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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Transformation in the academy by coming back a Mad person

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Abstract
I entered the academy as a conventional academic and decided to leave it after two years because it seemed to me what it did was harmful, discriminatory and regressive. I felt I had to work in more equal ways and returned to work in a community setting, but ended up without funding, having to live on benefits, experiencing severe distress and having to use mental health services. I made contact with a recently established radical UK survivors' organization, and got involved in that and 13 years after leaving academia returned now a different person and now able to have a different kind of role in and relationship with academia as a survivor educator and researcher, in a setting committed to diversity and supportive of my experience. In this piece, I write about this overall experience; the inter-relations of my change and the change in academia and the insights both for survivors and the academy I have gained from all this. I write as a cis man, member of a minority ethnic group (a non-zionist jew) and survivor activist, recognizing that my experience is unremarkable, but hopefully offering useful insights for others in their engagements with the academy as both a situation for maddened people and a maddening place for people. My involvement with the academy has always been coupled with my active involvement in survivor organisations and action – the two always feeding into each other.

Keywords
Mad studies, academia, distress, mental health services, user involvement, user led/survivors organisation, survivor researcher, activist, welfare benefits, inclusive involvement

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Introduction

The theme of this discussion, written from a lived experience perspective is connection and disconnection; the way that the construct of 'mental health/disorder' is closely associated with disconnection and the new social movement (NSM) of Mad Studies with reconnection. I don't claim to speak for others but from my own particular experience and experiential knowledge of participatory issues that have gained increasing interest and attention in recent

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years. This theme is one that touches on multiple aspects of madness and distress, with traditional analytical constructs frequently disconnecting us from ourselves, society and each other. Emergent Mad Studies meanwhile has helped us identify the connections that are at the heart of making sense of madness and ourselves and of responding to both in helpful rather than damaging ways.

My particular concern here is to reunite the political and the personal in this context, taking as my twin starting points:

- the commitment of the women's movement to the belief that 'the personal is political'

and

- the conflicting underpinning logic of the medicalised individual model of prevailing psych interpretation and response to madness and distress, that they are problems within us, that may be affected by outside circumstances but are essentially the equivalent of physical illnesses with comparable aetiologies, symptoms and pathways.

My concern here is both to revisit the wider relations between madness, distress and our world and societies, but also as a central part of that, to focus more specifically on the relation of madness, mad people and the academy. This is both because:

1. the academy has been central in the production of prevailing psych disciplines and professions – their conceptualization, training and knowledge production;

and

2. because of the developing issue of the academy's relation with mad people, as their efforts for them and their experiential knowledge to be included continue to grow in significance internationally, in the global south as well as global north.

Working in the academy

I entered the academy as a conventional academic and decided to leave it after two years because it seemed to me what it did was harmful, discriminatory and regressive. I felt I had to work in more equal, inclusive and participatory ways, but ended up having to live on benefits, experiencing severe distress and using mental health services. Thus, I have had two periods as an academic; the first as a non-service user, the second as a service user/survivor.

I remember the train journey taking me to my first academic job - 250 miles - a long journey in the UK and at the time, one that took a relatively long time. I was to be a lecturer in social policy or as it was then called social administration and my students included professional social work students. I got talking to the older woman sitting across from me in the carriage. I told her where I was going and what I was doing. And I quickly realized that it surprised her

that someone was going to be teaching about social policy who had, as it were, never really done it – as a worker, manager, or policy person. Also in truth, as I saw for myself, I had little experience on the other side of the counter, beyond signing on for benefits, trying to find accommodation and doing some research. I remember taking this in and agreeing with her. I have often reflected on it since. From what pool of knowledge or expertise was I going to teach? From my present vantage point, maybe being prepared to learn!

What I also remember was a commitment I had already made to myself before setting off. I would try and do my best in every way for the students I had responsibility for. I must not let them down, do less than my best, betray the truth or treat them all as other than equals. From childhood I had hated the way that adults could so easily ignore the rights of children and young people, override their ideas and experience. For me the defining experience of my growing up years was the Vietnam War; the massive slaughter of innocents on all sides – an enormous institutionalized act of child abuse as I saw it. The UK didn't send troops to Vietnam, but we supported the Americans and we had American students on the courses I was involved in, so for me the connection was a very real one.

