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Crip Theory and Mad Studies: Intersections and Points of Departure

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Abstract

The experiences of crip and mad people—as well as the disciplinary homes of crip theory and mad studies—have rarely been brought together in any synthesised manner. In this article, I bring crip theory and mad studies together to explore the similarities, intersections, and points of departure. The article starts by exploring the similar life experiences between crip and mad bodies, including: familial isolation; shame, guilt, and essentialism; stereotypes and discrimination; experiences and rates of violence; the power of diagnostic labels; and, passing and 'coming out'. The discussion then moves to explore the theoretical overlaps between crip theory and mad studies, including: (strategic) essentialism vs constructionism; opposition to norms; subversion and transgression as political tools; and, the problematisation of binaries. The article then meditates on the question of combining these two schools of thought to help forge a collective politics, and speculates about the political methodologies of cripping and maddening dialogues.

Key words
Crip theory, mad studies, ableism, sanism.

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Introduction

Crip and mad people share many common experiences given their social oppression and abjection, and their disciplinary homes—crip theory and mad studies—likewise share several features. Recognising how different disciplines borrow from each other, my aim in this article is to explore the similarities, intersections, and points of departure between crip theory and mad studies. An investigation of this type is warranted because disciplines rarely examine how their concepts, theories, politics, and practices are picked up, (re-)theorised, (re-)used, and (re-)shaped. Disciplines, much like the schools and faculties that host them, (can) become 'closed institutions' (Foucault 1977; Goffman 1961). It is also common for disciplines to ignore the ways in which newer sub-disciplines have taken their ideas and shaped them, particularly when these newer fields are pejoratively described as 'in infancy' (see: Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009; Turpin-Petrosino 2009). Wilson and Beresford (2002) suggest that strengthening the links between crip and mad discourses will help counter hegemonic medicalised and individualised accounts of crip and madness. In building this account, I am indebted to the foundational works of Castrodale (2017), Chandler and Rice (2013), Church (2016), Church et al. (2016), Ignagni et al. (2019), and Rice et al. (2017, 2018). Ahmed (2017: 15) tells us of the importance of citation policy in acknowledging 'our debt to those who came before', and I recognise their work in helping to develop this consolidated account. An investigation of the similarities and points of departure between crip and mad is critical to forging a collective politics, and of considering crip and mad in new and different ways.

In thinking with and through the intersections of crip and mad, I am inevitably confronted by the thoughts of my own temporarily abled and sane body and mind. I am not interpellated as crip or mad, yet I simultaneously sit beyond, beneath, and beside both subject positions (*or*, they sit beyond, beneath, and beside me) (Sedgwick 2003). Crip and mad sit *beyond* me, as subject positions that may come to me at any point in my life. I am temporarily abled and sane, yet crip and mad are slippery and leaky categories (Shildrick 1997), and both may enter my own embodied/corporeal life. This temporariness also relates to how crip and mad sit *beneath* me, haunting me unflaggingly. Indeed, my experience as a queer youth equips me with the understanding of disablement and madness; of believing I was sick, of believing I had the wrong body and thoughts, of feeling imprisoned and in despair, of writing the suicide notes because I could not see a way out (in a sense, a form of madness sits *behind* me). Finally, *beside* me sit my brother and sister; the former mad and the latter crip—their subject positions leaking on to me, giving me a lived experience and situated knowledge with crip and mad. Specifically, I am engaging in a politics that seeks to explore the ways in which situated positionalities and knowledges help to inform crip and mad dialogues, and I work to lay bare and subvert the discursive construction of seemingly stable and binaried categories (Campbell 2009a). Crip and mad subjectivity—as well as any subjectivity—is contingent, permeable, leaky, and revisable (Butler 1993; Davies and Harré 1990; Shildrick 1997).

In the discussion that follows I start by introducing the terms under interrogation: crip and mad. I outline my conceptual approach to them and flag my different uses of the terms at different points in the article. I also justify why I have brought mad studies and crip theory together. I then chart the similar experiential life of crip and mad bodies, and this explication is important in recognising the relationality and interplay between lived experience, everyday practice, and theory (Ahmed 1996, 2000, 2017). I then move to consider the similarities,

intersections, and points of departure between crip theory and mad studies, and I conclude by exploring the potential of cripping/maddening dialogues. My aim, then, is to (re)align these topics for the mutual consumption of mad studies and crip theorist scholars.

