both analyze experiences, draw conclusions, and make appropriate recommendations.

Autoethnography

A method of qualitative research, autoethnography is fundamental to the research methodology of *Living Through It.* To understand autoethnography, we can break the word into two parts: "auto" and "ethnography" According to Van Maanen (2011) "ethnography is first and foremost a social practice concerned with the study and representation of culture (with a distinctly small c these days). It is an interpretive craft, focused more on 'how' and 'why' than on 'how much' or 'how many'" (p. 219). Autoethnography is part of an "autobiographical genre" of research for self-examination characterized by "the analysis of one's own identity, culture, feelings, and values to larger societal issues" (Tracy, 2013, p. 6). Autoethnography can be framed as a specific intersection of time and space in the researcher's specific lived context. This approach makes sense given autoethnography's historical ties to the fields of phenomenology, narratology, and existentialism (Poulos, 2021, p. 14-15). For the research I concern this project with, I operate with the understanding that cultures are multiple, situational, and contextual. My thesis answers questions of "how" and "why" within a culture from the perspective of the self—my self—especially in relation to specific "penalties and privileges" (Hill Collins, 1990) within a given society, time, and culture. This reflection on positionality will come in Chapter 4: Discussion and Findings. However, for now I wish to summarize the intersections of identity which *Living Through It* acknowledges in relation to the zeitgeist of the present day.

In a culture that uses power to incite violence against marginalized groups, stories must include "the study and representation of culture" (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 219) to identify timely socio-political issues. Therefore, I use technology to my advantage to narrate my story by situating the narrative urgently within the present to show how technology is "used by particular people, in particular places, at particular times" (Van Maanen, 2011, p.

221). Autoethnography is an approach that displays “a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes” (Olmos-Vega et. al., 2023, p. 242). As an author, I reflect on my specific lived experience by positioning myself as disabled, queer, and transgender. However, I also use knowledge within my grasp in the analytical essay to position my privileges as a masculine, White, educated, English-speaking Canadian citizen. This lens allows me to locate my research and project in a particular historical, cultural, and political context. I situate myself in the creative artefact using the technique of thick description, which is defined as “a way of observing and describing human action” to “delve into the deeper contours of meaning and context that animate [actions and behaviours]” (Poulos, 2021, p. 7). This technique allows for me to create a sense of realism in my storytelling, rendering me able to utilize the writing process itself as the method of inquiry for the thesis. Thick description was pioneered by anthropologist Clifford Geertz for the purpose of stepping outside of armchair anthropology, a biased form of research that viewed cultures and peoples from an outsider’s point of view. However, thick description is also critical in creating an immersive autoethnography, given that writing about one’s own experiences from an armchair vantage point is extremely difficult and not rhetorically strategic (Poulos, 2021).

Autotheory

A less focal method to the *Living Through It* thesis is the approach of autotheory writing. Autotheory is a term that “exceed[s] existing genre categories and disciplinary bounds, flourish[ing] in the liminal spaces between categories, [and revealing] the entanglement of research and creation” (Fournier, 2021, p. 2). Autotheory is cited as being an inherently queer, crip, and feminist method of research due to the lack of rigidity and potential for self-determination. Fournier argues that, when examining feminist research methodologies, “the history of feminism is, in a sense, a history of autotheory— one that

actively seeks to bridge theory and practice and upholds tenets like 'the personal is political'" (2021, p. 8). The idea of the personal as political is fundamental to Living Through It, connecting my crip-trans* life to the socio-political climate I live through. Eamon Schlotterback takes a similar approach when theorizing autotheory as trans* methodology as well. A similarity between crip and trans autotheory is that scholars argue that autotheory is not a genre, but "a way of doing work—the creative, intellectual work of scholarly and cultural production." (Schlotterback, 2023, 369). Formative to the envisioning of the thesis' writing style is Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* (2015), which also imagines the personal as political in terms of her evolving queer partnership and family. Her writing on gender, family, sexuality, and desire defines an era of autotheory as a scholarly and cultural literary genre.

Literary Techniques

Paratext

According to Genette and Maclean in a seminal journal article on paratextual theory, paratext is any element that encompasses a written page or screen, excluding the body of the text itself, that is essential to the experience of reading (Genette & Maclean, 1991; Astrom, 2014, p. 1). While many fields of study are dedicated to paratexts of print media, there is a case for the merging of screen-based media and paratextual theory. A larger branch of paratext is concerned with paratexts that surround television shows or films (e.g. scripts, trailers, interviews). However, there is another, different intersection of paratext that my work explores. Genette and Maclean's theory of paratext becomes ever expansive and relevant as more content exists in the "threshold" between medium and message (Genette & Maclean, 1991, p. 261). I approach paratextual theory informed by avant-garde poetics and hypertext literature to broaden the definition of this threshold and challenge what can be studied as paratext.

This thesis looks at paratext through a lens of design, digital writing, and otherwise unconventional narrative forms. Prior analysis of paratext looks at established mediums of media and communication: film and television, print media, and future cinema artforms. Some examples of paratext from these forms include film trailers and cast interviews, prefaces, and fan art, respectively. However, none of these examples apply to *Living Through It*. This thesis sits at the intersection of many different forms, therefore its paratext must be analyzed as a situation of hybridity and digitization. Livingthroughit.com was fabricated across multiple platforms, sewn together from many different tools and assets to create one fluid story. The tools used to create the narrative can be considered paratextual, as they have their own navigational systems, and have their own metadata which tell a completely different story to the one I intended. There are gestural and spatial decisions I had to make in the creation of Livingthoroughit.com as well. Every microanimation, shadow, and spatial element was crafted by me for the purpose of this narrative. Finally, I also had to create a help page, title page, credit sequence, and other kinds of informative paratext for the website. There are endless other examples of paratext I could elaborate on regarding Livingthroughit.com. For now, though, I can only loosely gesture towards the potential conversations to be had about paratext in experimental digital literature.

Hypertext Literature and Tools

Hypertext

The specific type of genre this work is classified as is hypertext literature. One of the foremost scholars in the realm of hypertext and digital poetics, Loss Pequeño Glazier, says of the medium that “hypertexts are not just texts ‘beyond texts’” nor are they “merely texts that are linked to others” (2002, p. 58). He says that by using the word hyper in the word hypertext, the mood of the prefix describes how web-based writing conveys the “sense of agitation, disturbance, obsessive instability” which occurs when a link shifts a reader’s gaze

towards “a natural digressive side thought or [astonishes the reader] with brazen and quick abruptness of thought” (Glazier, 2002, p. 58). He also says that links are a logical, inherent extension to the act of writing, not an accumulation or “e-equivalent of paper writing” but a unique artform with its own equally unique properties (Glazier, 2002, p. 84). Through conversations with Dani Spinosa, along with my reading of texts such as *A Kiss* by Dan Waber (2013) and *With Those We Love Alive* by Porpentine Charity Heartscape (2014), I have come to define hypertext literature as a type of electronic literature that creates an interactive reading experience. Hypertext literature often uses text-based responses based on links to make requests that are fulfilled by the hypertext transfer protocol (http://). Hypertext literature often has nodes that can branch out and create a non-linear narrative experience. This approach to writing informs the delivery of the creative portion. While the narrative expands away from Twine, *Living Through It* uses non-linear plot delivery and nodes of storytelling to create meaning and simulate the digital mundane.

Design Tools

A design tool integral to the creative portion of *Living Through It* is the graphic user interface (GUI) for web design called ReadyMag. The GUI does not use coding language but instead mirrors technical design language and uses modular drag-and-drop components to compose a webpage. This user interface allows the author of a given website creative freedom to build media from a blank page without any compulsory knowledge of web design coding languages such as HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. Instead, ReadyMag uses modular elements within the application to replicate other design softwares that users may be familiar with such as Adobe Suite products or Procreate. While not a perfect tool, ReadyMag works well for the story I am telling and functions surprisingly well, especially within the parameters of my knowledge. Not every piece of livingthroughit.com could be made entirely and solely using the Readymag GUI. Another key tool I used to make app icons, vectors, gradients, and other assets that I found to be incompatible with native Readymag software

and capabilities is Adobe Express. Almost identical to Canva, Adobe Express uses several rudimentary design components to help users make simple graphics, edit photos, craft social media posts, and utilize copyright-free assets for projects of different scales. Once again, this tool gives a lot of creative freedom to the user while still being easy to use and providing a low barrier, easy entry design technology for a mainstream user. Both Readymag and Adobe Express have paid and free versions while also offering student discounts. I opted to pay for both tools to best fit the needs of my thesis.

Ethics and Limitations

Participants and Anonymization

There is one true participant in this study, and that participant is me. This is intrinsic to the idea of autoethnography and self-study. The information collected about me will be my testosterone dosage and method of taking the medication, my consistency in taking medications daily (or when I forget), and memories associated with identity. I will also be analysing my social, cultural, and political relationships with my surrounding environment. In terms of mentioning other individuals, there will be mentions of interlocuters such as "the psychiatrist" or "the doctor" but there will be no distinguishing or identifiable characteristics such as gender, location, or specialization mentioned in my research. The people mentioned are the ideas of other people, representing systems within medicalized institutions, rendering identifiable characteristics completely anonymous to anyone other than myself. There will also be political figures such as Donald Trump mentioned in news headline notifications to speak on the political climate of the current times. However, this information is secondary data analysis from existing media.

The only component which draws from real people is my composite character, confidant, and fictional best friend, Bestie. Again, this composite character is the idea of a best friend. However, some of the conversations between myself and Bestie are based on

real conversations I've had with two of my closest friends over the past year or two. These conversations have been rewritten to conform to a voice I created for Bestie. Composite characters are approved by York University's Office of Research Ethics as a suitable method to convey anonymized data to limit risk and recognizability. I also wish to point out that none of the conversations between myself and Bestie are for the purpose of data analysis. The conversations are there to create personal insight into the life and data I am sharing about myself. Bestie's character is created to be a place for my analysis of culture, society, and related elements to be reiterated. No data is collected from other individuals for the purpose of this research or for analytical means.

Risk Analysis and Limitations

Risks

There are both psychological/emotional risks and social risks I could expose myself to as the central figure in a self-study. I could feel stressed or anxious about how I am perceived by those who engage with my work. However, I am actively working through these risks as they come up with my support network and care team. I see mental healthcare practitioners and physicians regularly who are closely monitoring my physical health and mental wellbeing. This leads me to believe I am in the correct state of mind to be making decisions without pushing myself beyond limits that could cause me harm. In terms of social risks, there is always a risk of outing myself as a transgender individual. Everyday, I make these decisions based on how I dress, whether I choose to shave, the conversations I choose to have with others. Ultimately, I am tired of hiding. The decision to live authentically is one I make everyday despite the social risks. All I can do is read situations accordingly and try to protect myself as situations arise. There is no more risk to me in creating this thesis work than there is to me daily existing in a politicized body. This

work brings my lived experience and replicates feeling, therefore it does not harm my privacy or reputation by reporting anything I view as negative.

Benefits

A direct benefit I notice already because of this research is regarding my personal growth. I have already gained useful knowledge about myself in the process of documenting and analyzing my gender-affirming care journey. I have been able to process difficult emotions such as fear, dread, and exhaustion by being able to humorously jab at frustrating elements of the digital everyday such as poorly crafted emails. I have been able to find purpose in finding my voice within academia. This work also provides me with opportunities to advance my academic career, as I have already received SSHRC for this project and presented at an international conference. Finally, I am benefiting by educating myself on the research method of autoethnography. This project would benefit transmasculine individuals, especially those with concurrent disabilities, in Ontario with guidance on navigating the Ontario health system. On that note, having this study made public could reveal opportunities to make the Ontario healthcare experience more user-friendly on the level of the everyday. This would specially make sense in university healthcare settings and clinics with gender-affirming healthcare practitioners. Overall, the work has potential to change systems of healthcare in Ontario on the scale of the digital and social.