I worked hard at the University, I liked the students and there was a general commitment to them, I had some good colleagues, I was able to get on with my research and I met my life's partner. But after the end of the first year, although this was a permanent appointment, I had decided I must leave. I also discovered that a colleague much valued by the students, had come to a similar conclusion and we both left after two years in post. I was warned it would be difficult to get such appointments again, to think carefully, but my decision was made. Academics seemed to have an inappropriate significance in the local community. They would be on the management committees of local organisations and initiatives making decisions about them, while local people, with much greater knowledge and investment, would be on the receiving end of those decisions. It seemed to me that universities, their teaching and research were part of an approach to policy and practice where one more powerful group prescribed what they thought another less powerful group needed. This seemed at least a paternalistic, if not authoritarian, controlling and top-down model - especially since there seemed to be little overlap between those shaping and those using resulting policies and services. Being part of a university felt overall like reinforcing rather than challenging existing power relations, prevailing 'expert' narratives and othering narratives of the devalued groups we were seeking to help support. This was a systematic rather than individual issue and perhaps not surprising given the traditional elitist understanding of 'higher education'.

Working in a more equal and inclusive way

I wanted to work in a more egalitarian, grassroots way, rooted in my own community which then was identified as a disadvantaged inner city area, where I shared issues with other people and we tried to work together inclusively and on equal terms. We did this. We worked alongside other community and identity-based groups and organisations, deliberately trying

to do things in an inclusive and participatory way and spread the message that this was the way to work. We developed local knowledge resources with an emphasis on supporting local people, including particularly marginalized groups, to offer their views, tell their accounts and get together to do what they wanted to do. We found like-minded people, allies and other sympathetic groups and projects (Beresford and Croft, 1978; Beresford, 2021).

However, this was a time of hardening right wing populist politics, locally, nationally and internationally. We couldn't get secure funding, we worked unpaid, living on poverty-level benefits, and it wasn't long before I was struggling materially and mentally and drawn long-term into the psychiatric system.

Making sense of my madness

Madness and distress may have many starting points; trauma, loss, discrimination, poverty, violence, ageing, disability, sexual abuse, war and conflict, but in my case, I believe the roots were laid in my childhood. I've realized since that what for me at the time were coping mechanisms were part of the aetiology of disorder from the point of view of the prevailing 'expert' psych understandings. Experiences I found frightening like the sense of hearing voices and strange noises were part of the medical experts' symptomatology. I was left susceptible by what I experienced. Most of all, those feelings and fears, that I couldn't and didn't make sense of at the time, came back to bite me in adulthood when the pressures I came under overcame me. Then with the help of skilled workers in the psych system who were more than the sum of their training and professional learning, together with the help and insights of other survivors, I could begin to make sense of my own lived experience.

Experts have long looked into people's pasts, their childhoods, to make sense of their adulthood. One of the understated issues for survivors, at least from my experience, is how difficult it can be to examine and reflect on your situation when you are in the midst of it. It was only as I was able to recognize and put together the nature and effects of my seriously emotionally abusive childhood that I was able to do the same for myself, along with help from my survivor friends, the survivor organization I joined and a supportive partner. For me making sense of madness was a matter of discovering and working through what had happened to me, with help from professionals, survivors and loved ones – establishing the connections with what originally happened and who I was, from these different, sometimes conflicting perspectives, giving real value to my own and other people's lived experience and the understandings that flowed from that. It also meant making sense of my identity as a cis man, and member of an ethnic minority, something I had been encouraged by my mother to hide as a child.

The equipment the dominant psych world offered me for addressing and negotiating my experience was very narrow. It set me on a chemical journey of reliance on prescribed and damaging medication, which it and I had subsequently to deal with. It framed my experience narrowly in terms of a medical model, which narrowly interpreted me and what was

happening in terms of pathology and disorder. Most important the emphasis then as now was on something wrong *within*, probably to be understood in biomedical and chemical terms, located within my head, more specifically my brain.

However, the human beings within the system could also turn it on its head. I was fortunate enough also to have the support of an extremely skilled, experienced and understanding psychologist. What this meant was that my contacts with her became more like a form of coproduction. I would listen to her, and I felt she listened to me and between us we constructed an analysis, understanding and ways forward for my situation. This was not a psych worker – as is often the case – as impersonal agent of a medical model, but a humane, responsive and helpful helper as support.

Over this period, I had also made contact with a recently formed radical UK psychiatric system survivors organization, and got involved in that, as well as disabled people's organisations, user involvement activities and user-led collective action.