Crip and Mad: Defining and Uniting

Crip and mad are both slippery and elusive concepts, and this is the case because they denote people, groups, attitudes, behaviours, practices, activism, and scholarship. Originally used as an invective ('you crip', for example), the multiplicitous nature of 'crip' and mad' creates confusion because each different usage demands different questions, problematisations, and effects. In this article, I use crip and mad in two broadly different ways in two different parts of this text.[1] In the first part of this article (from 'Experiential Overlaps in Crip and Mad Lives') I use crip and mad as umbrella, catch-all terms. This denotes the ways in which subject positions sit under the words 'crip' and 'mad'. Crip is thus used to acknowledge the physically, intellectually, and mentally disabled body,[2] much in the same way 'queer' is used to denote LGBTIQ+ people. In the context of mad, Diamond (2013: 66) writes that the term is:

> frequently used as an umbrella term to represent a diversity of identities, and it is used in place of naming all of the different identities that describe people who have been labelled and treated as crazy (i.e., consumer, survivor, ex-patient). There are many different interpretations of what Mad means and what the Mad constituency is about, but there is a common emphasis on the oppression faced by

[1] I have borrowed from queer scholarship in deploying these concepts in different ways (for examples, see: Ball 2016 and Sherry 2004).

[2] In deploying the terms 'crip' and 'mad' I am cognisant that many people do not self-identify *as* crip or mad, or even its correlates (insane, people with disability, physically disabled, crazy, and so on). I am reminded of Sinason's (1992: 39) observation that for disabled people 'no human group has been forced to change its name so frequently'. She notes that such euphemistic changes are merely new words that replace contaminated old words (Sinason 1992). I am open to the idea that crip and mad may lose value (see: Thorneycroft 2019), yet I deploy them because of their efficaciousness in this contemporary moment. Also see Althusser (1971) and Butler (1993) for their comments on interpellation and the politics of recognition.

> people who have been oppressed as crazy.

Thus, mad is a term that incorporates a wide array of subject positions and discourses. In the next section of the article (from 'Theoretical Overlaps') I use the terms crip and mad in a more critical, subversive, and political manner. I stop using crip and mad as nouns, and discuss them as political tools, methodological standpoints, and theoretical perspectives to prise open a new discursive space for the subject positions often constituted as crip and mad. In this sense, the terms are used as verbs to identify, unearth, disrupt, and subvert the ableism and sanism that have constituted crip and mad bodies as abnormal and less than. Borrowing from Halperin's (1995: 66) conceptualisation of queer, I also take crip and mad to define disabled and mad identities 'oppositionally and relationally but not necessarily substantively, not as a positivity but as a positionality, not as a thing but as a resistance to the norm'.

Before moving on to consider the centrality of ableism and sanism in crip and mad dialogues, I also want to acknowledge the existence of mad crip people. In discussing crip and mad, it would be a mistake to conclude that they are mutually exclusive subject positions—crip theory and mad studies must remain attentive to the diversity of crip and mad bodies. Additionally, I think it is important to recognise that other subject positions intersect with these social designations. As Clare (2015: 143) so poignantly highlights:

> [g]ender reaches into disability; disability wraps around class; class strains against abuse; abuse snarls into sexuality; sexuality folds on top of race…everything finally piling into a single human body. To write about any aspect of identity, any aspect of the body, means writing about this entire maze. This I know, and yet the question remains: where to start?

While I focus on crip and mad in this article, I invite the reader to consider the ways in which other subject positions impact upon, and often compound, the ways in which intersectional

bodies are constituted and regulated. Ableism and sanism are but two matrices of oppression that constitute bodies in particular (pathological) ways, and as I will go on to demonstrate, the abjection of crip and mad bodies cannot be resisted without a collective politics against other forms of social abjection.

Ableism and sanism are intimately connected to crip and mad. Ableism refers to the idea that the abled body is natural and normal, and in fact, the 'corporeal standard' and 'species-typical' (Campbell 2001: 44). Ableism is a 'system of causal relations about the order of life that produces processes and systems of entitlement and exclusion' (Campbell 2017: 287-288). Sanism, as I approach it, describes the 'ways in which society values certain forms of human consciousness and being over others' (Van Veen, Ibrahim, and Morrow 2018: 259)—that is, the preference, expectation, and command for the sane mind. While LeBlanc and Kinsella (2016: 62) and others—such as Diamond (2013) and Meerai, Abdillahi, and Poole (2016)—consider sanism as the 'systematic subjugation and oppression of people who have received "mental health" diagnoses, or who are otherwise perceived to be "mentally ill"', I believe that description to actually *be an effect of sanism*. As far as I am concerned, it is the sanist beliefs that produce the oppression, abjection, and othering inflicted upon mad bodies (just as ableism produces disablism—the belief that disabled people constitute inferior ways of being because they are not abled) (Campbell 2009b). Sanism is invested in shoring up the sane body and mind, and in that shoring the loathing of mad bodies manifests. In any case, to invoke crip and mad is to flaunt and twist the deep-seated beliefs about ableism and sanism, and these matrices of oppression provide the platform or site in which oppression and abjection is fought (to which I turn to later in this article).