Limitations

This thesis is rooted in my personal lived experiences between the period of June 2025 and June 2026. This narrow sample of the present day is limited by my own privileges, penalties, and perspectives. I cannot recommend how to make the Ontario medical system work better for Black women, or refugees and immigrants, or Indigenous communities. These perspectives are impossible for me to understand, and I am aware of these

limitations in my vision. However, I argue there is possibility in limitations, especially in this thesis. In terms of the space I occupy and write within, I live in a metropolitan area of Ontario, Canada, where my day-to-day life as a master's student is rather mundane. I attend many doctor's appointments. I sit in front of a computer for hours at a time trying to do my job. I see my friends sometimes and my partner as often as I can. These experiences are not universal, but ordinary. Kathleen Stewart's work on the ordinary illustrates how bringing mundanity into qualitative research can evoke empathy and comradery. Stewart says that the ordinary is "a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a scene of both liveness and exhaustion…" (2007, p. 1). This thesis emphasizes practical knowledge to portray the dualities of liveness and exhaustion that extended across the borders of identity politics.

The doctor's office, and the overall circumstance of navigating a given healthcare system, reflects practical knowledges and practices that most people in Ontario have come to gain. Connecting with others on what Kathleen Stewart coins "The 'We' of Mainstream Banality," a moment where "a weirdly floating 'we' snaps into a blurry focus when one enters a mall [or a doctor's office…]" where individuals are participating in the same experience, which in turn incites social connection that " takes on a life of its own…" (2007, pp. 27-28). My thesis taps into this 'we' by using the digital mundane to evoke experiences that a large majority of readers can relate with. Instead of focusing primarily on the identity factors that make me uniquely situated on axes of power, I focus on feelings that are not universal, but relatable as part of everyday consciousness.

The digital mundane, according to feminist digital geographers, is "the on-the-surface, taken-for-granted, seemingly ordinary and routine sites, objects, data productions, and networked practices of everyday life" (Leszczynski, 2020, p. 1194). However, present research on the digital mundane is focused more on the Internet of Things and smart objects (Pink et. al., 2017; Leszczynski and Crampton, 2016; Elwood and Leszczynski, 2018). My interpretation of the digital mundane focuses on phenomenological qualities of

everyday digital interactions. This focus is intended to invite readers to contribute to a conversation that forms the consensus that the digital communication technologies we rely on are not functioning optimally, or even acceptably.

The banality of digital medical environments is not often studied because the people interacting with these systems and environments are dependent on them. Instead of demanding something better from higher actors, users blame themselves for not being able to use or navigate a dysfunctional system. This internalizes power inflicted by the social order, and users must accept violence because they are reliant on the system, and therefore, there is no other choice but violence. This thesis operates on the queer notion that there are choices beyond the options immediately within our reach. Instead of submitting to inadequate systems and bloated bureaucracy, *Living Through It* invites Ontarians to begin a community dialogue of imagining a world which meets the needs of the collective and is open to transformational change. While I cannot see every perspective or gather a large sampling of data with this thesis, I can ignite conversation by appealing to elements of embodiment that traditional research cannot capture through figures and datasets. This research is about asking questions rather than drawing conclusions.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Findings

Introduction

The thesis consists of two interdependent parts— a hypertext-inspired, web-based alternate reality narrative (livingthroughit.com), and a traditional analytical research paper. These components are inseparable, telling one unified story in two different ways. The narrative of this research centres around my almost-autobiographical account of navigating everyday existence as I balance graduate studies, chronic illness, gender-affirming healthcare, absurd political theatre, financial precarity, and the constant strain of structural violence (Galtung, 1969). In this chapter, I will examine the three research objectives that *Living Through* It is constructed around.

First, I will outline the structural problems within Ontario's digital disciplinary domain. This section meets the research objective of **determining structural problems within Ontario's institutional communication technologies** in the following ways: expanding on the theoretical lenses of time, the matrix of domination, and the disciplinary domain, and how these theories are referenced in livingthroughit.com; defining technologies of stratification— a term that describes the virtual systems that administer, quantify, and assign monetary value to disability as a socio-political identity in Ontario; and analyzing how specific examples of digital bureaucracy in Ontario are punitive and perpetuate structural violence. Next, I will **analyze examples of Ontario's technologies of stratification by using autoethnographic and immersive research-creation methodologies** by taking personal case studies and experiences narrated on livingthroughit.com to apply theoretical frame works and explain how structural violence materially impacts my life. I will close off this chapter by **proposing recommendations for the problems diagnosed in Ontario's technologies of stratification**. While these recommendations can only help problems within my immediate gaze, they do not pretend to

be definitive solutions, but serve as a means of beginning dialogue in the interpersonal domain.

Research Objective Analysis

Objective One: Identifying Problems

A Note on Space

Space is not within the scope of this thesis paper, but it is a factor worth gesturing towards, especially when thinking about the fabrication of livingthroughit.com. Recreating a digital space is an intentional choice to illustrate an immediate experience of my crip temporality. The digital space is an inevitability in the age of 2026. This space is important for thinking about "a 'queer' adjustment in the way in which we think about time" because queering and cripping time "requires and produces new conceptions of space." (Halberstam, 2005, p. 6). I theorize that new conceptions of space need to include digital spaces like computer screens and video games to embody the new temporal frameworks we all inhabit. In a world of social acceleration (Rosa, 2013), the world as you know it can literally disappear from beneath your feet without warning. This facet will be discussed in the next subsection about time. However, I feel there is worth in thinking about the digital space and how this type of cultural space influences the thesis.

Disabled and trans* individuals have their own cultures, especially online. Commenting on disabled experience and the crip methodology of virtual ethnography, Emily Lim Rogers notes that "virtual worlds are of particular importance to disabled and chronically ill communities, for whom public, physical space is often inaccessible" (2023, p. 93). When minorities like disabled and trans* individuals leave their curated online cultures and engage with the power structures embedded into everyday systems that are institutionalized (patient portals, federal tax systems, ODSP applications, EI applications), there is a startling way state systems are disconnected from embodied human reality. This

disconnection can be theorized when thinking about the ways that information travels from one digital space to another.

Digital systems codify assumptions, privileges, and oppressive classifications. These digital systems are violent in their construction, and in the way these systems analyze data. Ruha Benjamin analyzes race in relation to technology and social science to theorize "the New Jim Code." This phenomenon describes the emergence of "new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequities but [are] promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory systems of a previous era" (Benjamin, 2019, p. 3). Although this project does not centre around a racialized identity, we can extract the core of "the New Jim Code" and apply it across medical and disability-adjacent administrative technology. Cultural coding is entangled within the technical coding of software programs and user interfaces of all sorts (Benjamin, 2019, p. 5). Designers and writers following institutional protocols create communications like patient portals for Ontario's healthcare settings from an undiscerning, hegemonic gaze. The assumptions made towards "normalcy" results in final technologies that are inaccessible to the most prominent system user. After all, marginalized groups access healthcare the most; people with physical, psychological, or cognitive disabilities, seniors, refugees and immigrants, and those living in poverty are the groups which need the most medical attention. Yet these perspectives are erased from digital spaces within Ontario's institutions.

There is also a lack of fixed location in digital spaces which interpret reductive and structurally violent ideas and reproduce said ideas. When it comes to digital spaces, "meanings float in probabilistic clouds between systems, only becoming fixed when a specific system takes a specific perspective on the cloud (an event), thus assigning attention for a particular time to a particular array of sign-signified relations. Interactions always take place between the cloud and a situated system, rather than directly between systems. This uncertain, intermediary space is what we need to observe: it is the complete and encompassing sign-system, all the possible connotations and denotations between signifier

and signified" (Pond, 2020, p. 220). While these current spaces replicate structural violence, they are also spaces which represent possibility and change. Queering and cripping these spaces can reorient temporalities as well.

Time

In the postmodern age I live within, time is experienced in a particular fashion. Under the power of neoliberal capitalist social order, **time is a commodity** (Kitchin, 2023). Neoliberal capitalism renders time as a commodified resource in which we exchange time for the money we need to survive. **Time is simultaneous** because of advancements in technology and the ways in which information is delivered on our screens. Time is also experienced through a temporal movement of **acceleration** due to time-space compression and the increasing speed of technological advancements (Rogers, et al, 2013) (Kitchin, 2023). Chrononormativity is a concept fashioned in relation to these experiences of time, as commodified time justifies chrononormativity as a societal expectation. Simultaneity intensifies chrononormativity by altering consciousness through manipulations of speed and quantity. Acceleration compounds chrononormative expectations as standards of labour, family, and other performances are frequently rendered incongruous with the material conditions of the present. All these points will be expanded upon in the paragraphs to come, but for now, I will analyze how each of the three elements (time as a commodity, time being simultaneous, and time accelerating) come to inform livingthroughit.com.

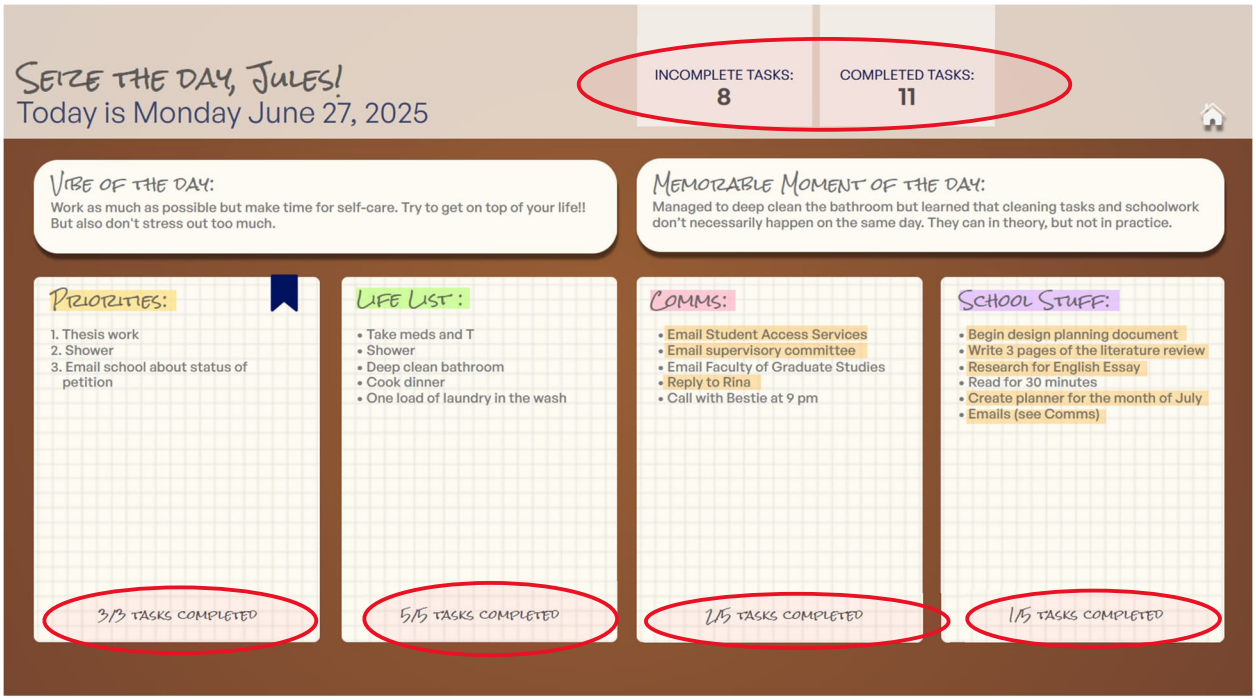


Image 1: *Screenshot from livingthoughit.com with quantification of productivity emphasized in red*

Time as a Commodity. Design choices made in livingthroughit.com demonstrate how neoliberal capitalist social order renders time as a commodity first through its honest portrayal of life in academia. Productivity is a quantifiable resource in the creative web narrative that I have authored. For example, in the Planner App, every day the reader is confronted with the number of completed tasks I have done. Right along side that figure is the number of tasks that have not been completed in a day, in addition to running tallies of complete tasks fixed at the bottom of each planner category (**Image 1**). As the narrative progresses, I can complete progressively less schoolwork. I am continually falling behind with no chance to catch up. The way tasks pile up in the narrative and are displayed through my app designs repeatedly highlight deficits in productivity. I even highlighted unfinished tasks in orange to bring more attention to incomplete tasks. All these subtle choices are intentional, reflecting how neoliberal capitalist society repeatedly emphasizes deficits in productivity, and the ways in which you have wasted time and therefore capital.

