

A Textual Analysis of Newspapers, Madness, and the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital

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Abstract

Since the development of news media in North America, representations of mental illness have been a preeminent feature of news stories. These representations are key to understanding the intricacies of Mad people's history, their marginalization, and their disenfranchisement. This paper provides asylum researchers with a simple yet effective strategy for examining how Mad people were portrayed in the Canadian asylum era by applying a qualitative textual analysis method to examine newspapers' negative representations of "mad people" who were inmates at the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital in Etobicoke, Ontario. Drawing themes from a cross-section of relevant newspaper stories, this paper identifies the ways in which Mad people were –and continue to be – projected and perceived and how that has – or has not – changed over time. As a result, findings work to counteract many damaging and false perspectives adopted by newspapers and challenge the common belief that Mad people are inherently dangerous and thus deserving of incarceration.

Keywords: Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital; Mimico Asylum; Mad history; news media; post-structural textual analysis

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Une analyse textuelle des journaux, de la folie et l'hôpital psychiatrique Lakeshore

Résumé

Depuis le développement des médias d'information en Amérique du Nord, les représentations de la maladie mentale ont été une caractéristique prééminente des nouvelles. Ces représentations sont essentielles pour souligner les subtilités de l'histoire des Fous, leur marginalisation et leur privation de droits. Cet article offre aux chercheurs en droit d'asile une stratégie simple mais efficace pour examiner comment les gens fous ont été dépeints dans l'ère de l'asile au Canada en appliquant une méthode d'analyse textuelle qualitative pour examiner la représentation négative des «fous» par les journaux (Personnes ayant reçu un diagnostic de maladie mentale - avec ou sans garantie) qui étaient détenus à l'hôpital psychiatrique Lakeshore, à Etobicoke (Ontario). Tirant des thèmes d'une section transversale d'articles de journaux pertinents, cet article identifie les manières dont les personnes folles ont été - et continuent d'être - projetées et perçues et comment cela a changé - ou n'a pas changé - au fil du temps. Par conséquent, les conclusions permettent de contrecarrer de nombreuses perspectives préjudiciables et fausses adoptées par les journaux et de contester la croyance populaire selon laquelle les personnes folles sont intrinsèquement dangereuses et méritent donc d'être incarcérées.

Mots clefs

Hôpital psychiatrique Lakeshore; Mimico Asylum; histoire folle; médias; analyse textuelle post-structurelle

Since the development of news media, stories about mental illness have been a preeminent feature of North American news stories, many of which frame people with mental illness in terms of violence, criminality, or danger, deserving of medicalized control and incarceration. Questions that arise from this line of reasoning inquire about the types of representation that people with mental illness have historically experienced on both macro and micro levels. Furthermore, a critical view of these practices asks whether an examination of news media would reveal traces of discriminatory

representation of people with mental illness, and if so, where would one locate such remnants, and how would one go about analyzing this information? This study begins to interrogate the multiple ways in which “mad people” (people assigned with a mental illness diagnosis—warranted or not) have historically been represented in news media. The study narrows its focus to that of local newspaper stories of a less studied asylum—the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital in Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada. It accomplishes this by analyzing newspaper stories, in this case referred to as “texts”, from four newspapers: *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Hamilton Spectator*, and the *National Post*. However, the study does not strive to evaluate any given truth within such stories (McKee, 2003). Instead, it offers an alternative way in which to reveal themes within texts that may tell us something about how power operates within our society over time. According to McKee (2003), this kind of “post-structuralist textual analysis...seeks to understand the ways in which these forms of representation take place, the assumptions behind them and the kinds of sense-making about the world that they reveal” (p. 17).