In bringing two different disciplines together I have chosen to incorporate mad studies with crip theory—and not disability studies or critical disability studies—because I believe

crip theory provides a more useful platform for the furthering of mad studies as a scholarly and intellectual field. Disability studies has arguably reached a point of 'conceptual exhaustion' (Campbell 2019: 6), whereby its normalising approach to disablement (Goodley 2017), and the tiring 'intellectual masturbation' (Oliver 2009: 50) over the social model has led to weary arguments and repetitive intellectualising (see: Goodley 2001; Hughes and Paterson 1997; Levitt 2017; Woods 2017, for examples). This in many respects explains the proliferation of crip theory, as formed in response to the perceived problems of disability studies (Goodley 2017). While mad studies is a new field, I believe it would be a mistake to use disability studies as its lodestar. Instead, a more critical edge is required, especially one that has learnt from disability studies and plied it for its dis/uses. Crip theory presents itself as a more efficacious approach, as it is a discipline that engages in political action to explode norms, think otherwise, and imagine differently (Beresford 2016). Exposing the similar life experiences between crip and mad people makes evident the alignments between a crip theory and mad studies political project.

Experiential Overlaps in Crip and Mad Lives

Searching for (a) Home(?)

Many members of particular minority groups grow up in a world detached from others within their same group (for example, queer people often grow up around cisgender heterosexual people). This assumption is not always the case, however, for many people of different races and religions are often born into a family or community that privileges the identification of that race or religion (Asquith 2008). Yet for a crip or mad body, they may be the only person in their family to have their subject position, perhaps making them feel like a stranger in their own family and home. As Siebers (2008: 5) notes, 'as a white man I will not

wake up in the morning as a black woman, but I could wake up a quadriplegic'. This isolation—endemic to the leaky, mutable, and unstable nature of bodies and lives—leads many to seek out new families, hence the existence of ghettos (Levine 1979). While gay ghettos are firmly entrenched in many major cities, for crip and mad bodies this is a little more complex. The heterogeneous and permeable nature of crip and mad bodies foreclose the possibility of finding a stable ghetto, especially when one thinks of the intersecting subject positions that run in and through crip and mad. So too, while many gay people perceive themselves as belonging to identity categories (and thus seek out ghettos), many crip and mad bodies consider themselves as belonging to illness categories (and thus confine themselves to their homes). As such, many crip and mad bodies exist with and around abled and sane bodies, producing 'border anxiety' (Young 1990: 146), shame, guilt, and essentialist discourses.

Shame, Guilt, and Essentialism

The power of norms demands that crip and mad people—and most people generally—regulate and reproduce the different technologies and discourses through which their subject positions have been constituted and embodied. Specifically, exterior forces of pathologisation work their way into the psychic life of crip and mad bodies. The pervasive ableism and sanism in society works to tell disabled and mad subjectivities that they are undesirable and abject. Disabled activist and academic Eli Clare (2017: 163) writes: [s]hame is a chasm of loathing lodged in our body-minds, a seemingly impenetrable fog, an unspeakable and unspoken fist. It has often become our home'. Shame can also be a central feeling and emotion for mad people, in perceiving madness as a form of weakness (Ussher 2011). It is unfortunate that the institutions of ableism and sanism create the internalisation of pathologising discourses; Mason (1992: 27) writes:

> [i]nternalised oppression is not the cause of our mistreatment, it is the result of our mistreatment. It would not exist without the real external oppression that forms the social climate in which we exist. Once oppression has been internalised, little force is needed to keep us submissive. We harbour inside ourselves the pain and the memories, the fears and the confusions, the negative self images and the low expectations, turning them into weapons with which to re-injure ourselves, every day of our lives.

This description captures how social practices work their way into the psychic lives of those who are oppressed, how social norms and practices are produced through a psychic enactment of the ideal, which is a fantasy simultaneously produced in un/conscious spheres (see: Butler 1997, 2000). Lotringer (cited in Tyler 2013: 43) suggests that '[p]eople don't just become abject because they are treated like a thing, but because they become a thing to themselves'. The stereotypes and discrimination prevalent in society helps shore up the (internal) devaluation of crip and mad bodies.

Stereotypes and Discrimination

The stereotyping and attendant discrimination directed at crip and mad people pervades social life. Crip and mad people are often stereotyped as dangerous, incompetent, disordered, helpless, and unpredictable (Liegghio 2013). While crip and mad people are constituted as dangerous (to themselves and others), in reality this is seldom the case (Stuart 2003). While it is true that crip and mad bodies are over-represented in the criminal justice system (Prins 2011; Steele and Thomas 2014), this does not mean that such danger can be generalised to society at large. Moreover, their over-representation says more about the criminalisation of particular bodies, the effects of transinstitutionalisation, and ableist and sanist criminal justice frameworks than the danger of crip and mad bodies (Thorneycroft and Asquith 2019). Crip and mad people are also constituted as incompetent, perceived as pathetic individuals incapable of occupying any sophisticated or intellectual job (Liegghio 2013). The

unemployment of crip and mad people, as well as discriminatory workplace recruitment conditions, supports this claim (Baron and Salzer 2002; Runswick-Cole and Goodley 2015). But again, this perception comes from a particular viewpoint that privileges the autonomous (abled and sane) neoliberal subject, and conflates unemployment with individual deficiency. Crip and mad bodies are also constituted as disordered, whereby the power of psy discourses and practices create conditions that seek to 'alter, control, or repair' mad bodies (Liegghio 2013: 122) and cure, correct, or eliminate crip bodies (Campbell 2012). Crip and mad people are also constituted as helpless, whereby they are perceived as possessing no or limited agency (Thorneycroft forthcoming). The denial of sexual citizenship for crip people converses with the myth of the mad rapist, both rendered unable to exhibit 'normal' agentic sexualities. Finally, and relatedly, crip and mad people are constituted as unpredictable in their beliefs, practices, and behaviours. Crip and mad people are thus constituted as 'out of control'. Ultimately, the stereotyping and discrimination of crip and mad bodies is a form of violence, and this violence often occasions physical violence acted upon them.

