Rethinking Resilience: Review of Ontario University Mental Health Strategies
Introduction
Who are we?

Disability Organizer, Researcher, Activist

B.A. (Hons)

Queer, Crazy, Disabled

Third-Generation Psychiatric Survivor

Pet Parent

Shannon Balfour
(They/Them)

Shannon Balfour
@ShannonBalfour
shannon_447@hotmail.com
Who are we?

Disability organizer, researcher, and activist

BSc. (Hon.)

Mad/Crazy, Queer, Disabled

Aspirational Gardener
Rules

- Be comfortable and use the space

- Respect and honour others’ experiences and knowledge
Stop to Think

How is ‘mental health’ involved in your life?

personal sphere | professional sphere | social sphere | systemic
Background
The mental health crisis on campus

Canadian students feel hopeless, depressed, even suicidal.

Students demand action on campus mental health crisis

Universities and colleges are under a microscope from incoming students.

The Student Mental Health Crisis Calls for Better Campus Design

The kids aren’t alright: It’s time to get serious and invest in student mental health.

Student-led mental health initiatives shifting how schools provide supports

Community mental health resources available for post-secondary students

Ontario campus counsellors say they’re drowning in mental health needs

Canadian Universities Don’t Have Resources to Address a Mental Health Crisis

Western University and partners launch free after-hours crisis counselling

Crisis on campus: Universities struggle with students in distress

How many Ontario post-secondary students die by suicide each year?
Rise of the Mental Health Strategy

What is a Mental Health Strategy?

- Official plan
  - Allocation of resources
  - Provision of programming
  - Educational goals
  - Guidelines for response
  - Longitudinal
  - Coordination of departments
Stop to Think

What is Mental Health?
Stop to Think

What is ‘Mental Illness’?

What are ‘Mental Health Concerns’?

What are ‘Mental Health Difficulties’?

Others?
What’s in a Word?

- Lunatic to patient to person
  - Lunatic → Insane/Inmate → patient → consumer/survivor/ex-patient
  - Asylum → mental hospital

- Mental Hygiene movement → Mental Health
What is Madness?

- Who gets what label determines how treated
- Systems of power
- Intersectionality
- Aesthetic mental health
Power

- The language we use and the ideas that language invoke are inextricable from their social and political confluence.
- The treatment, imprisonment, institutionalization, and care of Mad people has always been associated with power and maintenance of social division.
- Power dynamics exist at all levels of interaction and compound and co-mingle with other experiences of identity.
Case Study in Power

- Alex and Shannon both attend Resilience University
- They both are in first year political science together, and have the same essay due next week.
- Both of them have been struggling to concentrate, have been feeling exhausted constantly, have been eating less, and especially with the sun setting so early haven’t been leaving their residence rooms much.
- Alex is registered with campus’ student accessibility office with a ‘Mental Health Condition’. Shannon is not.
- When they both email their professor for an extension, Alex is given one and Shannon is not.
Check point

- Post-Secondary Education is not a vacuum: what happens here affects the world outside, and what happens outside affects what happens here.
- History matters: While our recent constructions of ‘mental health’ are contemporary, they are related and to varying extents evolutions of historic constructions of Madness.
- A hegemonic pedagogy of mental health exists.
- Intent versus impact
Guiding Questions

- Given the uptake in universities creating mental health strategies:
  - Who are these strategies for? Who are they about? Who writes them? Who is responsible for them?
  - What is their scope? What is their purpose/goal?
  - Where do these ideas come from?
  - When do these policies come into play? When are they created?
  - Why are we creating these policies? Why do they say what they say?
Methods
Scope

- What Universities were included
  - Top 10 largest universities in Ontario
- What was defined as a strategy
  - Official plan
    - Allocation of resources
    - Provision of programming
    - Educational goals
    - Guidelines for response
    - Longitudinal
    - Coordination of departments
Stop to Think

Schools not included are colleges, rural, northern, and smaller campus universities - what impacts could this have?

Ex. Indigenous student, staff, and faculty population, sense of community on campus, access to services, proportion of international students, etc.
Results
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Toronto</th>
<th>University of Western Ontario</th>
<th>York University</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report on Student Mental Health Strategy and Framework</td>
<td>Ryerson Mental Health Advisory Committee</td>
<td>Advancing a Mentally Healthy Campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mandated Leave of Absence Policy</td>
<td>Mental Well-Being Website</td>
<td>Five Ways to WellBeing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responding to Distressed Students</td>
<td>Signs of Distress in Students</td>
<td>Identifying and Responding to Students in Distress: A Guide for Faculty and Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>UTSC's The Flourish Program: Helping High School Students Transition to Postsecondary Education</td>
<td>Student Mental Health and Strategic Plan</td>
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<td>UTM's 5 Ways to WellBeing</td>
<td>Mental Health and Wellness Resource Guide</td>
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<td>UTM's Green Ribbon Campaign</td>
<td>Signs of Concern in Students</td>
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<td>Wellness at UTM</td>
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<td>University of Ottawa</td>
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<td>Wellness Website</td>
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<td>Standing Committee on Student Wellbeing</td>
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<td>Identifying and Assisting a Student in Distress Pamphlet</td>
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<td>University of Waterloo</td>
<td>University of Guelph</td>
<td>Carleton University</td>
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<td>2012 Mental Health Review</td>
<td>Mental Well-Being Website</td>
<td>Thrive Week Initiative</td>
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<td>Strategic Initiatives Report: Campus Wellness</td>
<td>Mental Health Info Kit</td>
<td>Wellness Website</td>
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<tr>
<td>President’s Advisory Committee on Student Mental Health (PAC-SMH) Report</td>
<td>PSYC 1400 Mental Health and Well Being First Year Course</td>
<td>Student Mental Health Framework: Guide for Supporting students in Distress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health and Wellness Guide</td>
<td>Responding to Students in Distress</td>
<td>Student Mental Health Framework 2.0: Building a Thriving Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creation