Initial research efforts reveal several examples of how news media historically frame mad people as psychiatric entities, perpetually chained to medicalized professionalism. Perhaps, as a consequence of this, mad people were often perceived as a threat to the safety and stability of “sane” members of society. However, it was also found that stigmatizing and harmful effects of negative news media portrayals could be lessened, and in some cases reversed, when mad/disabled people were actively included in the representative process. In the vast majority of cases, where they were not included, mad and disabled people actually created their own counter-narratives —

cultural texts which allowed them to better negotiate their own issues on their own terms (Haller, 2010; Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto, 2015).

Intertexts: Reframing the Literature

There are many lenses through which we may interpret newspaper stories about mad people and the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. This study, however, examines newspaper stories within the context of related materials, referred to as intertexts. These intertexts include studies by Mad scholars. The term “intertextuality” signifies the many ways a text (which can include stories, books, films, music, etc.) is inextricably linked with and to other texts (Abrams, 1993, p. 285). With this very broad definition of texts and intertexts in mind, the following section offers a review of contextual materials – research derived from Mad studies – that are, likewise, inextricably connected (Alford, 1998, as cited in Schwandt, 2007, p. 273) to the construction and discourse of newspapers, madness, and the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, and thus need to be included in this study. Although somewhat shortened here for the purpose of publication, examination of the following texts, as intertexts, facilitates the creation of a unique counternarrative to pejorative newspaper stories about mad people connected to the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. This examination of intertexts is also an important component of deconstructing newspaper stories about mad people at the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, and, more broadly, the Western psychiatric industrial complex.

An analysis of relevant intertexts carried out in this study discovered that most newspaper representations of madness highlight violence, criminal, and/or dangerous mad people, and almost always exclude the subjects’ voices from the story. This in turn

perpetuates the stigmatization of mad people in very real ways because news media is thought of as offering “truth”, albeit constructed, which in turn, influences saneist/ableist policies and behaviours that further marginalize mad and disabled people. The following intertexts are offered here to both provide context to the broader study of media and madness, as well as to offer a counternarrative to the stigmatizing texts that have been propagated by news media and supported by the perspectives of psychiatrists, who are positioned as “expert” witnesses on/for mental illness (in the place of mad people themselves).

LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaume (2013) are the starting point for creating a substantial counternarrative to psychiatry as the expert witness to and for madness. They begin by noting how mad people have long been writing about madness, and that this kind of writing had been (and is being) practiced by activists, academics, and other “radical practitioners since the very beginning of organized psychiatry in Canada and abroad” (LeFrançois, Menzies, & Reaume, 2013, p. 1). They also identify how Mad Studies has become a growing discipline that works to challenge medicalized models of “mental illness” that have dominated western societies “since the 18-century Enlightenment” (LeFrançois, Menzies, & Reaume, 2013, p. ix).

Following this, Malacrida’s (2015) work provides a powerful testament of the horrors that occur in Canadian institutions for disabled people. Under the canopy of medicalized professionalization and control, disabled youth at the Michener Centre in Alberta were subjected to some of the worst maltreatment that Canadian children have ever known.

Bringing the discussion of Canadian institutions closer to the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, Reaume's (2000) work was the first of its kind in Ontario, Canada, to reconstruct psychiatric patient narratives derived from archived patient files from the Toronto Hospital for the Insane (1890-1940). This institute was Ontario's first provincial asylum from which the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital originally stemmed (Jackson, 2014). As in the case of Malacrida (2015), Reaume (2000) reads patient files "against the grain" (Dubinsky, 1998, p. 361) of medicalized asylum staff in order to reveal touching narratives of the lives of inmates. Writing this way, Reaume reconstructs a picture of the day-to-day life of persons in a mental hospital. Reaume (2000) effectively demonstrates that these inmates had unique personalities, values, and work ethics. These traits were manipulated by the institution to acquire skilled labour at no cost to the administration; inmates were forced to build the very wall that kept them imprisoned (Reaume, 2006). Reaume (2000) demonstrates that psychiatric inmates were not flat characters, as commonly shown in sensationalized news reporting, but were authentic people, more than capable of performing high-quality workmanship. This is still apparent today as much of the patient-built wall is still standing over 100 years after they built it.

