Unlearning through Mad Studies: Disruptive pedagogical praxis

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Abstract

Medical discourse currently dominates as the defining framework for madness in educational praxis. Consequently, ideas rooted in a mental health/illness binary abound in higher learning, both as curriculum content and through institutional procedures that reinforce structures of normalcy. While madness then, is included in university spaces, this inclusion proceeds in ways that continue to pathologize madness and disenfranchise mad people. This paper offers Mad Studies as an alternative entry point for engaging with madness in higher education, arguing centring madness in pedagogical praxis has the potential to interrupt hegemonic ways of knowing, being, and learning. We illustrate how this disruption is facilitated by examining particular aspects of pedagogical praxis mobilized in Mad Studies, including building curriculum alongside mad community, centring madness in course design and student assessment, and the deployment of mad positivity. Ultimately, this approach provides a metacurriculum of unlearning, challenging students to consider how their engagement with madness in the classroom, and beyond, has the potential to disrupt sanist systems of oppression and the normalcy they reconstitute.

Mental health/illness discourse currently runs rampant in higher education. Universities are declaring a 'mental health crisis' on campus (Hawkes, 2019; Reid, 2013) and policy, access, and accommodation strategies rest on tactics that respond with notions of risk and liability. At the same time, critical scholars continue to build on a long line of inquiry refuting the mental health/illness binary, and the responses it develops and valourizes (Fernando, 2017; Foucault, 2006; Mills, 2014; Parker, 2014). Yet scholarship resistant to biomedical epistemes is rarely engaged in undergraduate curriculum, and university administrations remain reticent to engage disability justice approaches to distress. Indeed, through this cumulative collective disengagement, students easily pass through programs of study without encountering alternative ways of knowing. Enter Mad Studies.

Mad Studies unsettles the logics of mental illness schemas dominating how we comprehend and make meaning of madness (see Aho, Ben-Moshe & Hilton, 2017; LeFrançois, Menzies & Reaume, 2013; Russo & Sweeney, 2016). Mad Studies can broadly be defined as a project that sets aside prevailing assumptions of mental illness as an organizing category, and "not only resists the power/knowledge nexus of the psy disciplines, but also offers an array of counter-narratives which multiply the socio-cultural meanings of madness" (Voronka, 2019, p. 4). Similar to Disability Studies, Mad Studies interrogates the construction of normalcy and subverts sanist[1] research, knowledge, and practice paradigms.

In this paper, we draw on our experiences teaching various Mad Studies undergraduate courses at three different universities, demonstrating how Mad Studies offers a metacurriculum of unlearning. By unlearning we mean questioning what we think we already know, and making room for multiple ways of knowing. We argue centring madness in the curriculum allows space for troubling the dominant understandings of madness that abound in higher education. We first situate this argument by reviewing the ways madness appears in traditional curricula and university practice. We then move on to illustrate the varied ways centring madness disrupts this dominance by exploring: how Mad Studies calls into question who counts as a knowledge producer through its engagement with community knowledge and practice; several innovative aspects of Mad Studies course design, including non-linear course structure and arts-based assessment; and the mobilization of a mad positive pedagogy. We conclude by discussing how some students grapple with the disruption of previously held beliefs about madness, ultimately asserting centring madness opens possibilities for

students to challenge inequities within the context of the university, and as they move forward in their personal and professional lives. In this way we reveal how Mad Studies values multiple ways of knowing, consequently engendering an unlearning that encourages students not to seek mastery, but to engage the uncertainty this knowledge creates.

What follows stems from a panel presentation exploring the potential of a Mad Studies framework for approaching curriculum and pedagogy. We situate this work as a form of critical inquiry, collectively reflecting on aspects of our praxis as mad and non-mad educators socially positioned in diverse ways. Such a critical approach to pedagogy is grounded in the understanding of how power and hegemony operate in the classroom (Brookfield, 2017) and urges educators to consistently query what they do, how they do it, and why (Hosein, 2011). As critical inquiry then, this work considers how educators and students may challenge dominant views (Boler, 1999), disrupting institutional hierarchies and dominant modes of learning. At the same time, we recognize there are multiple challenges associated with achieving this. We do not propose finite solutions or definitive prescriptions but offer a provocation for educators to consider the possibilities of engaging Mad Studies as a pedagogical framework; in so doing, we aim to make a theoretical contribution to curriculum theory and praxis.