- Committees are most often comprised of university staff and faculty
- Committees rarely have student members and when they do, they are often the VPs of their respective student unions
- The inclusion of perspectives from students with lived experience is absent
- Corporate sponsors: Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), More Feet on the Ground, Bell Let’s Talk
Creation

- Purpose: address the larger issue of mental health on campus
- Corey Keyes’ Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health and Mental Illness

MacKean, 2011. Adapted from: The Health Communication Unit at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario; based on the conceptual work of Corey Keyes
Education and Awareness

Living Well  Find Support  Help a Friend  Get Involved
Education and Awareness

Five Ways to Wellbeing

The mental health committee encourages all students, staff and faculty to participate in their own wellbeing. The following wellness tips are produced by nef, the New Economics Foundation.

"The Five Ways to Well-being were developed by nef from evidence gathered in the UK government’s Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing. The Project, published in 2008, drew on state-of-the-art research about mental capital and mental wellbeing through life. It asked nef to develop the Five Ways to Wellbeing to communicate its key findings."
#FeedyourHippo
Recognition and Response

- All 10 universities have developed documents for the usage of faculty/staff to help them to identify “Signs of Distress” in students.
- Different “signs” lead to different responses that the faculty member is supposed to take. Examples include:
  - Setting up a Counselling appointment for the student
  - Calling 911 and/or Campus Security
  - Notifying the Vice-Dean or Dean’s Office
- Different schools have different ways of differentiating between crisis, non-crisis, urgent and emergency situations, though there is also a lot of overlap.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Referral to Health and Counselling Services</th>
<th>Report the Incident to Dean or Vice-Dean</th>
<th>Call Campus Security</th>
<th>Contact the Office of Student Conduct or Affairs</th>
<th>Other Actions</th>
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<td>Waterloo</td>
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<td>Speak to the student</td>
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<td>Submit a Care Report</td>
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<td>Guelph</td>
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<td>Queen's</td>
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### Emergency Situations: contact Campus Security and/or 911

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<td>Drug and alcohol abuse/misuse</td>
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<td>Staff feels unsafe</td>
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Check point

- There is an extensive degree of similarity
  - Language
  - Scope
  - Authorship
  - Educational goals
  - Pedagogical methods
  - Recognition
  - Response

- There are differences in
  - Consultation
  - Response
  - Pedagogical methods
Analysis
What is Resilience
What is Resilience

Specifically, emotionally resilient people tend to:

- Have realistic and attainable expectations and goals.
- Show good judgment and problem-solving skills.
- Be persistent and determined.
- Be responsible and thoughtful rather than impulsive.
- Be effective communicators with good people skills.
- Learn from past experience so as to not repeat mistakes.
- Be empathetic toward other people (caring how others around them are feeling).
- Have a social conscience, (caring about the welfare of others).
- Feel good about themselves as a person.
- Feel like they are in control of their lives.
- Be optimistic rather than pessimistic.
The changing face of PSE

More young women are obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher

Canadians are equipping themselves for the jobs of today

Gains in educational attainment among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit

One in five lone mothers has a bachelor's degree or higher, up from 2006

Close to one-third of refugees have upgraded their educational credentials in Canada
IT'S ONLY
RACIST
WHEN
WHITE PEOPLE
DO IT

- Positively self identify
- Defend ourselves from criticism
- Organize in our self interest
- Express concern about our future
- Preserve our culture
- Desire to continue to exist as a people

ALT-RIGHT

Tired of
Anti White
propaganda?

You are not alone.
Creating Deficit

- Feeling bad is associated with being bad
- Success is associated with wellness and resilience
- We don’t talk about about disability
- We frame students as removed from normal or ideal

Adapted from “Healthy Settings Model,” healthyuniversities.ac.uk
The hippo in the room

Why the “Feed Your Hippo” campaign is misleading and potentially harmful

OPINION • SEP 29, 2016 • 0 COMMENTS • OPINION

Hungry Hungry Hippo @sadhungryhippo • 30 Aug 2016
Pro tip: take a bubble bath and feel the trauma just wash away #feedyourhippo

Hungry Hungry Hippo @sadhungryhippo • 30 Aug 2016
Pro tip eat kale and your suicidal urges will immediately fade away! #FeedyourHippo
Resisting Resilience

Responsibilization + Binaries of deficit

A definition of resilience that is positioned against community and justice

Liability  Blame  Power  Re$ources
Violence and Coercion

- What happens when you are simultaneously a student, tenant/resident, and patient all at the same institution?
- Confidentiality?
- "...any disruptive behavior/failure to adhere to the conditions of this agreement will result in (...) potential termination of your residence agreement/eviction"
UofT approves student leave of absence policy that has drawn criticism
Current Student Engagement

- Student Union Executives
- Clubs
  - yoga clubs
  - men’s clubs
  - jack.org
- Student Services(?)
Retheorizing Meaningful Student Engagement