What this meant was that much later, after years more living on poverty-level benefits and government unemployment schemes, I was looking for paid work to escape the poverty and insecurity that long overshadowed our lives.

Returning to academia

One day I saw a small advertisement for a half-time job as a social policy academic. I made careful lists, for and against applying and realized that the first list greatly outweighed the second. Why was that so, after my earlier experience? Why would I want to return to academia? There was push and pull here. Anyone who has lived long term on welfare benefits will understand the pressures to escape them – of both stigma and hardship. I had been fortunate and secured some short-term participatory research and other funding but this was uncertain and insecure and a difficult future to cope with. Now I believed I had worked out a more self-determining pathway with my partner for our lives and the work I wanted to do. Such participatory work in the 1990s was now gaining a much greater interest and priority in policy, practice and research. It had become mainstream and was now impacting on the academy and related policymakers.

A different identity in a different academy

Happily I got this part-time academic job as a psychiatric system survivor (although at this stage I didn't dare do so as an out-survivor).

Much had changed between 1977 when I left my first academic job and 1990 when now as a survivor I applied for this one. I believe that the key transformation that took place which I am writing about was in me. I was changed by many experiences - of parenthood, distress, poverty - but especially by long term use of devalued services and involvement in grassroots movements.

Meanwhile there had been changes in academia, especially perhaps the college I went to in 1990, fifteen years after my initial academic job. This was a college that had sought determinedly to address issues of diversity, particularly then in relation to gender and ethnicity and this was reflected and represented in both the student and teaching body, as well as in the curriculum and support available for students. I was teaching on professional social work courses where there was similarly a particular commitment then to challenging discrimination and oppression. Many of our students had disadvantaged backgrounds and could bring the strengths and understandings from that to their professional practice.

Also, my relation with academia was now fundamentally different, I was a half-time worker here, never full-time and always devoted to working as an activist and committed to sharing my learning between the two roles. So, I was amazingly fortunate to find myself in receptive, supportive and fertile ground for change, where there was much I could learn from my highly diverse colleagues and students. I had new experiential knowledge which gave me greater confidence in other aspects of my identity and which informed my approach and that I could share with them.

Initially the job was hard for me. I wanted to run out of seminar rooms in panic. I wondered if I would be able to manage after a long period out of conventional employment. However, as I have said, I was working, teaching sociology and research methods, with a very diverse group of students on professional social work courses, with lots of life experience themselves and this helped. I quickly realized that although the issue hadn't been discussed at my appointment (not a risk I then felt secure enough to take), that ultimately I had to be out with both my colleagues and students about my survivor experience. I couldn't cope with this as a secret, although I knew people who had to make this choice and respected them for so doing. As my identity became known to students, so some sought guidance and information about their own situation and about coming out or not. So, my identity and experience began to feel like a resource that could be useful to others as well as myself. Put simply, who I had become, influenced what I did and what it meant. Not much later the national social work regulator in England, then the General Social Care Council, made a general ruling that anyone with psychiatric experience could not normally practice as a social worker, even if it had had no negative impact on their work – until this was successfully challenged by a survivor social worker and the then anti-discriminatory organization, the Disability Rights Commission. This unacknowledged discrimination was shocking to see.

However, around the same time at the beginning of the twenty first century, new requirements which as an activist I had been involved in advancing meant that all professional social work courses were required to have service user and carer involvement in all aspects and stages of their operation. Central government also provided a pot of funding to all colleges involved to help make this a practical possibility. At least in the context of social work (and later related health profession education) there was a real sense of participatory change

in the academy. This was taken seriously and such involvement had to be adequately evidenced in regulatory inspections.

I was able to establish an international Centre for Citizen Participation at the University which had a focus on involving people as service users in its process and activities. We were able to develop a board jointly made up of disabled people/service users, academics and others, which undertook participatory and emancipatory research with strong mental health service user and disabled people involvement and representation. We secured statutory and non-statutory funding, worked in collaboration with user led organisations, developed links with policymakers and won awards both within and beyond the university.