Where Madness Meets the Curriculum: A Review of the Literature

Disability Studies scholars have made critical interventions into the field of curriculum studies, extending focus beyond addressing the exclusion of disability from curriculum content. As Titchkosky (2003) notes, disability has been present in mainstream education predominantly in ways that situate disability as a problem of both

teaching and learning, to be remedied through further study, diagnosis, and even inclusion. Alternatively, she suggests disability be engaged as an opportunity to question "what counts as learning" (2003, p. 132) as well as the construction of education itself. Erevelles (2005) addresses this issue, suggesting traditional and even radical approaches to curriculum often operate in normalizing ways. She points to how disability has been devalued as a social category, and the way this logic influences curricula, reinforcing discourses of normalization that disavow "signs of deviance/disability" (p. 433). She also highlights how disability is enmeshed with other social categories including race, sexuality, class, and gender in this context of normalization. Erevelles calls for a critique of liberal practices of disability inclusion, the constitution of normalcy through educational praxis, and the construction of curriculum construing disability as abject. Similarly, writing on what she identifies as mental disability, Price (2011) reveals how medical discourse pervades academic spaces, constructing both students and teachers who think differently as mentally ill and unfit for academia. In response to this, Price argues the presence of mental disability holds potential to shift pedagogy around thinking in higher education in ways that value and reimagine disabled minds. These accounts suggest it is not the question of inclusion we must attend to, but rather what is included in the curriculum and how.

Madness most often meets university curricula through the framework of mental illness and mental health. As such, while we acknowledge madness has been a persistent presence in curricula across the university, its inclusion has overwhelmingly reinforced madness as always only mental illness. For instance, in the area of teacher education, emphasis is now placed on teacher candidates to receive mental health education,

incorporating this knowledge as part of their pedagogy (see UBC, n.d.) and some universities offer mental health education programming for students and faculty (see Queen's University, n.d.). Universities also partner with corporations to provide suicide prevention training to students, faculty, and staff as part of university-wide attempts to create safer community spaces (Council of Ontario Universities, 2017). Nursing students are taught mental illness prevention (Seed & Higgins, 2003) while journalism students learn how to report on mental illness (Skehan, Sheridan & Hazell, 2009). Some curricula aim to reduce mental health stigma (Aggarwal, et al., 2013) and there is interest in studying the impacts of such mental health curricula on student and teacher attitudes toward mental illness (Kutcher, et al., 2016; Milin, et al., 2016). Students also learn about mental illness by turning to literature (Flood & Farkas, 2011) and in healthcare by utilizing films featuring mentally ill characters (McCann & Huntley-Moore, 2016). Normative modes of teaching and learning about madness instruct not only medical and associated helping profession students, but also students outside of psy related fields to identify/diagnose mental illness; how to regulate and remedy it; and how to accurately define the lines between what is and is not mental illness in order to produce normalcy. 'Including' madness in this way continues to centre and by extension to teach students normalized ways of thinking, learning, and being, both within the classroom and beyond.

Mad Studies Metacurriculum

Conceiving of Mad Studies as metacurriculum has the potential to disrupt these practices by calling into question how and what students learn about madness, consequently transcending the limiting notion of curricula as merely content.

Conceptually, metacurriculum stresses "what is learned from learning the school curriculum" (Tripp, 1993, p. 1) holds as much significance as what is learned from the curriculum's content. Accordingly, we are concerned not solely with what we teach but also with attending to what students learn from learning Mad Studies. We assert centring madness offers significant possibilities for learning that potentially challenges the normalizing function of curriculum and the sanism structuring education.