In discussing representations of mad people within the news media, Thornton and Wahl's (1996) study is directly linked to Reaume's work as they examine the effect of newspaper stories on the perceptions of readers. By examining dramatic newspaper stories (either accurate or inaccurate), which contain elements of violence committed by a person with a mental illness, their study includes the mitigating factor of so-called "accurate" information about people with mental illness. Their findings confirmed the belief that negative media reports about mad people foster negative attitudes and

stigma toward people with mental illness. They also discovered that when people were provided with mad-positive (factual) information before exposure to negative newspaper stories, it reduced the negative effect of reading sensationalized news stories.

Wipond (2013) went on to examine how North American news media sources have traditionally framed madness in their stories, and offers suggestions on how to counteract the effect of these framed messages of “mental illness”. Coming from a position that identifies mainstream news media coverage of mental illness as inaccurate, unfair, and uncritical, Wipond (2013), a professional journalist, found that there are key aspects of newsgathering and reporting that affect the ways in which stories of mental illness are told or ignored. A key aspect of this discussion was how the news media chooses its “credible” authorities, such as psychiatrists and mental health organizations, which presume to speak for all mad people. Wipond (2013) challenges the notion that such “authorities” are all-knowing monoliths of psychiatric truth due to the absence of psychiatric survivor perspective and input. He then offers strategies for “how to improve awareness and coverage” (Wipond, 2013, p. 262) for mad-positive issues and events. He suggests building coalitions with members of civil rights groups (none specifically related to madness or disability), alternative mental health professionals, lawyers, and academic researchers, educating them on fact-based issues behind mad politics.

Wahl (2003) found a persistent pattern of negative portrayals of madness in mainstream western media. This trend contributes to the stigmatization of people with mental illness, which in turn has a damaging effect on them (Wahl, 2003). Newspapers were shown to provide an ongoing stream of sensationalized, inaccurate, and

stigmatizing information to the public about mental illness by selecting and presenting a minority of stories that use “psychiatric slang” (p. 27) about madness and violence in a way that would be unacceptable when applied (reversed) to other marginalized groups¹. Such descriptions about mental illness deny the public knowledge of the diverse range of psychiatric survivor stories that exist. Although such stories may be less spectacular and shocking, they would provide a more balanced representation of the average mad person.

Expanding the scope of context and intertexts, Hurt (2007) found that the dominant discourse in newspaper reporting of mental illness (depression) was gendered and detrimental to woman. In the array of newspaper stories examined, women were depicted as being particularly susceptible to depression due to their sex/gender “deficiencies”, whereas men were subtly portrayed as being more resistant to depression due to their biology (specifically, testosterone). The newspaper discourses examined imply that, due to her very biology, a woman somehow becomes dangerous when experiencing depression, not only to herself, but to her children—and the blame for this rests on the woman simply because she is a woman. The effect of this discourse is “a powerful disciplinary mechanism” (Hurt, 2007, p. 304), which suggests an ongoing surveillance of the female body and mind within the media that works to “silence the complexity of a depressive experience and mask the potential cultural, social and political factors of that experience” (Hurt, 2007, p. 304).

¹ This is in line with McKee’s (2008) ‘Commutation Test’ which reveals textual artifacts of dominant group power dynamics within society (pp. 107-110).

Expanding the analysis to other marginalized groups, Harper (2009) examined media coverage of people in “mental distress” (incidents of overt psychiatric behavior) and its resulting intersection with class, gender, and race. Harper (2009) confirms that much of the earlier critical work on media and madness (e.g., Wahl, 2003) has accurately identified stigma as the result of many media representations of mad people, the collectively negative effect of which is amplified throughout mainstream media formats (news, books, magazines, television, movies). Additionally, he noted that newspapers tend to employ biomedical language to discuss madness, while subtly manipulating stories with mad-positive language that, upon closer inspection, expressed the political/ideological agenda of another group.