Another way time is viewed as a commodity is through the subtle mention of an academic petition. This small narrative fragment speaks to the way disabled workers and students are not usually able to keep up with the chrononormative expectation of pace and productivity. As a punishment for this divergence, students like me are docked pay, are threatened with removed from our programs, and expected to do extra work to produce successful petition paperwork, all while having less energy to give than a chrononormative student who is already adhering to the school's institutional standards. In livingthroughit.com, there is always something stressful being added to the calendar, directly correlating the bureaucratic work it takes to be disabled and participate in society. The reader is taxed energy through the immersive perspective created by the medium of the narrative. I hope that, through the choices I have made, readers can see how disabled students like me must work harder with less capacity to give, and that when time is a commodity, crip bodies are always at deficit in one way or another.

Time and Simultaneity. Due to advances in media and communication technologies, "we [as a globalized species] are transiting to a new normative temporal regime that is defined by speed, connectivity, flexibility, and radical time-space compression" (Kitchin, 2023, p. 37) (Hassan, 2009). These factors impact the former horizontal configuration of the linear past-present-future model of temporality. As media and communication technologies exponentially collapse locational boundaries, the present becomes multiple. In other words, through the glass of a screen, one can live through multiple presents at once. We are longer limited to our embodied consciousness. Instead, we can make countless online alter egos or personas, watch the collapse of countries oceans over in real time with commentary, or form parasocial relationships with influencers and celebrities on social media. These examples are not exhaustive, but they demonstrate the idea of multiple presents colliding. This multiplicity creates an existential sense of unstable immediacy that renders us less able to conceptualize the future.

I illustrate these concepts of simultaneity in various ways throughout livingthroughit.com to reflect these theoretical frameworks. One large way my project illustrates simultaneity lies in my deliberate choice in using a skeuomorphic replication of a computer OS as the medium to deliver the story of livingthroughit.com. This decision started with a desire to convey how, in the digital world I am consumed by, I am always overwhelmed to some degree. What I called the "overwhelm" was a feeling produced by intense simultaneity. On the home screen page of each day, along with other communication-centred apps like the planner and email hub, information and visual clutter accumulate rapidly— sticky notes swallow the home wallpaper whole. Tasks stack and multiply in the planner. Hundreds of message notifications and unread emails sit unable to be deleted from the page. These simultaneous echoes of information speak to the idea I posed earlier of multiple presents colliding and unstable immediacy. Another key example I want to expand upon more are the global news reports that unrelentingly deliver horrible captions every single day. Simultaneousness can also be seen as I create a space on the screen where digital and political systems interact simultaneously to create a new, hybrid threshold of communication. While news outlets and social media are researched places that hybridize the digital and the political (Pond, 2020), I add some new to the conversation by gesturing towards spaces where digital technologies administer socio-political programs, literal government initiatives that poorly fabricate digital spaces to serve a bureaucratic, administrative, and political purpose.

Time and Acceleration. Sociological research has distinguished present experiences of time as accelerating. While the social sciences historically struggled to clarify and unify the meaning of acceleration, Hartmut Rosa created a framework for social acceleration (2013). This framework defines the axes of acceleration as categorized by different forms, namely technical acceleration, the acceleration of social change, and the acceleration of the pace of life (Rosa, 2013). Technical acceleration, the most blatant form acceleration and the form which concerns this thesis the most, "is the intentional, technical,

and [machine-based] acceleration of goal-directed processes" with examples spanning across processes of "transportation, communication, and [the production of goods and services]" (Rosa, 2013, p. 71). Rosa points to an "increase in average speeds" that are indicative of what is known in human geography and other interdisciplinary fields as time-space compression (2013, p. 72) (Rogers, et al., 2013). Time-space compression and technical acceleration are entangled with advances in all forms of technology, as these technical temporalities accelerate embodied the pace of life. Due to technology creating a sense of chronic simultaneousness, and subsequently a chronic feeling of being overwhelmed, human beings are experiences a "scarcity of time resources, which means that the increase of the quantity of actions exceeds the technical enhancement of the speed of performance" (Rosa, 2013, p. 79). This scarcity of time resources is critical to the emotional experience created in livingthroughit.com.

There are some positives to the ways in which acceleration is portrayed in the narrative of livingthroughit.com. Whenever the protagonist (me) needs to speak with bestie, there is an immediate outlet for me to unload my thoughts, anxieties, and to facilitate connection with a trusted confidant. However, the ways in which acceleration conflict with my crip sense of time are even more essential to the story I tell. The movement of the narrative makes information, tasks, notifications, and other essential responsibilities pile up without mercy. This onslaught of overwhelming simultaneity and scarcity of resources is what "infects" the narrative and makes the interface lose all control. There is no clear reason for why I fall behind in the narrative. Progress is quantifiable and happens almost everyday. Yet the pace of digital life combined with a fluctuating and increasing deficit of time resources innate to disabled temporalities results in a total loss of control and cohesion. In other words, normative time exists in extreme conflict with crip time. This conflict translates into punitive measures enacted by institutions that disabled individuals rely on.

Punishing Crip Time Under Capitalism. Moving on crip time is a punishable offence when it comes to how Ontario fabricates institutions that quantify, administer, and classify disability. There is an expectation created by institutions like the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) that mandate strict compliance to operations which largely revolve around time. Chronormativity is the expectation made in all systems constructed by Ontario neoliberal, capitalist social order. The expectation for normativity extends into systems where normative expectations are categorically impossible for stakeholders to adhere to. Disabled populations cannot simply remove barriers that render their temporalities moving on crip time. For the vast majority of those on crip time, disability is a fixed pillar that interjects their temporal movement. The only option within crip possibility is to move around the pillar, given that barriers are immovable obstacles that cannot be offset by money or power or status. The expectation for crip individuals to move according to chrononormative expectations is unreasonable. Still, timelines are fixed and views are narrow when it comes to disability categorization within systems of bureaucracy. The punishment for this inevitable incongruence between institutional standards and crip bodyminds is the denial of life.

In most circumstances, neoliberal and capitalist social order does not let the crip bodymind thrive. Most of the time, the best-case scenario is unstable survival living on government mandated poverty wages and, if we are lucky, spotty employment from a part-time job. Again, this is a more favourable outcome as those granted the privilege of bare-minimum survival are the population that were able to adhere to chrononormative institutional expectations. In other words, these populations were deemed "disabled enough." Definitions of disability depend on the institution/system one interacts with. According to the Canada Revenue Agency, disability is when one or more conditions one is inflicted with impacts one's ability to function *at all* or takes three times longer than "someone of similar age without the impairment, even with the use of appropriate therapy, medication, and devices" to perform (Canada Revenue Agency, 2025). To be eligible for

ODSP, you must meet the criteria of the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, which is when:

- [you have] a substantial mental or physical impairment that is continuous or recurrent, and is expected to last one year or more
- the direct and cumulative effect of [your] impairment results in a substantial restriction in your ability to work, care for yourself, or take part in community life
- [your] impairment, its likely duration, and restrictions have been verified by an approved health care professional

(Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 1997).

The CRA and ODSP have their own caricaturized of what exactly disability is. To be considered a body worthy of financing, crip individuals must exactly meet these unrealistic standards, leaving disabled bodies no choice but to perform disability correctly. There is no other choice. Able-bodied individuals are given the illusion of choice when it comes to day-to-day survival. The illusion of choice comes in deciding to either work at least one full-time job, or to starve and die. But if you are disabled, unable to work, and restricted in options for survival, the two options become about the speed in which you starve and die: slowly or quickly. If this "choice" can be defined as anything punitive, I am afraid you would be wrong.

Administering Violence through Technologies of Stratification*.* To begin this section, I want to reassert the importance of Critical Theory and the idea that the school of thought is built off the foundational "claim that needless suffering ought not to exist" and "that such suffering is produced in a systemic way because of the way that we have organized ourselves" (Shuster, 2024, p. 10). Looking back at Galtung's "Image of Social Order", there is an obvious problem with the way institutions order, replicate, and reproduce stratified power relations. Suffering is inevitable when working with a stratified model of authority. Systemic oppression and hegemony are foundational to systems of bureaucracy

within Ontario's healthcare systems. The technologies which are frontline tools in accessing all forms of medical care, what I call **technologies of stratification**, disregard marginalized perspectives. Even though the largest stakeholders for technologies of stratification are people with physical, psychological, or cognitive disabilities, seniors, refugees and immigrants, and those living in poverty, these communities are actively oppressed by the communication technologies they rely on as a frontline portal to accessing care.

To situate why and how I formulate the term **technologies of stratification**, I turn to examining the context in which I define stratification. Stratification is a term that originates from the writings of scholars such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim (Andersen, 2011). The term has transformed into its own field of study called social stratification, defined as "the allocation of individuals and groups according to various social hierarchies of differing power, status, or prestige" and, in the context which I use the term, emphasizes stratification resulting from socioeconomic inequalities (Andersen, 2011, para. 1). Technologies of stratification are critical to management of the disciplinary domain because they "administer and manage oppression through bureaucracy and hierarchy, rather than through laws that explicitly encode inequality on the basis of someone's identity" (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, "The Power Chapter", para. 12). Technologies of stratification replicate social hierarchies and power structures in multiple senses. These technologies of stratification firstly replicate the biases and oversights of their creators. Also, technologies of stratification are situated as entry-level barriers which disallow access to systems of care without categorization in exchange. These are two ways social stratification is replicated through the process of data collection and systemic categorization.

I can illustrate these two elements of structural violence inherent to technologies of stratification by articulating explicit barriers that disallow me from accessing services I need without being entirely legally classifiable. To quickly exemplify this idea, I point out that I cannot get bloodwork (I task I do at least 7-8 times a year) done without divulging my dead

name and birth sex to total strangers. These strangers almost always refer to me as the identities on my documents unless I have the energy to explicitly demand otherwise. Often, I must exert even more energy to placate performative guilt or conversations about how difficult political correctness is for whatever reason. Often, structural violence occurs because an administrator is excusing their biases based on adherence to hegemonic assumptions, or orders dictated from an actor placed higher than the administrator on the chain of command. This point is abundantly clear when thinking about the power that data holds in the disciplinary domain, and how classification systems administer oppression.

Technologies of stratification are first and foremost about data collection. This collection of data serves to power the disciplinary domain's reliance on classification systems to administer oppression. A classification system is "a spatial, temporal, or spatio-temporal segmentation of the word" that collects information to quantify the human experience and subsequently organize that information into "a set of boxes (metaphorical or literal) [so the information] can be put to then do some kind of work" (Bowker & Star, 1999, p. 10). The work done by classification systems is largely for bureaucratic purposes or for knowledge production (Bowker & Star, 1999, p. 10). In a bureaucratic context especially, classification systems are used as "tools of power" to "dominate, discipline, and exclude" nonnormative bodyminds (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, "What Gets Counted Counts," para. 50). For example, the main purpose of an ODSP initial application is to gather information about who is seeking support and data that supports their case for why they are in need. The technology of stratification is the entry-point to the larger bureaucratic process which gathers and delivers data to administrative actors. This technology is essentially the foundation in which applicants are judged upon and discriminated against.