Experiences and Rates of Violence

Crip and mad bodies are subjected to levels of violence unparalleled to those of abled and sane bodies (Marley and Buila 2001; Sherry 2010). While there are similarities between their experiences—such as the legacies of institutional violence, normative violence, and so on—there are also unique experiences that impact on crip and mad bodies differentially. In terms of their similarities, crip and mad people are both subjected to normative violence, whereby the violence of norms controls and facilitates their regulation and violation (Butler 2004). In turn, crip and mad people are subjected to ableist and sanist violence—the expectation and demand that bodies are supposed to be abled and sane (Campbell 2009b). Crip and mad people also have disproportionately high experiences of institutional violence,

where both populations have been persecuted and prosecuted by the state (Goffman 1961, 1963). Within these institutions, both crip and mad people have experienced violence by state agents, including confinement, sedation, shock treatment, physical, sexual, and emotional violence (Rossiter and Rinaldi 2018; Williams and Keating 1999; Copperman and McNamara 1999). Hospitals, asylums, prisons, and work farms have housed and violated crip and mad people (Thorneycroft forthcoming; Human Rights Watch 2018; Shimrat 2013). Crip and mad people also have high rates of suicide, a form of violence inflicted upon themselves. However, in adopting a critical suicide studies approach (see: Cover 2012, 2013, 2016; White et al. 2016), I claim that suicide can often be conceived as 'self-completed murder'. This approach acknowledges the accretion of injustice, violation, and trauma inflicted by others. Crip and mad people have experienced shared histories of violence—including the legacies of genocide and eugenics. It is also important to recognise the compounding effects that other intersecting subjectivities may have on the crip and mad body. Crip and mad people are already oppressed and violated by society, yet the intersections of crip and mad with other marginalised subjectivities—such as queer and trans people, indigenous peoples, people of colour, women, working class people, and many others—compounds this violation and its attendant effects. Overall, the available evidence paints alarmingly high rates of violence inflicted upon crip and mad bodies and lives. Crip and mad bodies are 'marked', and that mark can be difficult to dislodge.

'Marked' For Life

Crip and mad people are subjected to diagnostic labelling that often follows them throughout the course of their lives. Crip and mad people can experience discrimination when exploring (life) insurance (Hoffman and Paradise 2008; Sharac et al. 2010), seeking a loan such as a mortgage (Hagner and Klein 2005; Sharac et al. 2010), travel (El-Badri and Mellsop

2007; Siebers 2008), employment (Darcy, Taylor, and Green 2016; Krupa et al. 2009), parenthood (Beresford and Wilson 2002; Liddiard 2018), and so on. This discrimination lay in part on a previous diagnosis that makes their request somehow problematic (Wilson and Beresford 2002). Wilson and Beresford (2002: 149, deitalicised) write: 'once we have been diagnosed, "our diagnosis" is recorded (in perpetuity) in our medical and psychiatric records', thus haunting an individual throughout life. Crip and mad people are encouraged to 'come to terms' with their 'pathology', and society forecloses the possibility of employment, travel, and parenthood because a crip and mad body is *less than*. The acquisition of the 'mnemic trace of the body' (Butler 1997: 159) acquires the force of objectification, where the (crip and mad) subject is reduced to an object, and viewed exclusively as a crip or mad body. Once a label is placed upon a body it becomes difficult to shake that label, to view them as anything other than that label. In a sense, when someone is marked in a particular way, all other characteristics, attributes, and qualities are invisibilised and negated. Despite a body being marked, some bodies can appear unmarked and thus must navigate passing and 'coming out'.

Passing and 'Coming Out'

Given the institutions of ableism and sanism, a body is presumed to be abled and sane 'unless otherwise stated' (Swain and Cameron 1999: 68). While many do have physical 'markers', it is also the case that many crip and mad subject positions are non-visible, or not readily visible. The ability to pass, then, largely rests on one's embodiment, where in/visibility mediates a politics of recognition. While Sedgwick (1990: 71), in the context of queer people, writes that the 'closet is the defining structure for gay oppression in this century', I suggest that the act of passing need not be constituted as an act of shame *per se*. Rather, passing can be a strategic enactment, or what Cox (2013: 101) calls a 'legitimate aspect of subjectivity'. While many do not leave their houses in the morning with the

intention of appearing abled or sane, many do in particular moments. Conversely, Siebers' (2004) notion of 'disability as masquerade' is also relevant here; he writes that many crip subjects may 'disguise one kind of disability with another or display their disability by exaggerating it' (Siebers 2004: 4), and this masquerading is important in satisfying suspicions that the disabled subject is eligible for support, or even to assert that the disabled person's subject position should be believed. There is thus vexed connections between discourses of dis/ability and sane/ism and notions of in/visibility. Crip and mad subjects must negotiate their in/visibility, choosing when, where, how, and why to disclose or not disclose. This labour-intensive activity weighs heavily on the crip and mad subject.