Mad Studies metacurriculum reconfigures worldviews. In connecting seemingly disparate historical events (e.g., the residential school system and the rise of psychiatry) and disciplines (e.g., Mad Studies, urban geography, Black Feminisms), and in revealing to students historical and contemporary conditions constituting experiences of madness (capitalism, patriarchy, racism, etc.), Mad Studies is a reminder we must consider the dialectical and affective intensifications that make up any experience (Menzies, LeFrançois & Reaume, 2013). Within the context of this paper (and our teaching), even as we enter the discussion with a focus on madness, we do so with an acknowledgement that madness and social constructions of madness are enmeshed with other socially and discursively produced articulations of difference including but not limited to race, gender, and sexuality. We both engage intersectional frameworks of analysis, which aim to expose the complex interconnections among dominant systems of oppression (Collins, 2000), as well as mobilize approaches that invite a redirection of our attention from identity markers of difference and systems of oppression toward analyses of "historically developed systems *and* the technologies that (re)create hierarchical structures" (Joseph, 2015a, p.17).

In our teaching, we each recognize and draw on the evolving conceptualizations and contributions of critical scholars who theorize technologies of power and their effect on the (re)production of marginalization, hierarchy, and violence. In our classrooms we variably make use of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991), matrices of domination (Collins, 2000), assemblages (Puar, 2007), and confluences of power (Joseph, 2015a), all in an effort to conceptualize and understand how these effects come to be. It is an engagement we also bring to this paper, as we reflect on how historically informed operations of power and technologies of difference shape our students' experiences and the work we do as educators.

Consequently, Mad Studies as metacurriculum encourages students to think critically, not only about contemporary discourses around madness and mental health but also how inequity is produced in interlocking ways (Razack, 1998). The authors of this paper all hold some markers of privilege and some of marginality. Sharing our diverse experiences of classism, sexism, homophobia, racism, and sanism, as well as our encounters with those systems managing difference assists students in mapping these connections. Students explore multiple conversations and counter-narratives and examine the underlying ideological tenets supporting these claims. The fractures in thinking emerging from these discussions also disrupt traditional approaches to knowledge production. The result is an opening up of space for students to learn – really, a process of unlearning – from their learning experience.

Centring Madness: Opportunities for Unlearning

Building Curriculum with Community

Toronto, Canada is a hub for teaching Mad Studies in higher education, as three major universities (York University, Ryerson University, and the University of Toronto) have offered Mad Studies as well as Mad People's History courses through their Disability Studies programs (Reaume, 2019). We have all taught these courses, both online and in-person, as sessional instructors. While implementing Mad Studies in universities that continue to work within mental health/illness models proves challenging, as has been well documented in Mad Studies scholarship (Church, 2013; Landry & Church, 2016; Reaume, 2006; 2019; Reville, 2013), what has been central to this endeavour is engaging community in the process.

Ryerson University's School of Disability Studies in particular has emerged as a driving force in formalizing Mad Studies curriculum in university settings, which began with the School's formation 20 years ago. The School's work has had reverberating consequences in other locales, including with the psychiatric survivor group Oor Mad History, who have developed their own course for Queen Margaret University, Scotland (see CAPS, n.d.). Further, the School has collaborated with Toronto's Empowerment Council to develop a curriculum for Postgraduate Year One psychiatric residents enrolled at the University of Toronto's Department of Psychiatry. This project offers the unique opportunity to evaluate how psychiatric residents encounter and process Mad Studies curricula, as well as synthesize such knowledge into their practice (Devaney, Costa & Raju, 2017).