These frontline technologies replicate the assumptions, biases, and oversights of their creators and the systems they uphold and maintain. As Hill Collins points out, while "laws may change, the organizations that they regulate rarely change as quickly" (1990, p. 355). Under neoliberal political regulation, intersecting oppressions are organized by law but

managed and administered by institutions through their unregulated internal methods of bureaucracy. While social reform and related discussions occur in parliament, these conversations and their conclusions remain within the walls of political discourse. The ramification of this stagnation is that change does not reach the everyday individual; instead, the changes rot on a legal document. Classification systems reproduce structurally violent assumptions and perpetuate harm by upholding ideas that dominate, discipline, and exclude non-normative bodies.

Objective Two: Autotheory Analysis

What does a Technology of Stratification Look and Feel Like?

This subsection leads with a question: what does a technology so void of care as a technology of stratification look like? Relatedly, what does this technology *feel* like? I've included figures that can roughly show you the answer, yet these screenshots don't fully convey the experience of using the technologies. That is where autotheory becomes a useful methodology for putting forward the *feeling* of using a technology that was so clearly created with apathy. In my experience navigating Ontario's healthcare system frequently since 2013, I observe how inequity is coded into the banalities of the medical system. While my experiences are limited to my personal perspective, there are theoretically informed observations and critiques of power to be learned from my everyday experiences of structural violence. The exemplary technology of stratification that appears in my creative narrative website and in this research paper is the patient portal system from Appletree Medical Group. Appletree is the clinic where I receive primary care— the organization has offices across the Greater Toronto Area and in Ottawa. Examining their technologies of stratification paints a vivid picture of the state of political apathy in neoliberal capitalist social order. This political apathy is the biggest challenge identified in the research and informs the recommendations formulated in this Discussion and Findings chapter.

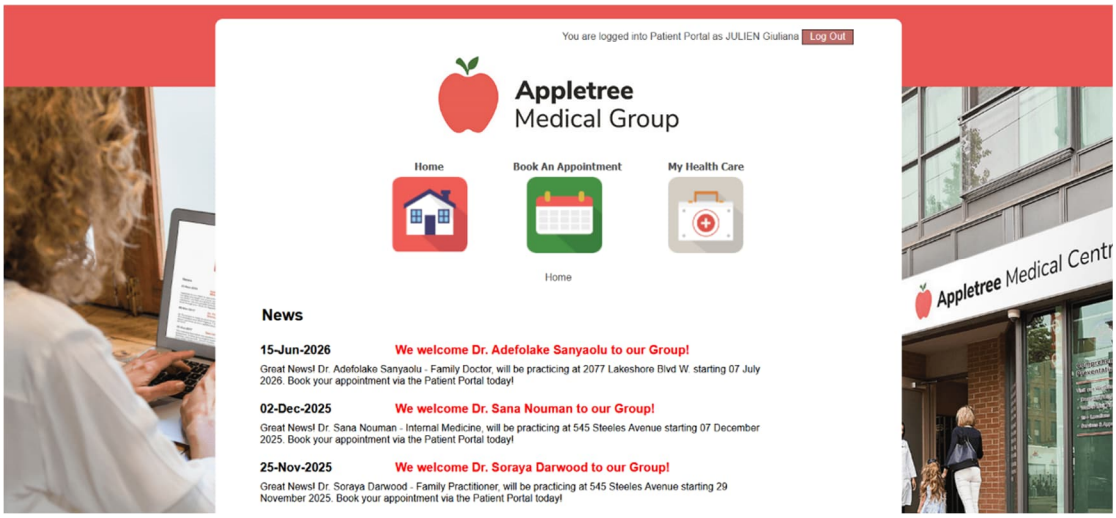


Image 2: *Appletree Patient Portal Welcome Page*

Apathy and the Appletree Patient Portal. I hate the doctor's office. I hate the fluorescent, tubular lightbulbs on the ceiling that never turn off. I hate the smell of disinfectant and iodine and printer ink. I hate the sound of the photocopier and muffled coughing and the hum of corporate lighting. I hate the putrid red accent wall that clashes with the grey-white-brown, armless chairs. I hate that the place is called Appletree (Aren't apples supposed to keep the doctor away?). What I probably hate the most, however, is the digital portal that precedes the sensory hellscape of being in that office. Portal is the right word for that technology. Portals rip a hole through reality just to take you to your destination, a transitory tear that will disappear without remorse or hesitation. The doctor's office is hell, and the Patient Portal is the reality-bending entry point to the aforementioned hell, a liminal tool with cruel intentions. I run the risk of sounding dramatic, describing an administrative software in this way. But I promise I'm not being *that* dramatic. Nothing ascribes more dread to me than apathy, and apathy is everywhere in the Appletree Patient Portal.

Referral Sent Notification for JULIEN Giuliana Quinto

Image 3: *Appletree Patient Portal email heading illustrating the way Appletree has constructed my name.*

As soon as you log into the website, you are greeted with a busy, poorly constructed, and overstimulating home page (see **Image 2**). There is a screeching JPEG of the Appletree Medical Centre logo, and below it, there are three options—kerned slightly off centre—to choose from: Home, Book an Appointment, and My Health Care. It always irked me that healthcare is spelled as two words in a title case. I'm not an excellent proofreader, but I am certain that healthcare is one word. Anyways, below these three subportals to the joys of Appletree Medical Centre the homepage is displayed, and all the information on that home pages consists only of "News." "News" is a loosely used term at Appletree, because every update is a copy and paste of the previous one, only including different dates, a different doctor's name, and their respective locations. The format is as follows: *Great News! Dr. XYZ – Practice of Doctor, will be practicing at ADDRESS starting on DATE. Book your appointment via the Patient Portal today!* (see **Image 2**). Another apathetic hex against me and my house is the way Appletree writes my name. Printed across every form, prescription, requisition, email, and portal I encounter at my doctor's office is my legal name (which I have not yet been able to change). My clinic knows I am transgender, and their response to this "problem" has been to add my chosen name in all capital letters, tacked unceremoniously to the beginning of the name I have outgrown JULIEN G******* Quinto (see **Image 3**).

These are just some of the countless examples in which I could pinpoint the lack of care put into technologies of stratification. The point I want to dig into, though, is that this lack of care, this fundamental shittiness, is a result of political apathy. Apathy is a theoretical term used across disciplines to describe conditions of mass society. The notion I want to lean into is one of political apathy, which can be defined as the societal condition where "in many industrial societies, [citizens] become disengaged from public space"

thereby causing a lack of participation in the collective decision-making which upholds democracy itself (Badie et al., 2011, para. 6). What that means about neoliberal capitalist social order is that political apathy functions "as an institutional reality that defines politics" (Antadze, 2018, para. 2). Political apathy relates to disabled and queer bodies due to these bodies being unwillingly politicized and impacted by cultural attitudes, laws and policies, and institutional bureaucracy. To explain this concept a bit further, I can draw from my own experiences as they are the foundation of my knowledge.

I know about political apathy because I have experienced it in many forms across fourteen years of medical experiences in Ontario. Some instances include: having my chronic pain handwaved away as an acute experience, every time, despite injuries reoccurring and flaring up constantly; wading through an emergency room in a mental health crisis, waiting for several hours to be seen by a doctor, only to be sent home with a referral letter and a note for work; or being told to lose weight as a solution for every single one of my health problems, even the health problems which have been present since time immemorial. These experiences all have apathy in common, and I know why apathy is present in all these scenarios. My body is politicized in a cultural context that is apathetic towards politics. I am too big, too crip, too crazy, too slow for the chrononormative world I live in. Either that, or I'm not enough of any one of these things at the same time. Or maybe I'm both all at once. While some individuals aren't aware these categorizations are political, they absolutely are. My body depends on laws, policies, organizations, and institutions to exist visibly. In some cases, to survive. I also don't have the luxury of hiding all my deviancies from the public sphere. As I said in the introduction chapter, the surfaces of my body are marked by deviance. When bodies are politicized, especially like mine, we must turn towards the question *does political apathy correlate to apathy towards politicized bodies?* In a Canadian context, other theorists before me find the answer to this question is "yes".

In a groundbreaking book on disability in Canada, Michael John Prince reviewed a study on cultural attitudes towards disability in Canada (2009). The quick summary of the results of that study concluded that "the prevailing sentiment in Canada on disability is one of ambivalence, with an odd mixture of positive and negative attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, experiences, and behaviours" (Prince, 2009, p. 48). The ambivalence is not born out of ignorance alone, but of additional dissonant realities, conflict and contradiction. In one breath, "most Canadians hold an affirmative image of their own views towards, and experiences with, people with disabilities; and they believe progress has occurred over the last decade in the inclusion of people with disabilities in community life." (Prince, 2009, p. 31). Yet, in the very next thought, Canadians contradicted their beliefs that social conditions have improved for disabled bodies by stating they also believed "that discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards people with disabilities are still widespread" (Prince, 2009, p. 32). As iterated in the book, lending itself to the title of the chapter, "the resulting public opinion environment [of Canadians towards disability] is one of pride and prejudice. This ambivalence is complex and contradictory" and "undoubtedly challenging" (Prince, 2009, p. 32). One of the challenges I see needing to be overcome is the tendency for institutional decisions made by governments and organizations to be based on assumptions informed by performativity (Lemke, 2015, p. 7) (Butler, 1990) (Foucault, 1990).

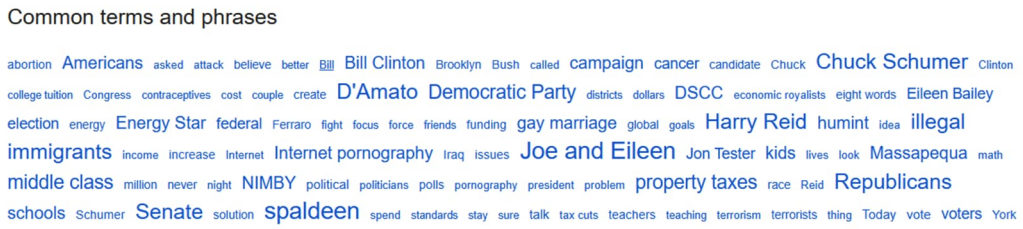


Image 4: *Screenshot of common terms and phrases from Chuck Shumer's book,* Positively American*, on Google Books. One of the most common terms is Joe and Eileen (Bailey).*

Being foundationally guided by the *idea* of a person is an alarming reality among high strata actors within neoliberal social order. The example which I feel best exemplifies this neoliberal audacity is that of Chuck Schumer's imaginary friends, Joe and Eileen Bailey. Chuck Schumer is the current Senate minority leader, and the previous two-time Senate majority leader, of the United States Democratic Party. In essence, he is the chief spokesperson of neoliberalism in the United States. On his own admission, Schumer's politics are guided by "a fictional middle-class couple from Long Island," "an amalgam of what Schumer sees as abiding middle-class values and present concerns" (Ireland, 2007, para. 9 and para. 11). Schumer wrote pages in his book *Positively American: Winning Back the Middle-Class Majority One Family at a Time* about who the Bailey's are and how much they guide his politics. In fact, The Bailey's are one of the most common topics in this book according to Google Books (see **Image 4**). However, the last thing Schumer says after four pages illustrating a written portrait of about the Bailey's is what matters the most in my opinion. This part Schumer's normative construction speaks to political apathy and contradiction. Schumer writes:

> Over the years [the Baileys] have both benefited from the government and been frustrated by it. They support government when they feel it supports them, which isn't often. They don't mind the government's help, but they hate it when politicians condescend them. They're proud of what they've done and what they've accomplished, and they don't need the government to treat them like baskets cases. Most of the time, it seems to them that the government's focused on someone else— the very poor or the very rich. So, most of the time, they tune government out. (Schumer, 2007, p. 29)

Remember, Schumer is the spokesperson for the neoliberal social order. By his own admission, Schumer reveals a relatable, everyday truth at the end of his lengthy tirade on normalcy. This career politician admits that contradictory, unstable political beliefs and political apathy are what describe the average voting public; it's what describes how most

middle-class citizens feel towards matters outside of their front door (Eliasoph, 1998). Here is where the conversation about disability in Ontario comes back into my analysis.