Turning to a disability studies frame of analysis of media representation, Haller (2000) analyzes the mechanisms behind media reports of disability and disability issues. The study finds that even though American state legislation prohibits discrimination based on disability, media coverage of disability issues tends to be shallow, “spotty and stereotyping” (Haller, 2000, p. 247). The research notes that the American public acquires their information about disability from these erroneous information sources, which results in the stigmatization and oppression of disabled people (sometimes by disabled people themselves), and ultimately generates a broader social impact on the lives of disabled people at the level of state social policy. Additionally, Haller (2000) found disability hierarchies which cause disability, race, and gender to intersect in a way that privileges some disabled groups over others. Sadly, Haller (2000) does not specifically focus on the inclusion of mad journalists as part of

the solution, but instead places a strong emphasis on building collaborative strategies within the disabled, and presumably mad, community as a whole.

Haller's (2010) work, although not specifically addressing madness, is essential to the crafting of a textual analysis of newspapers as it identifies how many disabled people respond to problematic representations of disability through the use of alternative media. Haller discusses the "alternative model of press" (Kessler, 1984, as cited in Haller, 2010, pp. 115-117), which holds that minority groups have experienced three specific forms of problematic media representation: 1) they were excluded altogether from press coverage; 2) their events/protests were covered, but the issues behind them were ignored; 3) the coverage contextualized the individuals within a stereotyping frame that belittled them. As a result of these problematic representations, marginalized groups actively created their own media (Kessler, 1984, in Haller, 2010). Haller's work, as an intertext, provides practical, pertinent information and strategies for both mad and disability activists that act as a counternarrative to pejorative news media stories that frame them as generally passive or altogether absent.

The last intertext examined in this study is one which includes the participation of mad people. The Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto (2015) website is dedicated to the physical and digital preservation of psychiatric survivor cultural texts and is run solely by mad people. The website provides a link to the Lakeshore Asylum Cemetery Project (2014), which is the only psychiatric survivor-run website providing information on the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital (with a focus on preserving the asylum cemetery). Yet, while these texts (*Phoenix Rising* magazine) were quite thorough, the site contained minimal information on the former Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital itself,

most likely due to the fact that minimal information was available on that institute (Jackson, 2014).

Methodology

The textual analysis outlined in this paper begins with an understanding of Mad Studies which “takes social, relational, identity-based, and anti-oppression approaches to questions of mental/psychological/behavioral difference, and is articulated, in part, against an analytic of mental illness” (Gorman, 2013, p. 269). With this general perspective as a guiding principle, the study examines several newspaper stories as cultural texts (although these stories themselves may be considered intertexts) related to the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital which reveal some of the subtle ways that power becomes created and enacted in and throughout society over time.

As touched on earlier, this study employs McKee’s (2003) textual analysis model. This model offers a guide to sense-making practices to explore texts and intertexts; yet it does not attempt to reveal any single given “truth” within a newspaper story, but helps clarify some of the subtle underpinnings of oppression as related to power being enacted within and through a respective society.

Consequently, McKee’s (2003) method proposes a unique way in which to explore narrative themes within texts (and intertexts) that contribute to alternative sense-making practices within cultures’ that have real-world effects on people living within their respective societies. Following McKee’s (2003) model, this study predicted and successfully located themes within dominant-group ideals of culture and representation, which indicate that a dominant group’s knowledge (production) worked

to overpower that of sub-dominant, marginalized group members and groups (McKee, 2003). This was accomplished within the study by contextualizing stories within specific frames of “sense-making” that are signposts or relics of the enactment of power within society. For example, “Exnomination” is a frame that sees the world as a series of embedded, “common-sense” assumptions of a dominant group’s perspective, in this case psychiatric professionals as the ultimate, unquestioned source of accurate information and authority (pp. 106-107). Another sense-making frame that McKee (2003) proposes is “Structuring Absences”, which are the invisible and systematic exclusion of alternative perspectives within a discourse (pp. 110-111). While these two frames are key to revealing translucent artifacts of dominant discourses, McKee’s (2003) method is further clarified by the addition of three more frames called “News Media Models” (Haller, 2015) which help uncover disability-related themes.