Central to the School's ethos has been drawing on curriculum developed by mad communities, as well as inviting the community to take part in formalized university settings. This is key Mad Studies application-in-action as mad people have historically

been excluded from higher education (Rieser, 2012). We have worked to build bridges between the School and our surrounding communities in a number of ways (see Landry & Church, 2016). For example, instructors are connected to community-based disability-run organizations such as the Empowerment Council, A-Way Express Couriers, Working for Change, and Sound Times Support Services, and we invite the knowledge generated by these local service user-led organizations into the classroom. The School has also offered workshops on the history of consumer/survivor social movement activism to community members, as well as developed the David Reville Bursary, which covers the costs of a mad community member to take the course Mad People's History (C/S Info Centre Bulletin, 2012). The School's focus on curriculum development alongside community partners is a transformative learning experience for students as it regards mad knowledge as central and valuable, and acknowledges mad people as worth learning from. It is foundational to centring madness in pedagogical praxis.

Complicating Course Structure

In addition to collaborative curriculum development, course design also has vast implications for the Mad Studies classroom experience. Mad Studies metacurriculum incorporates non-traditional approaches both to course structure and assessment. We examine the integration of innovative design elements into our courses, which (re)frame students as knowledge producers themselves and shift learning objectives towards processes of unlearning.

The design of the Mad Studies course at the University of Toronto follows a rhizomatic model of education, meaning the design of the course reframes expertise and makes space for (re)negotiating the learning environment (Cormier, 2008; Mackness &

Bell, 2015). Often associated with Massive Open Online Courses (or MOOCs), the rhizomatic model of education or what some scholars refer to as "rhizomatic learning" operates to create curriculum through collaboration (Cormier, 2008). Rhizomatic learning, derived from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of the rhizome – a "figurative visual term" (Goodley, 2007, p. 323), describes a mode of thinking that disrupts arboreal, hierarchical, and linear models of knowing (Carrington & Iyer, 2011). Rhizomes, like weeds or swarms, have multiple entryways, are interconnected, can be cut off, and re-started in the same or a different location and time. Jones and Bennett (2017) describe rhizomatic course design as "a space of interconnected possibility" (p. 199) where top-down approaches are uprooted and replaced by an interconnected web of stems and roots and shoots, and, and, and… They contend, "The rhizome […] does not privilege a particular focus, direction or way of thinking, but offers an anti-dualistic meta-landscape from which clearly directed learning trajectories might be mapped" (Jones & Bennett, 2017, p. 199). This meta-landscape sets the stage for a Mad Studies metacurriculum that does away with dualism and considers the flows operating in-between concepts and ideas discussed in the course.

The University of Toronto's Mad Studies course attempts to withdraw from using traditional pedagogical approaches (such as, only in-class participation, linear approaches to reading course materials, and teacher/student hierarchies) and instead, introduces students to a learning process that encourages and supports possibilities for educational breaks and fractures. However, hurdles like uncompromising university protocols requiring instructors submit a completed syllabus and marking scheme well before the course begins, limit how this methodology can be incorporated. Thus, some aspects of a

rhizomatic approach, including constructing a syllabus with students, are not possible (yet). Additionally, the course is not a MOOC, but an on-site class of 35 students. Somewhat restricted by these parameters, as many elements of the approach are incorporated into the course as possible.

Students are given the option of entering the syllabus like a map, at any point, and from there they traverse (in)between the readings, videos, artifacts, and stories rhizomatically. Students are advised to start with what compels them, draws them in, confounds their thinking, and catches their senses. Students are instructed to start a reading; stop and pick up something else; stop again, pick up another author; and consider the connections. They are encouraged to, for example, watch the video clip about capitalism making us sick, listen to the podcast about police brutality, and consider how these topics interlock with madness.

Traditional approaches to teaching, such as lecturettes and participation in class are still very much an important part of the course. However, the rhizomatic approach is fruitful even as students engage in traditionally-formatted classroom discussion; they interject with comments from readings either weeks ahead or behind on the syllabus. For example, students connect current mandatory-leave policies in higher education that would target mad and predominantly Black, Indigenous, and people of colour to the redefinition of schizophrenia, which coincided with the U.S. civil rights movement and led to disproportionate diagnoses of Black activist men (Metzl, 2010). They draw new connections between concepts and ideas that otherwise seem contradictory or unlinked. In the process, students begin co-facilitating discussions in the classroom.

