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## Disability, Non-disability and the Politics of Mourning: Re-conceiving the 'we'

Anne McGuire

### Abstract

In December of 2007, the *Globe and Mail*, one of Canada's national newspapers, published a series of articles written by columnist Ian Brown. In the three part-series entitled, "The Boy in the Moon," Brown narrates his life with his cognitively disabled son. This paper explores Brown's articles in relation to Judith Butler's (2004) "Violence, Mourning, Politics," and conducts an analysis of how cognitive disability is being enacted as "not quite a life" (34). This paper demonstrates how Brown's articles tell the story of cognitive disability as a state of brokenness, something that requires fixing. Significantly, when disability defies and/or resists fixing, it is discursively re-framed as a tragic loss. By attending to the making of disability in Brown's articles, this paper is more broadly interested in how disabled and non-disabled bodies ('we') are being formed in and through social spaces.

### Keywords

cognitive disability; non-disability; interpretive methods; cultural studies; disability studies; relationality; governmentality; mourning

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The nascent literature on disability can thus serve as a point of intervention—a way to examine the relationship between biology and culture without invoking ideas of innate dysfunction—since scholars in this field have been attentive to bodily injury, yet have also advanced a "social model" of illness. 7 As these scholars have viewed disability as an institutionalized source of oppression, comparable to inequalities based on race, gender, and sexual orientation, they have argued that it is not an individual's actual "impairments" which construct disability as a subord Perhaps the major obstacle to the analysis of disability policy is the lack of a general consensus about the nature or meaning of disability. In fact, at least three distinct definitions have been used in the formulation of government plans and programs for disabled persons. Each of these approaches seems to contain different implications concerning both the most appropriate solution to the problems of physical disability and the most effective means of allocating resources to achieve this objective. The Medical Definition. Public knowledge of physical disability, to the extent that it exists,