

This article was downloaded by: [Jasna Russo]

On: 09 June 2015, At: 06:33

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Disability & Society

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cdso20>

Psychiatry disrupted: theorizing resistance and crafting the (r)evolution

Jasna Russo^a

^a Centre for Citizen Participation, Brunel University, London, UK

Published online: 09 Jun 2015.



CrossMark

[Click for updates](#)

To cite this article: Jasna Russo (2015): Psychiatry disrupted: theorizing resistance and crafting the (r)evolution, *Disability & Society*

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1037561>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &

Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

BOOK REVIEW

Psychiatry disrupted: theorizing resistance and crafting the (r)evolution, edited by Bonnie Burstow, Brenda A. LeFrançois and Shaindl Diamond, Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014, 296 pp., £20.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-77-354330-0, £72.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-77-354329-4

With the release of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* fifth edition (DSM5; American Psychiatric Association 2013), psychiatry has already done much to disrupt itself. The profession's grand plan to extend its diagnoses and treatments to everything and everyone has jeopardised its credibility among even its own members and allies (see, for example, American Psychological Association Division 32 2011). Still, the release of *Psychiatry Disrupted* a year later does away with any lingering hope that the global psychiatric enterprise will recover and proceed as usual. While hardly taking the DSM as a point of reference, this book can be seen as its long-awaited counter-publication. Although it may not emerge from a voting procedure that aims to define and rule, or have the backing of corporate industry, *Psychiatry Disrupted* is still the more powerful tool. The incisive analyses of its many contributors effectively expose all that the DSM in its ever-evolving versions seeks to produce and sell. If the DSM is psychiatry's essential weapon, *Psychiatry Disrupted* equips us with equally strong means and announces a new stage in the war.

What distinguishes *Psychiatry Disrupted* from much other critical work about psychiatry is its situating of the mental health system in the context of all our lives and the links it makes with other regimes of governance. Investigating the 'toxic blend of neoliberalism and biogenetic psychiatry', Beresford and Menzies write:

Just as biopsychiatry constructs us as an inert and inept objects of scientific and chemical technology, so neoliberalism tries to isolate us from each other with the message that we are responsible solely for maximizing our own usefulness as economic beings, managing our risk to ourselves and others, and generally falling into line with the reigning order of things. (92)

When the writers of *Psychiatry Disrupted* come together to 'theorize resistance' – the first task of the book's subtitle – they do so from a very different place to most other theorists. The deep and wide-ranging theoretical contribution of this collection is rooted in their long-time involvement in different kinds of political activism. Almost all have the courage to write personally and take their own experiences as a starting point, regardless of the 'side' of the system on which those experiences were gained. Nor do they shy away from self-criticism.

In a foreword to what she rightly calls 'a treasure trove' of an anthology, Paula Caplan points out that now 'no one can claim that they want to act and don't know what to do. Each of us has a moral responsibility to choose a route to stopping the

harm' (xv). Here, then, is a summary of some of the routes that the contributors to *Psychiatry Disrupted* encourage us to go down:

- Chris Chapman's daringly honest account of his own work with children in a highly coercive setting invites us to approach our 'discomfort as political' rather than only psychological and so enlarge the options for action (32).
- Simon Adam analyses how pharmacology and psychiatry each place nurses 'in a discourse of efficiency and safety' (62). He calls on nurses to disrupt this ruling consciousness and develop an alternative one (76).
- Ian Parker criticises the belief in psychology as a 'solution' and outlines ways to 'destabilize the master signifier' (62).
- Chava Finkler introduces 'a psychiatric survivor analysis' (97) of housing and de-institutionalisation. There is an important distinction to be made between 'physical placement in the community' and 'emotional dis-placement' in these same spaces (104).
- Tina Minkowitz provides an excellent guide to how the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2007) can be used to restore justice to psychiatrised people. She reminds us that the concept of disability is 'continually evolving' and may one day become obsolete (130).
- A.J. Withers charts a radical model of disability and details several ways in which the psychiatric survivor movement (re)produces disablism.
- Bonnie Burstow explores how the prison abolition movement's attrition model can be helpful to antipsychiatry.
- Peter Beresford and Robert Menzies expose the 'competitive and individualising logic of the academy' and the 'corporate university' as part of a system of neoliberal governance (86).
- Shaindl Diamond's chapter and her interview with Ambrose Kirby convincingly display the shortcomings of any resistance to psychiatry which focuses narrowly on a particular identity or diagnosis. Referring to trans people, Kirby explains:

Our basic identities are less and less considered a 'mental illness', but our strategies for surviving are being taken out of context and individualized as 'mental illness'. (163)

Diamond, who is critical of the way that feminism opposes the medicalising of women's experiences and yet accepts certain psychiatric diagnoses, makes a compelling case against 'single issue politics'. She also addresses the uncomfortable matter of the perpetuation of oppression within liberation movements and urges us not to fall into that trap.

- China Mills uses post-colonialist theory to explore how 'the strategies of resistance to colonialism may be [...] used to illuminate the resistance to psychiatry – resistance that may be secret, sly, covered up' (210).

The wealth of experience, honesty and wisdom accumulated in these chapters is both encouraging and inspiring. It lays the foundation for different forms of

research, theorising and joint action. Towards the end of her chapter, Bonnie Burstow writes:

Besides that they have the lion's share of the power, people who successfully make this world a living hell for others – who rob others of their freedom, who subject them to torturous treatments – tend to be very good at what they do. *We* need to be equally good. (50; original emphasis)

This book proves that we are equally good.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed. Arlington: American Psychiatric Publishing.
- American Psychological Association Division 32. 2011. "Open letter to the DSM-5 Task Force and the American Psychiatric Association." www.ipetitions.com/petition/dsm5
- United Nations 2007. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities." www.un.org

Jasna Russo

Centre for Citizen Participation, Brunel University, London, UK

contact@jasnarusso.com

© 2015, Jasna Russo

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10.1080/09687599.2015.1037561>