Another central component of rhizomatic learning is the reframing of expertise. In this, disability and mad scholars share a concrete goal with rhizomatic learning. Scholarship in Disability and Mad Studies continues to centre mad and disabled people's knowledge, which psy disciplines, among others, have historically pathologized or ignored (Reaume, 2002). Rhizomatic learning, however, asks us to go further in acknowledging students as experts themselves. This is especially true when those students are mad, disabled, queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, and/or people of colour and can provide situated knowledge that would otherwise be absent or marginally represented in some of the course readings. By framing students as knowledge producers, we encourage them to delve deeply into their own understanding of the phenomena, centre their knowledge, and consider their own relationship to the subject matter. Student knowledge, which is often questioned, undermined, or constituted as insufficient, is reframed as welcome and even necessary to the success of the course.

Arts-Based Assessment as Methodological Tool

While essays and papers remain aspects of assessment in our courses, we also employ art and arts-informed evaluations. We understand art as any creative work outside of traditional and conventional academic writing and testing. The act of art making in our courses is a response to the call from Disability Studies in which art is seen as a key methodological tool through which critical perspectives of difference are best understood and expressed (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Disability Studies has been looking to art as a way to enhance both scholarship and practice since the late 1990s, as a multimodal way of representing, expressing, and engaging with information (Derby, 2012). Art making has also been an integral part of our Mad Studies curriculum since the outset of each

course. It is positioned as a way of creating accessible, socially-engaged, praxis-driven learning spaces.

In both our online and in-person courses, students have the opportunity to complete their final assignment either as a conventional research paper or in the format of a creative project. When choosing the creative project, students have the option to use any method of creative production and a written artist statement must accompany their work. Arts-based research situates creative work as an active processing of knowledge that invites students to use art as a tool for "provoking, challenging, and illuminating" new lines of inquiry (Sullivan, 2010, p. 174). Therefore, we incorporate creative practices as a means through which students are encouraged to learn, express, and engage with critical theory. The creative element of our courses is a way for students to think through the significance of how they learn what they learn differently, as they self-determine the best methods to engage Mad Studies metacurriculum. In this way, space is created for students to produce new knowledge through their own research and points of reference.

Students are pushed beyond making intuitive or training-based aesthetic choices when art is positioned as a methodological tool for integrating knowledge and practice, with an active reflection on both. Through lecture content, support from instructors, and outside research, students make aesthetic decisions rooted in theoretical engagement with critical themes and issues central to Mad Studies. In this way, our courses support an approach to knowledge production that values discovery and exploration – goals often not well suited to conventional research. Innovative methods encourage students to engage with, make sense of, and express their developing thoughts and ideas (Truman & Springgay, 2015).

Students learn art has always been an integral element to social justice work within and alongside mad community (Decottignies, 2016; Gorman, 2007; Reid, 2016). In line with overarching Mad Studies course goals, art making is positioned as a useful tool for "consciousness raising efforts, raising critical awareness, social justice oriented work, relating/portraying power relations, building coalitions and challenging dominant ideologies" (Leavy, 2009, p. 13). As educators with varying degrees of training in creative fields, we direct our efforts to supporting students in using their chosen medium to develop critical and in-depth conceptually driven projects. We have witnessed students use art to address issues of identity; create original visual culture; express complex narratives; create performative interactions with the spaces around them; and translate ideas not easily conveyed with words. By providing alternatives for how students learn what they learn, this mad-informed methodology provokes students to generate theoretically grounded creative work both drawing on and producing a social justice praxis.

Learning and Unlearning Through Mad Positive Pedagogies

Our invitation to students to participate in processes of unlearning extends beyond curriculum development and course design. It is rooted in the understanding that identity and past experiences inform both teaching and learning. Just as we do, our students come from different social locations and identify in various ways. Yet the acknowledgement that mad and disabled students are always present is key to our pedagogical praxis.