Politicized crip and trans bodies are Othered, the "someone else" that Schumer describes in the quote from his book that governments are always more concerned with than the everyday Joe and Eileen. Even though a body can be disabled at any time, through any means, disability is viewed narrowly by the normative individual clouded, by ideas founded on assumptions over realities. As noted by Prince in his research on attitudes towards disability in Canadian mass society, "Canadians are also inclined to think of disability in terms of a specific image: visible physical disabilities rather than mental health, developmental, and learning disabilities" (2009, p. 32). Symbolic cultural representations of queer bodies are another common example of actors believing experiences based on assumptions, the belief that queer has a "look" as a materialization of cultural normativity and power (Butler, 2011). There is a tendency for unaware people to make bold assumptions about lives they've never lived by deciding what they think that lived experience must be like and then calling themselves an empath for believing that assumption. (There's a meme about this. See **Image 6**). These types of assumptive decisions and logical flaws are a common human foible I've observed repeatedly in human history over my time studying the humanities. A few crude examples include armchair anthropology (Geertz, 2000), phrenology (Poskett, 2019), and Freudian/Jungian psychoanalysis (Kennedy, 2014). All these frameworks were once as much of a science as chiropractic care and psychotherapy is today. We believed these ideologies to be factual because we didn't have the evidence of what things truly *were*, as put by D'Ignazio and Klein, to disprove their objective claims. Due to political apathy, evidence was not sought out, and materialized beliefs were not challenged on the everyday level.

There are many challenges that can be identified in the state of political apathy, challenges like the scale of change, the felt meaninglessness in the state of democracy, the disimagination (Giroux, 2013) of mass populations, and the consequences of temporal

acceleration. These challenges extend beyond the borders of technologies of stratification but are well exemplified by technologies of stratification too. Healthcare systems are not the only places which are impacted by the challenges of political apathy. Apathy and systemic barriers towards disabled bodyminds are often seen in performance fields like theatre, fine arts, and especially in academia. When talking about creation practices in their book of essays, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*, Leah Laskshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha states that, when creating for normative entities like academic institutions, "the focus was almost always on creating the work of Art, in a vacuum. Almost no attention was paid to the audience, the performance space, the container, and the community for the art being as important as the art itself, and not separable from the art" (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2022, p. 149-50). This observation is well translated into the examination of Ontario's technologies of stratification, especially in the example I give of the Appletree Patient Portal.

Designers and writers following institutional protocols create digital media/mass communications for Ontario's healthcare infrastructures from an undiscerning, hegemonic gaze. These privileged actors' "lack of lived experience—this evidence of how things truly *are*—profoundly limits their ability to foresee and prevent harm, to identify existing problems in the world, and to imagine possible solutions" (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020, "The Power Chapter," para. 20). The assumptions made towards normativity is entangled with political apathy, and results in final technologies that are inaccessible to the most prominent system users. After all, marginalized groups access healthcare the most; people with physical, psychological, or cognitive disabilities, seniors, refugees and immigrants, and those living in poverty are the groups which access medical care the most frequently. Yet barriers like my issues with the Appletree Patient Portal, or the hostile temporalities of the Canada Revenue Agency's website, or the denial of disabled agency across institutions and policies still exist.

These problems could be described because of privilege hazard, "the phenomenon that makes those who occupy the most privileged positions among us—those with good

educations, respected credentials, and professional accolades—so poorly equipped to recognize instances of oppression in the world" (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020, "The Power Chapter," para. 20). There is no doubt in my mind, based on my experiences, that "no coder, tester, or user of the software had previously identified such a problem" that a crip or disabled user would encounter in the technology of stratification they helped create (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020, "The Power Chapter," para. 24). However, I have come to realize that these technologies of stratification are created under neoliberal intellectual circumstances. These circumstances create intellectual conditions which assume the end user of a technology of stratification is the idea of person, not an actual person who uses the technology and depends on the technology.



Image 5: *Data on file as displayed through the Appletree Patient Portal and related email communications. My gender is classified as "Other" and my legal name is always displayed.*

Maybe I'll keep all I've said in mind next time I must fill out my Appletree Triage Questionnaire, or see my legal name printed across every form, prescription, requisition, email, and portal I encounter, or even when I remember the doctor put my gender as "Other" in my Appletree personal information (see **Image 5**). When I am reduced to legible data to participate in a system that doesn't give a fuck about me, the system I am reliant on to live with less misery, I will write it off as assumptions made. And apathy. Apathy that results from a neoliberal social order which profits off the middle class being hyperindividual and in constant contradiction. Actually, maybe I won't think about all this. To think about these ideas would just be a reminder that, across the board, the world I'm surrounded by is not made for people like me. It feels like the political world I'm entangled with doesn't care how quickly or slowly I starve and die. It feels like *they* (the powers that be, the Big Captialist Hegemony, title case) don't give a fuck about people like me.

We could give a fuck, though. That's the entire idea pushing prefigurative politics along. I came across this term in a short essay contained within Leah Laskshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Care Work*, where they describe prefigurative politics as "a fancy term for the idea of imagining and building the world we want to see now" (2020, p. 149). Essentially, prefigurative politics is situated in the immediate present, and encourages thinkers to determine ways life can be better for more people, striving to "embody alternative forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, belief systems and direct experience" (Monticelli, 2022, p. 25). A good place to apply prefigurative politics is in digital communications. Technologies of stratification, with their flawed data collection and stratification, replicate the power structures that oppress crip bodyminds, among others. Yet "when [it is] thoughtfully collected, quantitative data can be empowering too." (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, "What's Counted Counts," para. 49). In fact, when classification is "undertaken deliberately, tailored to specific goals, and with issues of privacy and potential harms always in mind, counting can be used to support accountability—as one method, among many, of working toward a larger goal" (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, "What's Counted Counts," para. 49). The next subsection is about recommendations, places to enact prefigurative politics and be alchemical in our imaginations. My recommendations are only a place to start, a conversational tool to imagine a world better than "the best it can get" (Rossiter and Rinaldi, 2018).

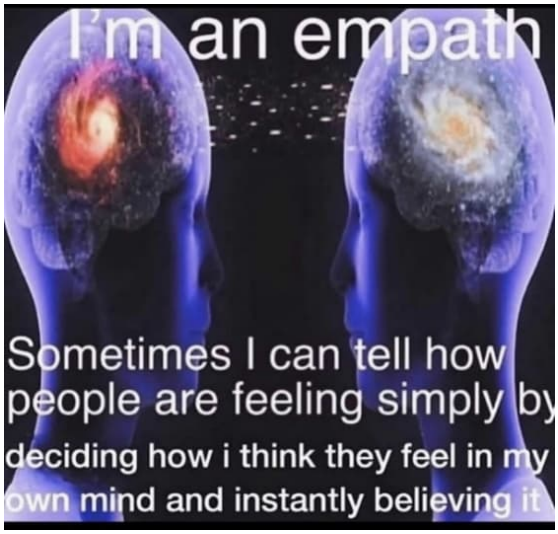


Image 6: *"I'm an empath" meme. Note. Found on @freud.intensifies post on Instagram, dated June 20, 2026, on slide one.*

Objective Three: Recommendations

After all this societal diagnostic work in this research paper, I need to start thinking about prefigurative politics again, about imagining ways society can be better *right now*. I know the problems which exist in society. I have named them clearly. I also have opinion-based reason to believe that we all know these problems intimately, problems that render the news a nightmare and the Canada Revenue Agency website impossible to navigate. The problems are abundant and clear, but there are no attainable solutions in sight. This lack of ability to see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel is likely because "so many issues of structural inequality are problems of scale, and they can seem anecdotal until they are viewed as a whole" (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, "What's Counted Counts," para. 49). My political order is the product of a "disciplinary state," a "fundamentally unequal society" that "forces us to be certain types of individuals" through a process of enforcing known as highway code— the rules that neoliberals enforce which dictate that "they don't care where you go, so long as you keep going, stay on the road, and obey the laws. But if we can't get off the highway, how free are we? When freedom is constricted and coerced, is it still freedom? And what happens to those who can't or won't stay on the highway and obey its

code?" (Wilson, 2017, p. 68). With Henry Giroux's theory of disimagination, he describes "the 'disimagination machine' [as] both a set of cultural apparatuses extending from schools and mainstream media to the new sites of screen culture, and a public pedagogy that functions primarily to undermine the ability of individuals to think critically, imagine the unimaginable, and engage in thoughtful and critical dialogue: put simply, to become critically informed citizens of the world" (Giroux, 2013) (Wilson, 2017, p. 71).

The internalized belief many of us garner from neoliberal social ontology is the catastrophic pessimism that makes us regard other "humans as fundamentally ignorant when it comes to understanding (let alone critiquing) the social totality—which, for neoliberals, is the spontaneous order of the market. Consequently, education and knowledge must be directed away from critical modes of knowing to focus on the process of training human capital, that is, entrepreneurial subjects who will follow 'the highway code' and live their lives as self-appreciating individuals" (Wilson, 2017, p. 71). Disimagination poses a large challenge in the face of transformational change, because it simultaneously dictates that we are getting the best we can get, and that we don't deserve anything better. In other words, disimagination is the antithesis of prefigurative politics.

The challenges of disimagination, especially when it comes to the prefigurative politics of imagining crip futures and creating digital accessibility, "aren't limited to organizations. They reflect broader global patterns[.] Not all countries have committed equally [to accessibility], and many that have [committed] still struggle to meet their obligations." (Cruse & Boudreau, et al., 2025, p. 50). Part of the problem is that these obligations are only obligatory on paper. Commitments to inclusivity, accommodation, equity, and futurity remain locked in the realm of law and policy. The disciplinary domain, consisting of the organizations and institutions which are the machinery who keep systems of social order running, prioritize "the highway code" and market demands over any obligations to minoritized groups. The "hollowed-out version of democracy" that neoliberalism offers means that "politics is no longer primarily a struggle over how best to

order society" (Wilson, 2017, p. 184). Instead, civic engagement "is primarily about growing 'market share' for a cause, campaign, or candidate, as the logics and practices of finance define the field of political action, citizenship, and activism" (Wilson, 2017, p. 184). With this model of politics upholding the Image of Social Order (Galtung, 1969) "the contours of collective life have already been decided for us" (Wilson, 2017, p. 184). I don't want to live in a word that decides for me. I don't think you do either. So how do we change this? Given that this paper is autoethnography, I am limited by my own personal time and space. I do not have all the answers. However, I can point to some places where we can start imagining a better world and transforming the institutions which impact a large portion of society.

In the context of this thesis and the scope of problems which I am looking at, the first step towards changing technologies of stratification to better serve the needs of disabled Ontarians is to refuse the notion that we must "take what we are given" when it comes to the systems we rely on. The first place I suggest we start is turning back to is the different domains in the matrix of domination and challenging how these domains focus their resources. When I talk about resources, I am specifically thinking about time, money, and attention. These resources exist across domains, but I think the interpersonal domain and the ways in which everyday people can engage with prefigurative politics hold the most potential for transformational change. On an everyday, non-structural level, I adhere to the personal choice of trying to see and find the good in people. I believe most people want a better world, if not for mass society, then at least for their loved ones. If we can dedicate some personal resources of time and energy/attention to having conversations that challenge dominant views and assumptions, and reveal contradictions, we would probably be better off. My hope in creating my creative narrative and continuing with the project long after this thesis is deposited in a database, is that the ideas and stories put forward can start a conversation over a cup of coffee, a kitchen table, in a park, on in the comment

section of an Instagram post. By generating conversations and asking questions, we can dedicate some of our taxed time and energy towards disallowing disimagination.