Accessing support

In the UK I was able to secure support in the workplace as a survivor first under disability and then equalities legislation. Following the lead of the US, we have anti-disability discrimination legislation. Disabled employees – and the definition is broad and inclusive - can, for example, seek 'reasonable adjustments' to enable them to work in the way that is most helpful for them and which challenge unnecessary and inappropriate barriers they may face. When my college was incorporated in a much larger, more conventional university, I made the decision to secure such adjustments to protect myself. This was new territory for both me and the university, and I gained the support of a skilled and experienced disabled advocate to be present with me in the process for agreeing these. My manager was friendly and emphasized the informality of the process. My advocate challenged this cozy atmosphere, highlighting that this process was a matter of securing rights and challenging discrimination. I learned then that informality can be the enemy of effectiveness and being able to be assertive, and as a result of my advocate's much more business-like approach, I was able to work out what adjustments I really needed and get these formally agreed in a way which was really helpful. I also realized that as a disabled person I was able to gain more protection under increasingly neoliberal conditions than other non-disabled workers who were increasingly being placed under inappropriate pressure.

This formal recognition of my status as a disabled person also meant I no longer had to be cautious about my identity. It was public knowledge, another barrier was broken and I could use my lived experience more explicitly in my teaching and play a more active part in advising students who sought help and others who shared such experience.

As I have said, I was represented in my attempt by a skilled disabled advocate who highlighted how difficult it is to try and represent yourself, however experienced you might be in representing others and also the importance of challenging any apparent informality and casualness in the process. This was about rights and challenging discrimination.

The essentially discriminatory nature of the academy

A lesson I quickly learned was how pervasive discrimination and 'mentalism' were in professional learning. At that time social work saw itself as a leader in 'anti-oppressive' or 'anti-discriminatory' practice (ADP/AOP). There is no question that it highlighted issues of oppression in relation to issues of ethnicity, sexuality and gender at cost to itself and in advance of other professions and disciplines. But in relation to madness and mental distress, there could be no question that it was still heavily rooted in its theorizing and practice in psych ideas and assumptions and that these permeated its teaching, resources, role and relationship with service users (Beresford and Wilson, 2000). At this time, so-called 'approved social workers' had powers to restrict the rights of service users as mental health service users and remove their children in association with medical professionals. I and survivor colleagues worked hard to surface these issues and contradictions and challenge social work's ambiguous role in relation to madness and distress; as part of a medical-model based psych system, but based essentially on a social model and approach in line with its social perspective (Beresford and Wilson, 1998 and 1999).

All the time I worked in a university I was also involved in disabled people's and survivor-led organisations. In my view, both of these, particularly the latter, have been facing increasing difficulties in more recent years as the control of neoliberal politics and ideology internationally has grown more and more powerful in the Global North (Beresford, 2025). We have seen the two; neoliberalism and the psych system operating in an informal but mutually reinforcing alliance, with their shared commitment to individualized understandings and responses to want and distress and expectation that support should either be commodified and paid for or provided through mutual aid by disadvantaged groups and communities. Meanwhile movements like 'global mental health' have been expanded into the Global South, an increasingly powerful challenge to Indigenous and self-organised movements challenging dominant colonialistic and psychiatrised responses to madness and distress (Beresford and Rose, 2023).

Mad Studies enters the equation

The issue really became high profile with the emergence of Mad Studies, particularly during the second decade of this century.

Mad Studies is an international survivor-led movement with its origins in the Global North, but with emerging Indigenous developments also in the Global South. Where the survivor movement has not always had a consistent philosophy or set of values beyond service users speaking and acting for ourselves, Mad Studies has been more firmly and explicitly rooted. Its key values and principles include:

- It rejects a bio-medical model of 'mental well-being'/mental illness/disorder etc;

- It is based on a rights, social and holistic model and approach, rather than individualised understandings and approaches;
- It values and gives priority to survivors' lived experience and first-person experiential knowledge;
- It values survivors being able to speak and act for themselves
- It emphasises the importance of inclusion; treating diversity with equality, decolonisation and challenging the dominance of global north ideas and models and devaluing of indigenous and global south understandings.
- It is survivor-led but not limited to survivors. It is open to all to be involved who accept its principles.
- It is supportive of building broader alliances beyond 'mental health' with other groups committed to the principles on which it is based;
- It builds on collectivist approaches to understanding, organising and making change;
- It is clearly ideologically and theoretically based (LeFrançois et al, 2013).

Mad Studies is clearly one of the new social movements that are committed to self-definition, self-organisation, self-expression and speaking for ourselves.

At the same time, critiques from both within and outside the psychiatric system survivors' and Mad Studies movements highlight some of the particular challenges which Mad Studies faces if it is to serve a helpful rather than an ambiguous role.