Those of us who are non-mad position ourselves as mad allies in the classroom, aligning ourselves with the mad community, and our teaching and scholarship with mad politics. By identifying as allies, we let mad students and students who have had

encounters with the mental health system know they are supported. At the same time, this demonstrates mad allyship as a possibility, something many students are unaware exists when they first enter our classrooms. Identification as mad ally is intentional, just as identifying as mad is important in the context of Mad Studies. There is power inherent in taking on a devalued identity. For mad people, claiming mad is a form of resistance to the cultural mandate that madness, and therefore mad people, be eradicated. There is also power and resistance then in aligning oneself with 'mad.' This rationale behind our practice is fundamental to our courses.

Following Mason (2002), we contend student engagement with our intentions increases the potential for transformative teaching and learning possibilities. Additionally, both students and teachers come up against their "own identities, actions, and practices" (Loughran, 2013, p. 122) in educational encounters, which also shapes their pedagogical experiences. This is evidenced in the Mad Studies classroom, where instructors' complex positionalities influence how, what, and why we teach; where students grapple with new ways to talk about their own experiences of psychiatry and madness; and where some students – mostly those in the helping professions, such as nursing – take our courses while simultaneously working placements at psychiatric institutions, where they engage in practices that are in conflict with the position of mad communities (e.g. forced drugging).

Further, while we identify as mad and mad allies, we also explore with students how they might be better allies themselves. We examine radical practices in the helping professions, for example, how someone might work within and against the system in order to support mad people/clients, and also how someone might work outside and

against the system in terms of coalition building. Landry and Church (2016) write, "Being an ally is […] an active terrain of knowing and learning; it has a politics" (p. 179). It requires constant reflection, negotiation, and action. As Ng says, mad allyship is the alignment of oneself with the mad community through one's actions (Mad Positive, n.d.). Accordingly, we teach students allyship is more than identity; it is also the active practice of navigating relationships of power. We then introduce the concept of mad positivity as the practice of this particular form of allyship.

In 2012, Ryerson's School of Disability Studies hosted an event called "Mad Positive in the Academy." This was the first time 'mad positive' was employed to frame a conversation about the kinds of spaces, cultures, practices, and attitudes thoughtfully fostered to challenge sanism and re-centre mad within the space of the university. Some people at this event identified as mad, and some of those who could not claim mad identified as mad positive (Spandler, McKeown, Rawcliffe, Holt, & Maclean, 2013). Landry and Church (2016) refer to mad positive as a standpoint, an epistemological location and a place from which to conduct activism, theorize, and teach. Mad positivity involves confronting stereotypes about madness and mad people, and "challenging the prevailing and assumed negativity around madness" (Spandler et al., 2013, p. 4). Anyone can practice mad positivity, mad-identified and non-mad people alike.

Castrodale (2017) uses the term mad positive to describe a type of "enabling pedagogy," a pedagogy "that counter[s] ableism/sanism inherent in educational systems and practices" (p. 51). We imagine our pedagogical praxis as mad positive, and as located in "the relationship between teaching and learning" (Loughran, 2013, p. 118). Mad positivity characterizes our student-teacher interactions; structures our engagement with

the curriculum; informs how we identify; shapes our relationships to/within the community; and it guides our activist and art practices. Mad positivity is an aspect of the course content, but it is also foundational to these relationships shaping Mad Studies pedagogy.

One way we model mad positivity in the classroom is through our allyship to mad students. The university is a sanist/ableist space privileging normative bodies, minds, and ways of learning. Furthermore, mad and disabled people face many barriers to education in the first place. Mad positivity does not privilege mad over non-mad students. Rather, being mad positive recognizes mad students are systemically discriminated against while also considering other forms of structural marginalization students navigate within the context of schooling.