Similarly, coming out is neither a static nor singular event; 'coming out' requires coming out *to* different people and groups in different temporal and spatial moments (Samuels 2003). Many factors influence the decision to come out, including an individual's beliefs, experiences, and circumstances. Mason (2002: 82) also suggests 'the rush to declare "who we are" can bring with it an unintended series of assumptions about "who we are not"'. Thus, coming out as a particular subject position again acquires the force of objectification, where other subject positions are foreclosed or disavowed. In any case, crip and mad subjects negotiate the processes of passing, masquerading, and coming out, and in doing so, destabilise the relations between 'being' and 'acting' (Cox 2013; McRuer 2006).

This discussion has thus far showed that crip and mad people experience many similar life experiences, many of which are normatively and physically violent. Indeed, I have not painted a happy picture. My approach might align with what Tuck (2009: 409) calls 'damage-centered research', yet I suggest that without exploring how violence is lived as a social process, it is impossible to explore the spaces of possibility within which such violence might be resisted, and the terms of intelligibility reimagined. Having identified and discussed similar

life experiences between crip and mad subjects, in the following section I turn to the similarities between crip theory and mad studies as disciplines. This project is important in opening up sites, possibilities, perspectives, and attitudes for the efficacious mobilisation of non-pathological approaches to crip and mad bodies and lives.

Theoretical Overlaps

(Strategic) Essentialism vs Constructionism

In broad and perhaps crude terms, the crip and mad subject positions are situated within two disciplines, with each pulling at the subject and constituting them in different ways. Specifically, the power and hegemony of psy disciplines and discourses are imbued with the power to constitute crip and mad bodies as fixed, natural, universal, and ahistorical (Coleborne 2018). This *constitution* creates psychocentrism and a whole repertoire of beliefs, practices, technologies, and discourses that work to pathologise and disorder crip and mad bodies and lives (Campbell 2009b; Daley and Ross 2018). Essentialist discourses work to contain, regulate, classify, govern, monitor, and violate crip and mad people. While psy discplines claim they are identifying the 'real' and the 'known' to *help* crip and mad bodies (and any other non-normative body for that matter), it remains the case that psychiatrisation and medicalisation works to mark the crip and mad body as non-normative and less than (Petersen and Millei 2016). In light of these discourses, crip bodies either need to be ameliorated, cured, or eliminated (Campbell 2009b), and mad bodies need to be altered, controlled, or repaired (Liegghio 2013). Under this logic, a crip and mad body needs to be changed because its existence in the world is wrong and problematic.

In contrast, another field of research rejects the above approach and seeks to highlight the constructedness of (crip and mad) bodies. Crip theory and mad studies is arrayed against

essentialism, instead supporting the view that bodies are produced in the social and cultural contexts of the communities in which people live. Bodies and lives are not fixed or natural; rather they are produced and reproduced (Butler 1990, 1993). As Gorman (2013: 269) suggests, mad studies takes 'social, relational, identity-based, and anti-oppression approaches to questions of mental/psychological/behavioural difference, and is articulated, in part, against an analytic of mental illness'. Similarly, crip theory perceives bodies as socially and culturally mediated, subject to contingency, permeability, leakiness, and revisability (Thorneycroft forthcoming; Shildrick 1997). A move to constructionism allows a de-emphasis on the individual in place of an emphasis on the social, and crip and mad theorists consider this approach more efficacious—and authentic—than the disavowal and pathologisation of crip and mad subjectivities.

Strategic essentialism also features in crip theory and mad studies. According to Butler (1993) and Spivak (1990), strategic essentialism refers to the tactic of essentialising identity in order to mobilise change and/or recognition. For example, strategic essentialism is being deployed when we, as academics and activists, draw upon 'people with lived experience' of mental health issues and disablement because we are ultimately homogenising their often heterogenous experiences in fighting for better rights and services (Voronka 2016). A concern with citing identity discourses is that it re-instantiates them, reinforcing the relations of power and knowledge that have constituted them in a particular (pathological) way (Foucault 1978). However, the important point is that while crip and mad theorists may start with crip and madness, 'it never ends with it, remaining ever vigilant of political, ontological and theoretical complexity' (Goodley 2017: 191). Also paralleling this discussion of (strategic) essentialism is the relatively recent turn to (post-)humanism in crip theory. Developed by Roets and Braidotti (2012), Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole (2014), Feely (2016),

and others, this scholarship recognises the emancipatory offerings of humanism, yet simultaneously advances this discussion to (re)consider the outdated category of 'human' itself. Interrogating connections between nature, technology, biopower, medicine, and so on, this scholarship theorises a posthuman subject (that avoids a return to essentialism). It will be interesting to see the ways in which these ideas may be used in mad studies scholarship, yet suffice to say, the aim of these political projects rests in disrupting the normative orientations that have constituted crip and mad bodies in the first place as less than.