Mad Studies and the academy

The first is its relation with the academy. Intimations of the complexity of roles and relations with academic institutions have already been demonstrated in connection with my own experience as both a non-survivor and survivor. The academy occupies a key position globally as an elite producer of knowledge through its research role and reinforcer of prevailing intellectual, occupational and social divisions in its educational and professional training roles. This does not sit comfortably with it being a disrupter of dominant assumptions, values and ideology. However, its role in innovation and intellectual inquiry does create space for the development of new and competing ideas. We have seen how this can play out with other new social movements (NSMs) where the academy can play a pacifying role, converting struggles into studies, organic intellectualism to privileged enquiry. As critics have highlighted, Mad Studies is similarly subject to such contradiction. It has long had strong connections with the academy, drawing on space, resources and skills often otherwise unavailable. At the same

time, the academy is an ambiguous institution, well able to incorporate as well as advance any innovation or challenge (see for example, Jones and Kafai, 2024).

It's important for us to remember that while neoliberalism may have taken us further towards totalitarian societies we are not there yet. The academy like everything else is not monolithic. There are variations within it, particularly because of the impact of different values and individuals and this provides our opportunity. We have to engage with it – if we want to effect change.

There have been longstanding concerns that the academy *academicizes* issues. We have seen it in relation to other New Social Movements. Instead of prioritizing change, it is pressured to focus on its own abstract analysing and this rather than achieving wider change becomes its priority. Rather than theory and practice combining to create a praxis, their segregation is emphasised. Instead of encouraging organic intellectualism where we can all be part of the creative process, it perpetuates an 'expert' class. These are all real pressures placed on the academy especially under neoliberalism. While there is a new emphasis in the UK, for example, on so-called research 'impact', this tends to be concerned with supporting prevailing policymaking rather than challenge or opposition, although at Brunel we were able to develop a formal case study in the process, which highlighted the challenge of user involvement.

The task that faces us as survivors and allies is to maintain Mad Studies as a liberatory praxis combining theory and struggle, rather than it being reduced to an abstracted domain of 'studies'; the threat that overshadowed women's, disability and queer studies and led to pressures for more critical approaches challenging prevailing academic models, rather than mirroring them (Jones and Kafai, 2024). That means supporting the recruitment of people with lived experience as a core concern of Mad Studies, as academic peers, rather than merely 'peer' workers, through developing new pathways, qualification routes and greater equalisation of funding towards people with lived experience.

Addressing diversity, working for inclusion

There has long been a tendency to conceive of psychiatric system survivors as a narrow, homogeneous group, characterised as different from the rest of us. The reality is that mental health service users/survivors are actually a highly diverse group, not just on the basis of the diagnostic labels attached to them, or even on the basis of the representation of protected characteristics, for example, in relation to ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexuality and so on (Bansal et al, 2022). One of the features of the development of this movement, as of other NSMs has been pressure for recognition of the constituency's diversity and the development of intersectional theory in response to this (Williams, 2021). Unless such diversity is addressed with equality and an inclusive approach adopted to involving people in Mad Studies developed, then only a partial picture of their views, concerns and experiential knowledge is likely to emerge and those facing some of the biggest barriers are likely to be excluded, with Mad Studies merely mirroring prevailing exclusions.

Mad Studies and decolonisation

There are signs that Mad Studies is developing as a movement in Global South countries even if its origins lie in the Global North. But this is still not without risk of it being incorporated in Global North and colonial agendas. If this threat is to be minimised, then it is important that support and appropriate attention are given both to Indigenous non-psychiatric developments and also to new and emerging self-organised developments. Both can be identified in low and middle income countries and both can be seen as reflecting the broader principles of Mad Studies. This means ensuring that the focus of Mad Studies is not artificially limited to having an anti-psychiatry or psych-centric focus, but rather connecting with the broader holistic frameworks that have developed locally. While some Global South nations have developed strong psychiatric structures and institutions as a result of past colonisation, this is not true for all. Some are still largely free of such survivals having developed different Indigenous responses to Madness and distress, sometimes, for example, based on building alliances between NSMs and campaigns around poverty and disadvantage, at others drawing on traditional and Indigenous models and understandings like Ubuntu (Eromosele, 2022). Others still have drawn philosophical inspiration and positive lessons for policy and practice from the United Nations Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities. There is no reason why Mad Studies should not learn from pluralist and Indigenous approaches to madness and distress, building on its commitment to holistic, social and self-defined understandings based on lived experience (Beresford and Rose, 2023). It has certainly encouraged me to engage with my own personal, social and cultural history, coming from a family of refugees fleeing persecution, to make sense of my distress and to respond creatively to it.