Because education systems privilege non-disabled and non-mad students, the environment of university is also disabling for people. Educational institutions either create disability because other ways of teaching and learning cannot be conceived of in these spaces, or they exacerbate students' existing distress. As instructors, we do not always know who our mad and disabled students are because they do not all have formal accommodations. Accessibility is bureaucratized within the university (Titchkosky, 2011), requiring students prove just how disabled they are. Therefore, not everyone who needs accommodations can easily access accessibility.

While it is important formal accommodation processes exist within the university, the system does not always work well or work for those who need it. As instructors and professors, engaging a mad positive pedagogy allows us to rethink how we can more effectively support our students. This can take multiple forms. We can begin from a place

of trusting our students; acknowledge how difficult it is for some students to ask for an accommodation; be flexible when students have not adhered to policies on our syllabi; negotiate informal accommodations; acknowledge students are the experts on what they need in order to thrive and succeed; and refuse to make assumptions about our students based on accommodation requests and/or accessibility needs.

What Do I Do with This? Unsettling in Mad Studies Classrooms

A mad positive pedagogy allows students to learn different ways of being in the classroom and can create opportunities and challenges for students as they mobilize mad positivity across disciplines. For students in helping professions – fields such as social work, nursing, and child and youth care – Mad Studies also provides a major conceptual shift, in part due to the recognition that their fields, and by extension their professional futures, are implicated in sanist systemic oppressions. While this shift is challenging for many students, both mad and non-mad, there is an unsettling that transpires for those whose developing professional praxis is reliant on medical models of madness.

This unsettling is well exemplified by an encounter with a student at the close of a lecture where we began to delve into how socio-political forces have and continue to inform the social construction of madness. This is when students begin to reflect on how the paradigm many of them have utilized to understand madness within the context of their personal, academic, or professional lives, may not be as stable as they imagined. One exasperated social work student, posed the question: “What do I do with this?” It is a sentiment echoed by many students in helping disciplines, who are now faced with navigating the space between the dominant teachings they engage in their respective fields and the Mad Studies classroom. Students often enter these discussions secure in the

view that their role is to treat this thing called mental illness in prescribed ways, guided by an infallible scientific body of knowledge. This moment represents an unravelling of their certainty.

We would like to proffer the question, 'What do I do with this?' as a significant juncture for those of us teaching Mad Studies to students who will leave the classroom to engage in helping work where they utilize psychiatric knowledge. If we position our teaching encounters as "fundamentally political" (hooks, 1994, p. 2), that is, as engagements grounded in anti-oppressive struggle, then both this question, and the moment of questioning provide a critical opening for students. Students are given the opportunity to imagine how they might mobilize a mad positive framework as they (re)frame their praxis in relation to this struggle. By fragmenting the question to create two points of foci: 'What do I do' and 'With this' we explore the possibilities for students as they navigate this intractable terrain.

For students training to do helping work, the question 'What do I do?' locates their work as a necessary site of critique. In helping disciplines this question has traditionally been answered through narratives of charity and benevolence (LeFrançois, 2013a). Further, helping professions are heavily enmeshed with dominant frameworks of mental health 'help' focused on providing services to manage mad people's behaviours and improve their functioning based on diagnostic guidelines (Voronka et al., 2014). However, when we centre mad people's knowledge in response to this question, we expose the porousness of the line demarcating help and harm. Privileging mad people's narratives in order to reflect on this question contemporaneously names the violence mad people have experienced under the guise of help and illustrates how this violence has

been normalized (Chapman, 2014). Further, students are challenged to interrogate how violent practices have been repackaged in sanitized and modernized ways.