Opposing Norms

Crip and mad theorists have a keen knowledge of the oppressive power of norms, and, as such, work to problematise and disrupt them (Castrodale 2017; Davis 1995; Menzies, LeFrançios, and Reaume 2013). Warner (1999: 53) writes:

> [n]early everyone, it seems, wants to be normal. And who can blame them, if the alternative is being abnormal, or deviant, or not being one of the rest of us? Put in those terms, there doesn't seem to be a choice at all.

The power of norms results in the policing of them, and the imposition of sanctions when they are violated. As Goodley (2014: 159) suggests—non-normatively in academic writing!—'normative standards have the potential to feed some pretty fucked up responses to that which is deemed to be abnormal'. Norms create, and then restrict and regulate, non-normative subjects. The goal, then, is to explode norms, and Hamraie and Fritsche's (2019) recent notion of 'crip technoscience' is one example. Taking 'crip'—'the non-compliant, anti-assimilationist position that disability is a desirable part of the world'—and combining it with 'technoscience'—'the co-production of science, technology, and political life'—they *crip* expectations of enhancement and capacitation and 'push technoscience beyond the military-industrial into the realms of activist resistance and world re-making' (Hamraie and Fritsch

2019: 2, 2, 5). This contribution aims to subvert the norms that call for simple inclusion 'add and stir' models (also see: Thorneycroft 2019; Thorneycroft and Asquith 2019). Crip theory and mad studies is not necessarily concerned with the question of 'how' crip and mad subjects deviate from the norm, but more so with disrupting and subverting the very notion of a 'norm'.

Subversion and Transgression as Political Tools

One technique or methodology for the disruption of norms is subversion and transgression. In the face of normative standards, expectations, and commands, subversion and transgression become the site of resistance. Disability studies and crip theory has a long history of subversion, whereby the aim is to engage in practices and politics that open up alternative ways of living and being (Sandahl 2003). Under this framework, 'disability is renamed as a site of resistance' (Goodley 2017: 193), the abled body is problematised/critiqued (Campbell 2009b; Davis 1995), varied forms of embodiment are promoted (Stryker 1994), disability is conceived as the site of human (un)becoming (Campbell 2017; Shildrick 2012), and 'negative' words and practices are reclaimed (McRuer 2006). The aim is to think in different ways, to think otherwise, and to imagine a different world. Similarly, in the context of mad studies, transgression and subversion involves challenging and offsetting psychiatric discourses (Burstow 2013), as well as reclaiming mad identities as proud identities (hence the mad pride movement) (Lewis 2006). Protest is important, too; crip people have engaged in mass crawls, and mad people in bed pushes, for example[3] (Diamond 2013; Siebers 2008). Reclaiming terms and practices is also important—

[3] Mass crawls are utilised to highlight the physical and symbolic inaccessibility of institutions, and bed pushes involve wheeling gurney's in public places to highlight the forces—and lack of agency—that ensnare people into mental 'health' institutions.

from people with disability to disabled people, from disabled to crip, from hospital to loony bin, from mentally ill to mad. Ultimately, the purpose of transgression and subversion is to infiltrate the practices, discourses, and technologies *from the inside* and then twist, queer, and crip them. As Lorde (1984: 112) says:

> [i]t is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

Crip and mad people cannot rely on the rules placed upon them—they must engage in invasion and insurrection to dismantle the norms that have constituted them as *less than*. In addition to resignification, reappropriation, and theatricalisation (McRuer 2006; Sandahl 2003), and exposure and demystification (Foucault 2006), another such tactic of transgression and subversion is the problematisation of binaries.

Problematising Binaries

Society is preoccupied with drawing distinctions: self/other, normal/abnormal, nature/nurture, man/woman, abled/disabled, sane/mad. Termed Cartesian dyads, the former category is situated as the norm and the latter as the opposite. The problem with these distinctions is that the former categories are unquestioned, uninterrogated and naturalised, while the latter categories are visibilised and constituted as deviant through their constant reiteration and surveillance as abnormal. Abled and sane are unremarkable and taken-for-granted, while crip and mad are constituted and inscribed as deviant and abnormal, 'drawn once and traced over and over again with the indelible pencil of nature' (Michalko 2002: 101). Part of the oppressive nature of these binary distinctions is the belief and expectation

that you are one or the other—there is no room for ambiguity. Binaries also feature *within* crip and mad subject positions; one need only think of the physically or intellectually disabled subject position, and the 'dangerous mad' or 'worried well' mad person (Goodley 2017; Wilson and Beresford 2002).