We must begin with small choices that effect digital spaces and impact agency. Once we stop unwaveringly accepting the technologies that institutions create to exhaust us, we can halt the gears of the disimagination machine and spark socio-cultural optimism. While systemic reconstruction may not be immediately achievable in the current milieu, fighting for bare-minimum choices like having your chosen name displayed on the queue tracker in the LifeLabs waiting room, or unsubscribing from the unapplicable triage questionnaire the doctor's office sends, is the first step towards dismantling the disimagination machine. Digital spaces seem to be a good place to start dismantling as well. There is a definite lag that I've observed in Ontario's technologies of stratification that contradicts the temporalities of digital culture we've come to expect. I went to the Ontario Supreme Court with my mom in February, and we were told these infrastructures' main mode of communication is via fax machine. Medical systems are in a relatively similar state in Ontario. It feels absurd that, in a world where we can deepfake porn, or get Instagram updates on a biweekly basis, or buy a smart fridge, the infrastructures that uphold our civic order are still using *fax*. This isn't a phenomenon unique to Ontario either— "according to the United Nations Disability and Development Report (2024), accessibility efforts, including in digital spaces, need to accelerate up to 65 times faster to meet global inclusion goals by 2030. This highlights an important reality: legal frameworks lay the groundwork for accessibility, but compliance alone does not guarantee an inclusive experience. Even in regions with strong laws, organizations must move beyond only meeting legal requirements and embrace their ethical responsibility to create meaningful, lasting change" (Cruse & Boudreau, et al., 2025, p. 50). While accelerating up to 65 times faster is a rather lofty goal, there are changes we can fight for that are so reasonable, so rooted in the everyday, that no politician or decision-maker could every deny them without being completely

unreasonable, and without simultaneously cracking the veneer of hollowed-out democracy that keeps our social order docile.

Making changes like having a flexible and standardized name-intake protocol for government forms, or pronoun selection features on institutional websites, or an updated document tracker on the CRA website would not only benefit queer and disabled communities. Sure, these communities are asking for the changes, and they would definitely benefit from them. But "laws and programs designed to benefit vulnerable groups, such as the disabled or people of color, often end up benefiting all of society" (Blackwell, 2017, tagline). Canadians do "not readily think about disability issues in terms of human rights" and a "serious test [that] faces the disability community and allied social groups" has long been in "finding language that resonates with the general population, builds an understanding of disability in societal terms, and portrays inclusion as nothing less than full citizenship" (Prince, 2009, p. 50). Having conversations about micro-level changes and the common frustrations across all levels of society leans into what Angela Glover Blackwell calls The Curb-Cut Effect. This term exists in reference to the 1972 public accommodation that occurred in Berkley, California to accommodate wheelchair users by building sloping, small ramps on the corners of street curbs. A small act of defiance, curb cuts became the standard in the decades that preceded the initial advocacy efforts in Berkley.

As Blackwell perfectly iterates, "when the wall of exclusion came down, everybody benefited—not only people in wheelchairs. Parents pushing strollers headed straight for curb cuts. So did workers pushing heavy carts, business travelers wheeling luggage, even runners and skateboarders. (Blackwell, 2017, para. 6). As Alice Wong has said time and time again in her works, disabled people are oracles. If we are fighting for accommodations, for the right to exist in public, for basic and fundamental technologies that don't solely benefit us, we are usually making life better for everyone. I think battling the tedium and minutia of technologies of stratification lends itself well to the idea of the curb-cut effect. In *The Right to Maim*, Jasbir Puar poses the question of "how do people who rely on accessing

significant resources within a political economic context […] disrupt the very models on which they depend?" (2017, p. 35). We can disrupt these models by refusing to accept whatever we are given. We can disrupt by cutting curbs and talking passionately. We can disrupt by having some faith in ourselves and less in our institutions. We can disrupt by daring to think about alternatives to apathy.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

What is wrong with me? I'm supposed to believe it's lots of things. I've got many diagnoses, and a body that does not work very well, and a gender that isn't normative. All that is true; but it's important for me to recognize that my penalties do not negate how I write this thesis from a place of privilege. I won a scholarship to write about my topic. I had easy, almost cost-free access to gender-affirming medical care. I am a fierce self advocate, with all the right axes working in my favour— I'm good with words, educated, English-speaking, and a Canadian citizen. I have spent my entire teen and adult life navigating the systems I rely on, to the point where helping others navigate these systems could be my new job. I have a nice place to live, fast wi-fi, a dual monitor computer setup, and a gaming laptop that runs Windows 11 and almost any video game I want to play. I eat three meals a day, have an Uber One subscription, a supportive family who takes care of me when I can't take care of myself, and a great personal health insurance package. None of this is taken for granted when I talk about the structural violence I observe and experience.

My masculinity and whiteness offer me advantages and opportunities to point out flaws within technologies of stratification, and for those observations to be accepted in the cultural narrative. This luck I have ties into the notion I came across that White transmasculine individuals contribute a great deal to recent academic conversations in trans* studies, and across related disciplines, as part of a cultural shift towards inclusivity (Puar, 2017, p. 42). I think this is about one-quarter a good thing for academia. The larger part of my feelings lies in the fact that there are complications to the praise of white transmasculine individuals and transmen. I came across an Instagram post last week that called me out in a transformative way. In my academic life, it can feel like I am always looking up at all the individuals who are better off than me. I often use the success and ability of others to validate my anxieties about not telling my story the right way. Yet, when I take a step back, I realize that another immense privilege I have is having the time,

monetary resources, energy, and technical skills to tell my story at all, let alone in the exact way that I want.

Alison Kafer's political/relational model of disability encourages questions that Jim Swan also asks in his works, questions such as "Who has access to care? How good is said care? Do patients get choices?" (Kafer, 2013) (Swan, 2002). In my work, I deepen these questions by specifically asking of my recommendations, in relation to my immense privilege: if my experiences with technologies of stratification are quite terrible, how much worse could it be for others with less privilege than myself? I know I am not positioned or capable of fixing every problem that structurally exists. However, I am a legibly White, transmasculine academic. I can't say I have the worst penalties in society, nor do I want to. What I want to do is start conversations given the fact that I have others listening to me. I am positioned with my work and identity politics to say something that matters and have others listen. Not everyone gets to be a storyteller, or mentioned a news article, or even named an obituary. While I'm winning SSHRC scholarships for talking about being a trans guy reduced to data points, a Jane Doe was found killed in a Toronto parking garage without any legible data to identify her body (see **Image 7.** Also please keep an eye on this story. I hope this Jane Doe can be identified).

Sometimes data is all we have. Sometimes quantification of human experience is a portal to accessibility, crip futures, and queer futures. The problems I want to use my privileges to identify are not with temporalities or data analysis— the problem is apathy and ambivalence. My research sits at the root of a problem that has grown to affect a larger majority of the Ontario population. These violent conditions "are not demonic instantiations of pure evil; they are rather human possibilities, actualized by human subjects acting for a great variety of reasons. And crucially these possibilities could have been avoided: humans could have organized themselves differently. That such kinds of suffering continue to exist makes critical theory still relevant. We still can organize ourselves differently." (Shuster, 2024, p. 10). Organizing ourselves differently means refusing apathy, refusing the idea that

every crumb we are given by the powers that be is “as good as it’s going to get.” Organizing ourselves differently means being disobedient and talking back.



Image 7: *The post that made me think about my privilege very deeply.* Note. *Artwork by Richie @baddgutz in an Instagram post on June 12, 2026. I encourage readers to view his post and read the caption especially. Reproduced and referenced with the artist’s consent.*

bell hooks takes the language of her southern Black community and reclaims the phrase of “talking back” with this decolonial framework. To “talk back” was an act that warranted the threat of punishment in hooks’ childhood, for daring to speak “as an equal to an authority figure” when the language was of disagreement or simply “having an opinion” (1989, p. 5). hooks extrapolates and theorizes talking back as “any oppressed, colonized group who endeavours to speak… not solely [as] an expression of creative power [but] an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless” (1989, p. 8). It is my mission to talk back to the systems that disable me and my spiritual siblings as the socio-political climate gets bleak for the most disempowered of us. I hope to use my privileges to lend this work into disallowing disimagination. I want to expand the definition of “close to home” and start conversations that can be understood by the average reader.

I have ideas about how I could make my work more than what it is. I could add more applications to illustrate the same concepts of time I described in **Chapter 4**. I could better home in on elements of the theories about time in my autotheory and autoethnography. I could create examples of these concepts with multi-sensory experiences like video media, an interactive pill tracker application, and a document app with links to extended readings and articles. An idea inspired by the work of Casey Mecija, my lead supervisor, is to include sound and sonic elements like voice notes, autoplaying music, and notification haptics. I badly want to add more interactive content to the Messages app and emails on livingthroughit.com to enrich the world-building and touch on more topics like financial realities. I could leave room for communication between the author and readers to further facilitate conversations and pick up momentum that leads to more possibility for transformational change. There could be a post-read survey and feedback box, a way to find other people who have read. These are all things I wanted to do with this project, but I simply couldn't this time around. However, that means my topic is alive. These ideas mean I have more to say. I will keep playing with *Living Through It* long after this thesis is over. I hope to continue the story as time inevitably progresses and my experiences grow and adapt, molded by changes that other people are going through at the same time. I wish I could have done all these things, but my crip temporalities are incongruent with the velocity of my ideas. Besides, my work needs to be done quickly and to specification.

My work has been described by a supervisor as urgent. This idea shocked me at first, but then I thought about it and realized why that statement might be true. There is a right-wing shift in the political atmosphere. Republicans hold the presidential seat, the senate, and the house of representatives (Cabral & Yousif, 2024). Pierre Pollievre was polling at 44.8% of all Canadian federal polls, holding a majority of popular votes to be Canada's next Prime Minister until January 20, 2025 (Grenier, 2025). Violence is escalating against trans* people, and this violence is a direct result of right-wing scapegoating which dehumanizes trans* individuals. Trans* individuals are having their legal documents revoked and sex

markers changed without their consent, their affirming documents sent back to them shredded (Swaminathan, 2025; Jersey Noah, 2025). Trans* health and terminology is being erased from the CDC website (Sun, Keating, & Nirappil, 2025). Pronouns are banned on internal email signatures within the USA's federal government (Hajela, 2025). Sam Nordquist was brutally murdered, and the authorities won't even deem his death a hate-crime (Jones, 2025). This work takes shape because *Living Through It* "is writing/that shapes itself around questions/of need […] because/why the fuck else would I be writing?" (Khúc, 2023, p. 30). *Living Through It* is a direct response to a need that I see within my environment. Research-creation enables me to share truths with those who want to listen in a way that is relatable, irreverent, and most importantly, sharable.