Reflecting on what they do also assists students in addressing how their respective disciplines are implicated in projects of regulation and normalization. Invested in hegemonic notions of helping (Macías, 2012), professional helping disciplines have been identified as actively monitoring the dividing lines between degeneracy and normalcy in historical and contemporary contexts. They mobilize technologies intended to direct the efficient and appropriate conduct of bodies presumed to act outside the boundaries of normalcy. It is a normalcy informed by sanist scripts, while simultaneously relying on dominant racialized, sexualized, classed, and gendered hierarchies of being (Joseph, 2015b; LeFrançois, 2013b). While students may have acknowledged this regulatory role in relation to interlocking axes of race, gender, sexuality, and class, the trope of benign helper remains far more persistent as they frame madness through medicalized and scientific discourse (see Poole et al., 2012). Our pedagogy stresses psychiatry does not exist outside of the political economy, and global socio-political relations shape its development and operationalization. Students then, are provided with a moment where they can locate themselves in relation to psychiatric knowledge and the violence that proceeds through their disciplines. They can also query their roles as regulatory agents, and the often taken-for-granted knowledge investing them with power in these roles.

Alongside having students question what they do, we can turn to the second component of this question: ‘With this?’ We imagine ‘this’ as having multiple meanings. It represents the orientation to madness sitting at the core of how and what we teach – one that centres mad knowledge and is informed by mad positivity. For many students in

the helping professions, these discursive frames have previously been unavailable as possibilities for their praxis. Mad activism, mad communities, and mad allyship become part of the scope for how they engage with mad people, and for challenging the systemic exclusion and discrimination mad people encounter.

'This' also encompasses the dissonance produced from students' exposure to a mad positive orientation, as the certainty underscoring this aspect of their emergent professional practice ruptures. It invites students to engage with madness in new ways. They are encouraged to re-evaluate the notion that mad people must be regulated, treated, and fixed and to deconstruct the knowledge upon which these ideas are predicated. As students explore the tight connections amongst the monitoring and regulation of race, gender, class, sexuality, and madness in the practices of their professions, they also attend to the structural conditions leading people to experience distress.

Cumulatively 'What do I do' and 'With this' provides students with an alternate frame of reference, encouraging they query how as helpers they are implicated in marginalizing, problematizing, and excluding mad people. This question provides a productive tension for students. It is a tension with the potential to create a profound rupture in how mad and non-mad students imagine their roles in engaging with mad communities as they redefine the discursive limits of their engagement.

Conclusion

Mad Studies metacurriculum challenges sanism in the university and beyond. By restructuring the aims of course design, it shifts classroom dynamics with both interpersonal and political implications. It creates space, particularly for traditionally marginalized students, to be acknowledged as knowledge producers. Further, it offers

students different methodological tools for processing and creating knowledge, which ultimately call into question what counts as knowledge. In so doing, and in rethinking student assessment, it also disrupts normalizing institutional procedures that devalue and exclude mad epistemologies and ways of learning. Additionally, in centring mad histories and activism and the knowledge generated by mad communities, Mad Studies metacurriculum resists the rearticulation of the university space as a sphere of expert knowledge.

Mad Studies students are provided with a distinctive entry point for engagement with madness and mad people, informed by a mad positive pedagogy. It is an approach that, to draw on Alexander's (2005) framing of pedagogy, can incite a "transgressing, disrupting, displacing, inverting [of] inherited concepts and practices […] so as to make different conversations and solidarities possible" (p. 7). The invitation to engage madness differently is a challenge not necessarily accepted by all students, but it is one open to all. The unsettling of students' deeply held beliefs about madness is not always a welcome experience. Nor is the challenge to query and transpose the role of benevolent helper or to re-evaluate the conviction that madness must be mediated. However, by reframing the terms of engagement with madness, Mad Studies metacurriculum has the possibility to engender student unlearning, therefore making room for those conversations to be had and for students to formulate new solidarities. Our pedagogical praxis encourages students not to master Mad Studies content, but rather, as they move through and beyond our courses, to continue to grapple with the uncertainty about what to do … with all of this.

[1] Sanism "refers to the inequality, prejudice, and discrimination faced by people who are constructed as 'crazy' within dominant culture" (Diamond, 2013, p. 77). We conceptualize sanism as operating in concert with other forms of systemic discrimination including but not limited to racism, sexism, transphobia, and homophobia (see also Meerai, Abdillahi & Poole, 2016).

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