A part of crip theory and mad studies involves the problematisation and deconstructive unravelling of binaries. In the context of madness, Wilson and Beresford (2002: 154) reflect on their own positionalities:

> [t]he two of us experience mental and emotional distress. Sometimes our distress is more extreme than at other times, but we place ourselves alongside everyone else on a continuum of mental and emotional distress and well-being: a continuum that does not show binary opposition between 'the mad' and 'the not-mad'.

Highlighting the continuum of various subject positions, as well as the temporal and spatial parameters that mediate such positions, helps play a part in a crip and mad politics that exposes the artificiality of binaries (Kafai 2013). Binaries must be prised open to enable sites of resistance and a resignification of what it means to be mad or crip. Binaries must be problematised and prised open to avoid restrictive subject positions, and to enable more livable and intelligible ways of being in the world.

Having identified the shared theoretical connections, similarities, and pursuits between crip theory and mad studies, in the following section I consider the merits of forging a collective politics through cripping and maddening. I specifically tease out the merits of a coalitional methodology between crip, mad, cripping, maddening, crip theory, and mad studies.

Crippingly Mad and/or Maddeningly Crip

How might the crip and/or mad subject negotiate the ableism and sanism in society? Should the crip and/or mad subject conform to the ableism and sanism in society? Or, should the crip and/or mad subject explore alternative ways of living and being in the world? Given that conforming to ableism and sanism inheres the negation of disability and madness, it seems that the latter question is the most ethical approach. Crip and mad people often grow up in worlds where they are made to feel as if they do not belong. To counter the hegemonic norms that have constituted these populations as less than, crip and mad people engage in wry critiques through cripping and maddening. Cripping is a political and methodological tool that exposes and critiques abled assumptions, expectations, practices, and effects (Clare 2015; Sandahl 2003). Cripping forces people to step back from the 'known' and the normative, and to rethink alternative ways of living and being. While cripping has entered disability discourse, maddening is a practice that is under-explored and under-theorised. Maddening also involves processes that demand people step back from the 'known' and the normative, whereby mad people engage in practices that expose and critique sanist assumptions, expectations, practices, and effects (Dalke and Mullaney 2014). Cripping and maddening involves disrupting and subverting ableism and sanism.

Mitchell and Snyder (2000), Baynton (2001), Withers (2014), and McRuer (2017) have all noted the ways disorder figures in the dis/avowal of disabled and other minority subjectivities. The historical oppression of abjected groups has been justified by constituting such groups *as disabled*, yet in claiming their rights and identities, these groups have tended towards disavowing disability—'we're not disabled!'. McRuer (2017: 64) suggests that this assertion—'we're not disabled!'—has always actually meant 'don't understand us as disordered or pathologized'. Accepting this proposition, I wonder what this might then mean

in trying to forge a collective politics between crip theory and mad studies. If crip people disavow—'we're not perverse' or 'we're not sick!'—what might this mean for the mad subject that is so often damagingly labelled perverse and/or sick? As McRuer (2017: 64) notes, 'the rejection of rhetorics of disorder…is never innocent of the very processes of stigmatization that speakers or thinkers are trying to renounce'. Withers (2014: 117) also suggests it is quite regressive to use 'a stigmatized identity of one group as shorthand for representing the victimization/disempowerment/oppression of disabled people'. I suggest, following McRuer (2017), that it may be more efficacious to engage in a simultaneous rejection/embrace of disorder. Such an approach forges crip and mad bodies together, repudiating the phobic burden between them ('don't worry, we're not like *that*, we're just like you, we're not your worst nightmare') (McRuer 2017: 68). A question: what might this simultaneous rejection/embrace of disorder look like?

I suggest that there may be something seductive and desirable in embracing disorder through anti-sociality. Impossible bodies engage in disorderly conduct, and to avoid the pathological ways in which this is so often constituted, embracing disorder may be an agentic act of counter-alienation and radical passivity (Campbell 2013). Edelman's (2004) account of anti-sociality involves fucking the future. Edelman, according to McRuer (2017: 68), 'wonders what it might mean to acquiesce to the charge that we are society's worst nightmare and to embrace our figuration as the negative force working against the social order'. This approach is similar to Halperin's (2007: 65) embracement of abjection; he writes that abject bodies 'need to admit our pleasure in being the lowest of the low, in being bad, in being outlaws, in betraying both our own values and those of the people around us'. Embracing abjection and disorder are strategic responses to social condemnation. Part of this politics is

about opening up new sites and possibilities of being human. To turn Edelman's mission of fucking the future, we may instead say: fuck off ableism, and fuck off sanism!