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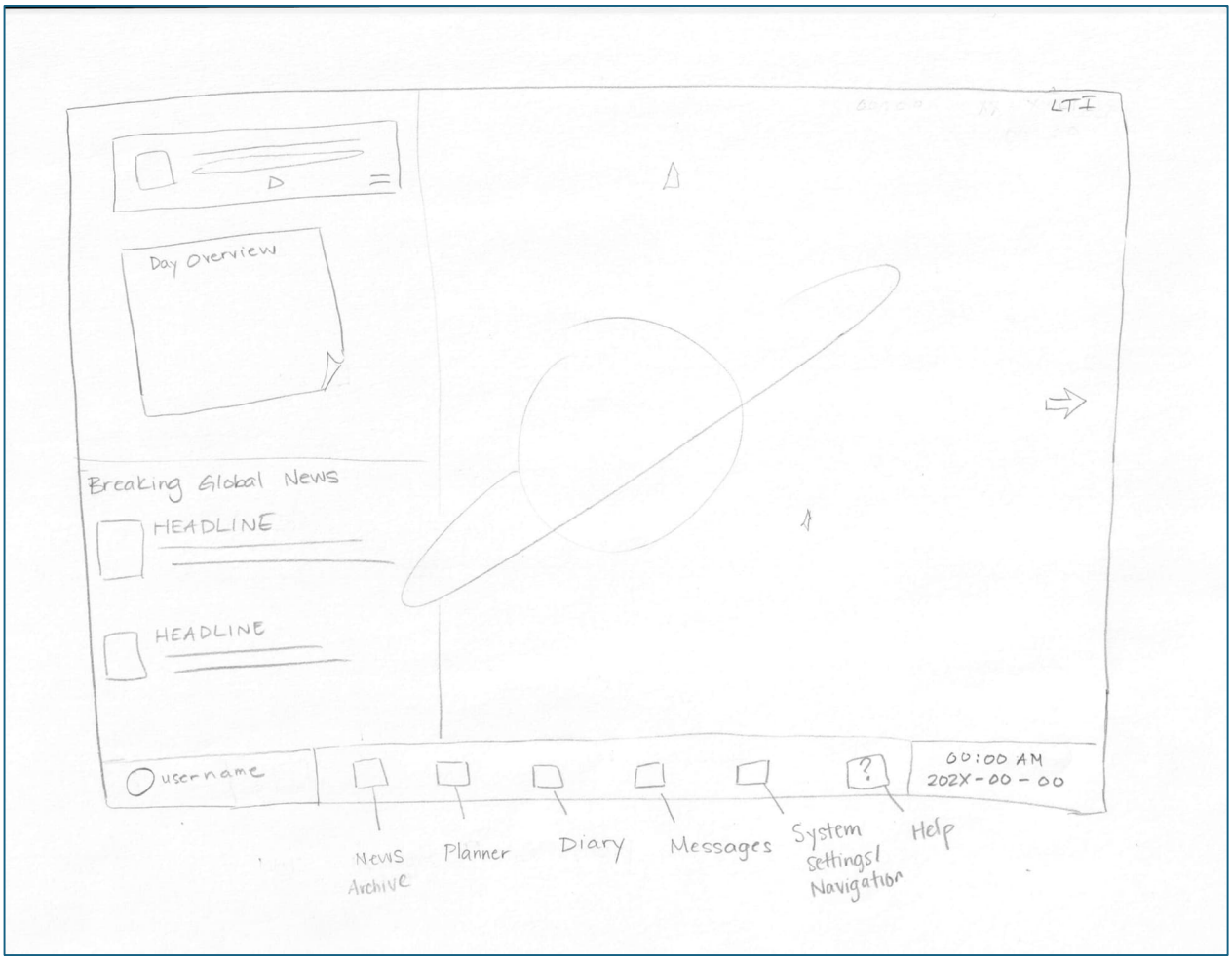
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Zendarski, N., Sciberras, E., Mensah, F., & Hiscock, H. (2017). Academic Achievement and Risk Factors for Adolescents with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Middle School and Early High School. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, *38*(6). https://journals.lww.com/jrnldbp/fulltext/2017/07000/academic_achievement_and_risk_factors_for.2.aspx

Zerubavel, E. (1977). The French Republican Calendar: A Case Study in the Sociology of Time. *American Sociological Review*, *42*(6), 868–877. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/2094573

Appendices

Appendix A. Design Process Work and Citation

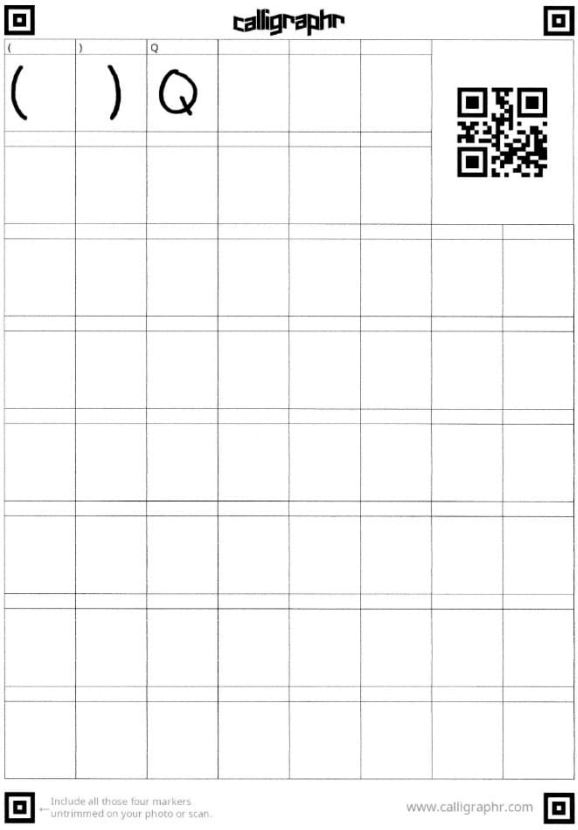


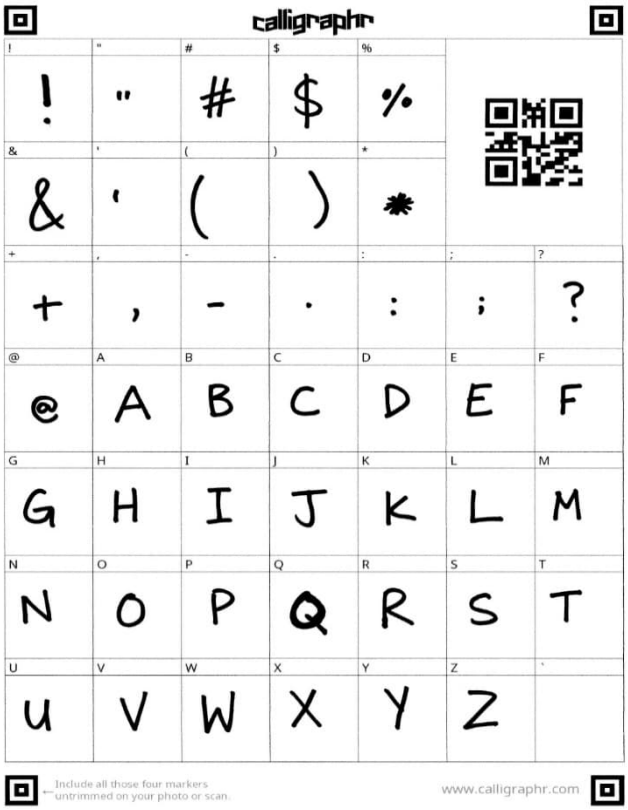
Sketch for the current iteration of livingthroughit.com home page layout. This sketch is inspired by the Apple OS X Mountain Lion, which was the operating system on my first laptop that I used when I started making digital content.



Iterations of the email app icon which I designed in Adobe Express.

Any small icons or assets that are public and fair use come the The Noun Project with a premium membership.





Scans of my handwriting for input on Calligrapher, a free application that turns handwriting into custom fonts. I used this font in the Diary application.



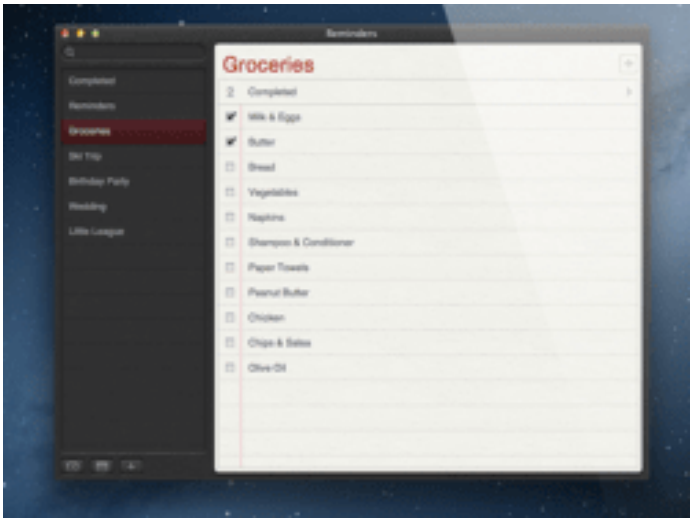


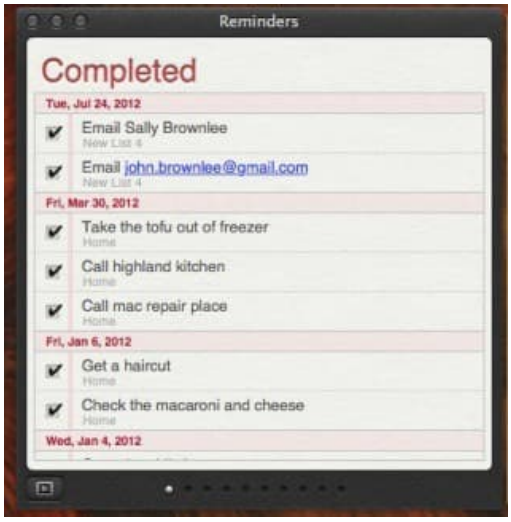


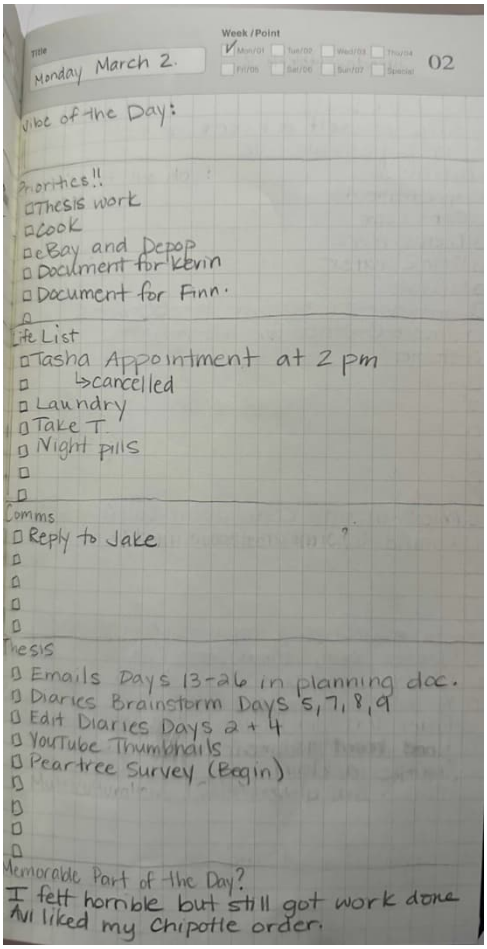
Pictures taken of my personal items which were then edited in Adobe Express as used as ephemera on the “desk” in the Diary application.