Contradictions

My academic journey has highlighted many paradoxes. It has been typified by contradiction. So, working ‘in and alongside’ the community held the promise of a liberatory and liberating role, but the structural devaluing of such an approach and the low priority attached to it has meant that it tends to be underfunded and workers insecure. That helps explain my fate, whereas people employed in the university system could expect more to be more valued and secure. For me, as an out-survivor, the latter came to offer an empowering acceptance of my psychiatric status, signifying positive change in the academic world.

However, in countries like the UK such progress has been challenged under neoliberal ideology and of course this ultimately affected the second university I came to work in, although by then I was personally in a more privileged and secure position, being promoted step by step until I was a professor. Neoliberalism’s recasting of higher education and framing it in market terms, its efforts to proletarianise academic employment practices, micro-manage and disempower its workforce and make working conditions increasingly precarious, while far-reaching, has nonetheless still not been complete. As I have tried to make clear in this discussion, it is not monolithicly negative. Instead, it sets us the more difficult task of taking advantage of its opportunities while resisting its pitfalls. For example, there were official

efforts to undermine user involvement in social work and health related professional courses, but this has continued to develop and be widely valued. While there has been tokenism, there have also been effective international developments, like *PowerUs*, bringing together service users and social work students to build trust and mutual understanding (Askheim et al, 2017). Perhaps more damaging and insidious has been the way that the psych system in alliance with individualizing right-wing ideology has worked effectively to incorporate and undermine positive pressure for lived experience peer roles and ways of working by recasting them within its own extended psych paradigm away from their radical origins (Voronka, 2017).

Summing up

Summing up, what I have come to realise is the importance of the interrelations of change – personal and structural. I was changed by my experience of madness and distress. I gained new understandings, new experience and discovered different ways of working, developing both practice and ideas in more equal, peer-based ways. I saw that happening in the second college I worked at, l learned from it and was able to build on it in my role, in relation to my own experience of madness and disability. I now felt I had a right to speak as someone with lived experience, rather than a supposed 'expert' either co-opting others' experiential knowledge as service users or 'practice wisdom' as service workers, or my own third person ideas.

For me I have learned that the difference between being a survivor and non-survivor academic is about entering the space with a focused mission to challenge oppression in common cause with other people facing that and also other oppressions, in order to do something about them. In this sense it is the most meaningful challenge to the use of the term academic as a perjorative, meaning no more than filling library shelves, lecture halls and minds with stuff rather than discovering, sharing and supporting liberatory truths and realities. This is the enlarged mission that the academy can provide a focus and opportunities for, as we have already been seeing with both Mad and Disability studies, although its contradictions – its tendencies to elitism and exclusion – as well as providing opportunities and resources - must always be guarded against.

Conclusion

In this article I have sought to explore the connections between the personal and political in the context of madness and distress, drawing on my own journey into a mad identity and experience. Central to this has been the role of the academy and Mad studies and their relation with each other. While the academy has the potential to undermine Mad Studies, I believe from my lived experience that Mad Studies offers an unprecedented opportunity specifically to challenge the academy's sanism and more generally to critique and highlight the maddening effects of dominant politics. It offers survivors the chance to challenge our isolation and build alliances based on our own principles. For me, this has been a personal and political struggle which I believe has been worth continuing with, despite the difficulties as the

psych system increasingly becomes part of neoliberal structures. They have an increasingly maddening effect upon us. But that perhaps makes this struggle all the more important. I believe it has offered me a helpful role in being part of this struggle, complementing my involvement in survivor-led organisations. Mad Studies offers a unique and unprecedented opportunity to riddle the academy and beyond with our understandings, which it has so far shown itself frighteningly adept at both subverting and resisting. It gives me more hope for the future of our struggles internationally. At the same time, we have to acknowledge the complexity of the struggles going on, so that while the new social movements have exerted a liberatory pressure on the academy and continue to, the continuing dominance of neoliberalism means that this is continually subject to powerful resistance. Each of us can play a key part in challenging this.

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Integrity Statement I declare that I have sought to adhere to ethical standards throughout the research referred to here, including submitting original work, accurately reporting data, and disclosing any conflicts of interest

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