There is a direct relationality between crip and mad bodies in the pursuit of anti-sociality. Campbell (2013: 212) writes that the crip subject, whom in their defiance of ableist normativity, 'comes to be figured in cultural terms as monstrous or alternatively in the language of medical-technics as "mad" or pathological'. I would add to this and suggest that the reverse is also true—that the mad subject who defies sanist normativity comes to be figured as disordered, as disabled. Crip, then, is not just related to ableism, nor is madness only related to sanism. Ableism and sanism work in concert with each other, abjecting bodies as less than. In response, then, crip(ping) and mad(dening) need to work together to resist these normative, pathologising discourses. Oppression and abjection is brought down on crip and mad bodies through multiple modes, and while this is primarily through ableism and sanism, it is also important to recognise that these modes work in concert with (hetero)sexism, racism, ageism, and so on (see: Meerai, Abdillahi, and Poole 2016). In order to resist, then, a collective set of conditions and tools (including cripping and maddening) are also required. Individually, opportunities are restricted; yet collectively there are possibilities. A politics of anti-sociality is about foregrounding the vacuousness of an ableist and sanist ethos, and in highlighting further possibilities of crip/mad lifestyles. Cripping and maddening exposes ableist and sanist beliefs and conjures renewed ways of living crip and mad lifestyles. In engaging in this type of politics, however, it is also worth ensuring that neither mad studies nor crip theory is affected by usurpation.

Forging Ahead, Together?

Since the emergence of mad studies, a number of arguments have been made about preserving the field and preventing its co-option (Beresford and Russo 2016; Burstow 2013).

Beresford and Russo (2016: 270) are preoccupied with 'what can be done in order to safeguard the distinctiveness of Mad Studies and foster its unique contribution'. They are cautious of mad studies' relationality to disability studies; they write: 'Mad Studies has an evolving position in relation to Disability Studies; sometimes incorporated in it historically, sometimes allied to it and increasingly seeking its independence' (Beresford and Russo 2016: 272). Central to their concern about disability studies is the debates over the social model of disability (mentioned earlier) that continues unabated. They remain vigilant that mad studies might degenerate 'into an abstracted intellectual exercise' that is 'reduced to policy rhetoric', leaving 'the doors open for the dominant structures of psychiatry to be reinforced and perpetuated' (Beresford and Russo 2016: 272). To be sure, this is a serious concern. However, I suggest that a coalitional politics between crip theory and mad studies is nevertheless vital. As Beresford and Russo (2016: 273) readily acknowledge: 'if Mad Studies is to gain critical mass and impact on the mainstream, then it will need the strength and solidarity that comes from seeking to build alliances between different groups of service users as well as different professions and disciplines. Mad Studies cannot be narrowly owned'. Coalitions and solidarity, rather than competitiveness and siloes, are what is needed to mobilise the acceptance of difference and a non-violent ethos.

Crip theorists' and mad studies scholars' need to be aware of the ways in which similar life experiences are mediated in and through the relationality and oppressive features of ableism and sanism, and likewise remain attentive to the ways in which theoretical and political positions are related to each other through crip/mad dialogues. I argue that a coalition between crip theory and mad studies will help fight against abjection. After all, human lives are relational, interdependent, and co-constitutive, and we cannot live without the support of others (Butler 2015; Mingus 2010). As Butler (2015: 84, 88) suggests, 'there can be no

embodied life without social and institutional support', and 'no human can be human without acting in concert with others'. We need to work with, not against, our shared humanity. If seemingly disparate disciplines continue on their own trajectories, then the battles against oppression and abjection become heroically individualised. And if one discipline wins the battle against essentialist and pathological discourses and practices, the power of abjection phobically shifts to burden other abjected groups. Surely decades of identity politics have taught us that non-violence and acceptance cannot be attained when minority groups are pitted against each other. The struggle for non-ableist freedoms and possibilities cannot be separated from the fight against sanism, just as collectives must be forged against sexism, racism, heterosexism, ageism, speciesism, and lookism.[4] Individually minority groups are constrained by the multiple modes and practices in which oppression is brought down; collectively, though, possibilities become promissory. Given the multi-dimensional forms of abjection and oppression, resistance likewise requires the complicity and action of multiple agents, politics, and perspectives. Halperin (1995: 18) tells us that the aim of an 'oppositional politics is…not liberation but resistance'. If true, what could possibly be better than resisting together?

Concluding Comments

This article has charted the similar life experiences between crip and mad subjects as well as the theoretical overlaps between crip theory and mad studies. It began as an exploratory exercise, yet I have become convinced that there are enough similarities to warrant a coalitional politics. To be sure, we must be mindful of avoiding the homogenisation

[4] Lookism refers to prejudice that is based on appearance (see: Patzer 2008 and Warhurst et al. 2009).

of heterogeneous bodies and lives, particularly with regard to the recent proliferation of mad studies and its investment in shoring up its own intellectual space. However, crip theorists and mad studies scholars are engaging in a similar politics—they are trying to resist the oppressive regimes of ableism and sanism. The overlaps between these two forces warrant combined approaches, perspectives, and fights. If anything else, learning from each other may prove useful in our theorisations, and help to open the closed institutions that segregate forms of knowledge and understanding.

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