Inspiration Images

Planner

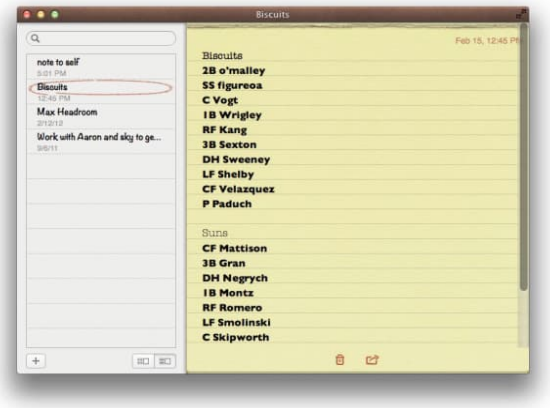


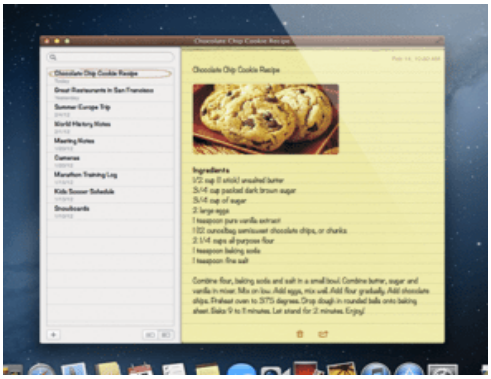




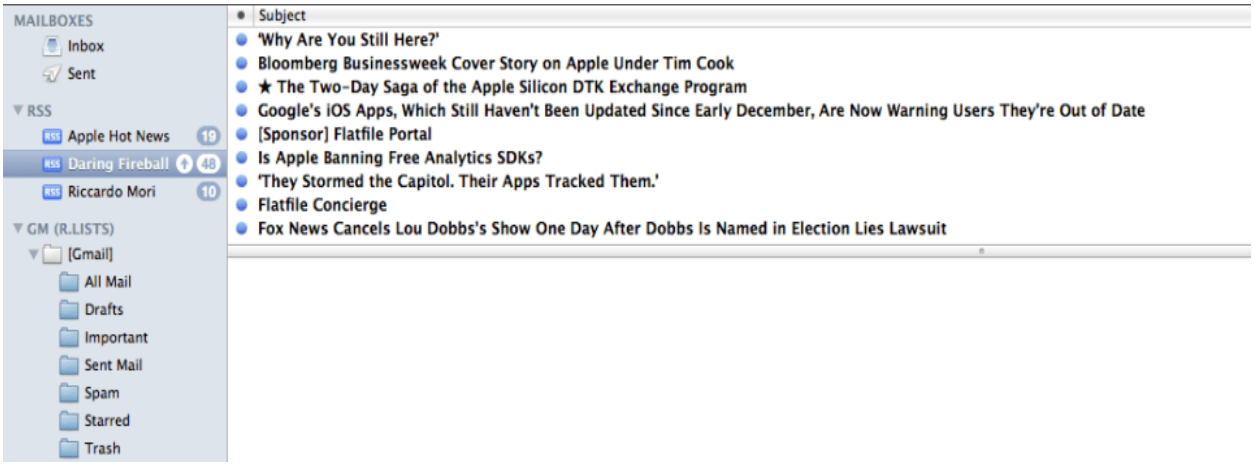
This image on the left is a picture of my personal bullet journal planner which inspired the content in livingthroughit.com

Diary





Mail



Messages

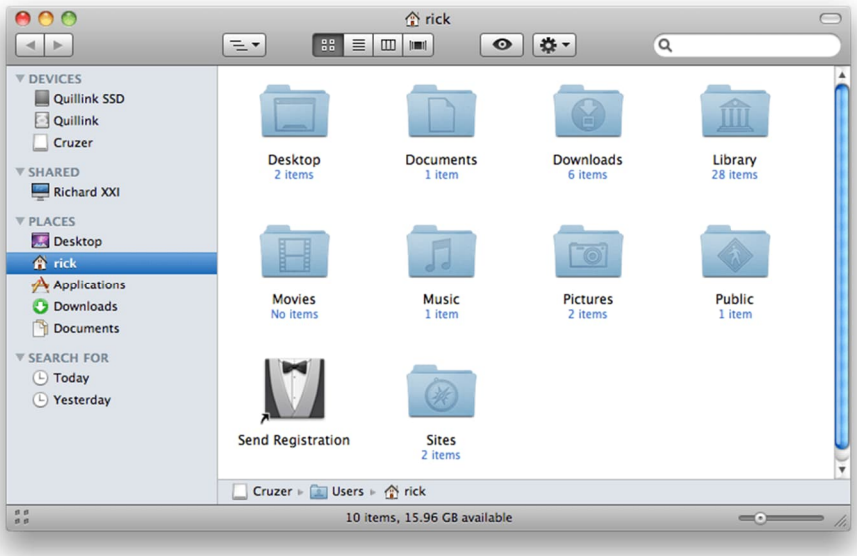


Overall UI

https://stateofmind13.com/2012/02/16/apple-unveils-mac-os-x-10-8-mountain-lion-and-messages-app/ → Resource with some images and general vibes of the OS I'm referencing (OS X Mountain Lion)



I like the upper finder bar (with apple logo, file, edit, view, etc) in this image. It works well for what I already have.



Finder app: some possibilities for how the widgets are placed (some kind of sidebar with a master list of all the apps?) maybe swatch some of these colours for the apps and pages associated with them (The blue and greys with the stoplight red/yellow/green). I also like the little house micrographic.



Quintessential Mac Mountain Lion Wallpaper, the spiral galaxy. Could this be the wallpaper?

Livingthroughit.com Design Elements Citation

Andrejevic, F. (2020). *Men in green and brown camouflage uniform* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/men-in-green-and-brown-camouflage-uniform-1LTunOck3es

Ansley, M. (2018). *A long hallway with a bunch of lockers in it* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/a-long-hallway-with-a-bunch-of-lockers-in-it-ihl2Q5F-VYA

Blake, S. (2018). *Seven construction workers standing on white field* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/seven-construction-workers-standing-on-white-field-x-ghf9LjrVg

De Luze, T. (2020). *Man in orange shirt wearing black mask* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/man-in-orange-shirt-wearing-black-mask-I-p8mZ-6h2Y

Gilbert, M. (2021). *Grayscale photo of ram head* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/grayscale-photo-of-ram-head-X-4NYxVZ4R0

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Howard, M. (n.d.). *Trees on Fire* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. Retrieved https://unsplash.com/photos/trees-on-fire-eAKDzK4lo4o

McGowan, B. (2021). *Double exposure of Hurricane Ida approaching New Orleans on August 29, 2021.* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/green-yellow-and-pink-abstract-painting-kKyxIwvljBg

Pan, J. (2021). *Stacked gold bullion bars* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/stacked-gold-bullion-bars-iYsrkq5qq0Q

Regan-Asante, S. (2024). *A newspaper stand with a bunch of newspapers on top of it* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/a-newspaper-stand-with-a-bunch-of-newspapers-on-top-of-it-h5WwNFEeNH8

Rodriguez, A. (2022). *A group of people walking on a sidewalk* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/a-group-of-people-walking-on-a-sidewalk-qrD-g7oc9is

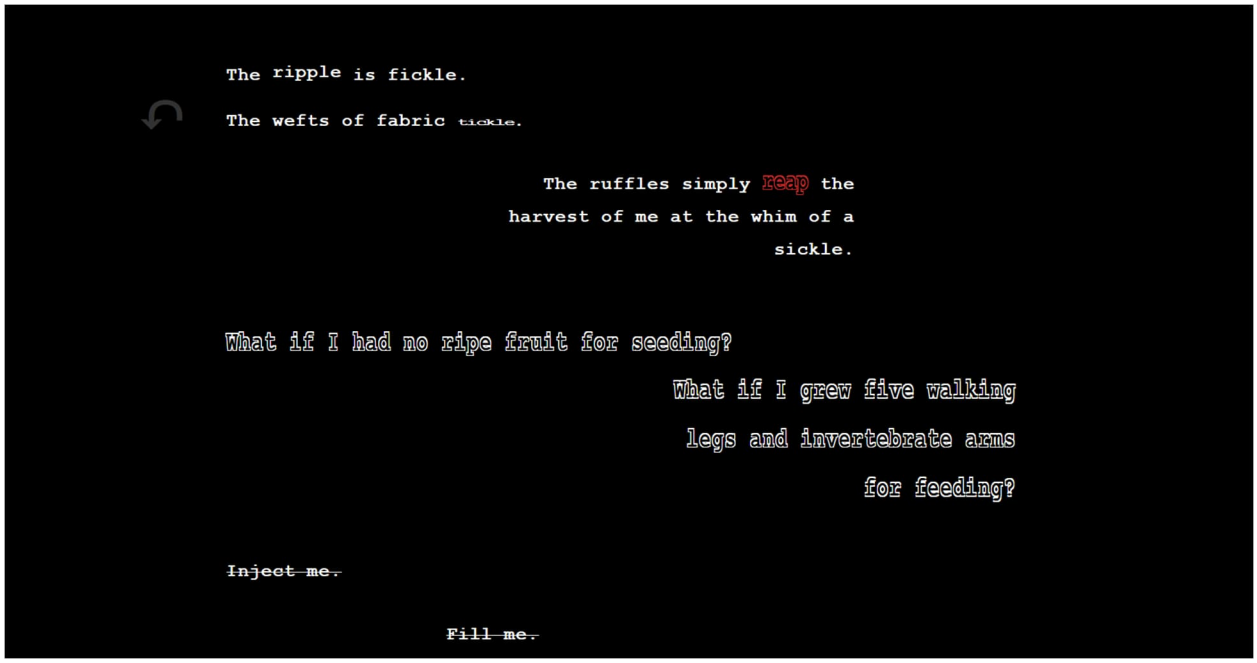
Sukjaroenkraisri, M. (2022). *A city with tall buildings* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/a-city-with-tall-buildings-WC0USRUvPy8

Ventura, S. (2023). *A store filled with lots of bottles of liquor* [Digital Image]. Unsplash. https://unsplash.com/photos/a-store-filled-with-lots-of-bottles-of-liquor-aocMmIyGs_A

Appendix B: Creative Fragments

PiLLLLars – A creative prototype made for the NEXUS Interdisciplinary Conference at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN. Made in Twine to explore hypertext poetry and creative non-fiction. Inspired by Porpentine, Judith Butler, Sandy Stone, and Gertrude Stein.

Link: https://julienquinto.itch.io/pillllars



Screenshot of one of the pages of PiLLLLars (Barren is as barren does).

Fragment 2 – Interlude: Nightly Routine

The next pages consist of a proposed interlude from early drafts of the research paper. This poetic and structural interpretation of writing chronicles my nightly routine as of March 2025.

It’s 10 pm and I’m on my phone in bed. My critical medication alert has just gone off, and I ignore it. My partner texts me 2 minutes later. *Take pills and T.* I start to give myself the medically necessary pep-talk I must recite before getting out of bed.

I don’t like getting out of bed all that much. Never have.

In resignation I let out an exasperated sigh, throw my blanket off, and trek across the house to my bathroom. This feeling brings back a very specific moment in time;

> I’m sixteen or seventeen, sitting in the waiting room of a youth psychiatric outpatient department. I can see the non-functional television screen and an empty table full of tattered children’s books. The table is so low, it stands no taller than my mid-shin.
>
> I’ve been waiting around for a solid twenty minutes. Finally, they call me in, and I sit down once more. I meet her, my first-ever psychiatrist. All I need to do is open my mouth before she starts diagnosing me.
>
> It’s small talk, basic doctoral get-to-know-yous. She reminds me of a bright-eyed bird— examining me, searching for something.

Soon on, I notice a mug with Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss* on it holding writing instruments on her desk. I stare at that mug while the psychiatrist speaks, not paying much attention, then interrupt her mid-sentence to comment. My new psychiatrist writes something in her notes, then asks me if I have trouble initiating tasks.

The answer was yes.

The answer is, still, yes.

I turn on the vanity light, get my black spider bag unzipped and waiting on the counter. I take off my shirt, pull out the small, decorative scissors coated in dried testosterone gel. I snip the silver packet across the dotted line, not really caring if some gets on my hands; I'm about to wash them anyway. I squeeze out half the packet onto my skin.

That smell always catches me off guard.

Testosterone gel smells like that hand sanitizer places used during peak COVID, when there was a shortage of whatever.

That smell is a punch in the gut, every

single

time.

I rub the gel in clockwise circles around my shoulder.

Once the gel gets tacky, I squeeze out the rest of the

packet. Rub it in again. Wipe the residual on my sides. Wash my hands a second time. Without a shirt, I brush my teeth and let the hormones absorb, just like the doctor advised. Then I put my shirt back on and return to my room.

Immediately, before I forget, I locate one of countless plastic water bottles I have scattered around. Grab 2 mg of brexpriprazole and 25 mg of fluoxetine. Swallow both pills in one go.

Finally, I’m done. For tonight, at least. As luck would have it, I get to do this all again tomorrow.

And the next day.

And everyday after that one, too.