Haller (2015) frames news media within the following three sense-making models: “Medical Model” (disabled people are considered flawed individuals in need of medical science to fix them); “Social Pathology Model” (disabled people are considered a social problem that may be treated by social programs that they may or may not deserve); “Minority/Civil Rights Model” (disabled people are seen as active participants in civic, legal, and social rights, which they, much like other community members, are entitled to). The above frames (or models of sense-making) proposed by McKee and Haller are applied throughout this study in order to reveal the intricate and subtle ways in which newspaper media represents madness and mad identities as linked to Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital newspaper stories.

To make sense of dominant cultural representations of mad people, this study carried out its textual analysis of newspapers relating to the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital to locate “fragments of popular discourse” (Hurt, 2007, p. 291) within texts as represented within narrative themes about madness and mad people. As noted above, this includes an exploration of related cultural intertexts (for example, an analysis of relevant literature conducted by both Mad and non-Mad scholars) which helps contextualize relevant, and counternarrative, perceptions of madness.

Source materials were gathered from the LexisNexis search engine, which found relevant stories from *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Hamilton Spectator*, and the *National Post*. The search term “Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital”, initially included the terms “violent” and ‘crime’, and yielded 5 items, but was further narrowed down to 3 items (due to the elimination of 1 duplicate and 1 non-relevant item). The second search string included the institution’s name, but applied no search-term modifiers, which generated 506 items. To narrow these 506 items down to a more manageable group, items were first sorted from ‘oldest to newest’ and the top stories were selected that featured something sensational (violence, disruptive or otherwise unexplained behavior) in the headline. This was then reversed to make the search from ‘newest to oldest’ and, as before, stories were selected which had the most sensational headlines (within 3 search pages of first search page), which generated 7 items. Combined, this method of search resulted in 11 (4 term-restricted stories, plus 6 term-unrestricted, but selective) newspaper stories from 4 newspapers (*The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Hamilton Spectator*, and the *National Post*) which contained stories related to unique aspects of the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital.

There are five major drawbacks to using this method of online search: First, the institution name changed over time, therefore, using Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital as a search term leaves out several newspaper stories that referred to the institute by another name. Second, because some of the stories were gathered from the top *oldest* or *newest* items, the *LexisNexis* search method left out a large portion of stories. Third, selected stories were based on the author's idea of what was considered "sensational", which introduced a cultural bias into the analysis that may have caused me to exclude non-sensationalized headlines which potentially contained important themes (although such bias is a key component to this type of study as it is also a relic of power enactments within society). Fourth, by restricting the *LexisNexis* search to newspapers, it potentially excluded key news media sources (visual and audio news media such as *The National*; Vlogs, etc.). Finally, the LexisNexis search engine, although highly effective, yields results only to researchers with institutional affiliation (students, academics, lawyers, etc.), thus many mad people are excluded from this particular method of online newspaper research.

Major drawbacks aside, the above method was effective in drawing out important themes related to the cultural representation of madness in newspaper media related to the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. These themes will be unpacked below.

Findings

An analysis of the source material located the following four themes and narrative frames related to newspaper reporting on the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital: 9/10 newspaper stories portrayed psychiatric professionals as authority figures, but mad

people as violent, criminal and/or dangerous; none (0/10) of the texts examined, included, or even suggested, that mad people's perspectives should be a contextual part of their stories; 1/10 stories framed a mad human rights issue within the minority/civil rights model; and 1/10 stories which initially framed madness in a positive light had, upon closer inspection, advanced dominant group agendas.

Using a subset of items drawn from both McKee's (2003) method of textual analysis and Haller's (2015) disability news media models, 9 of the 10 newspaper stories were found to have embedded examples of 'exnomination' and 'structuring absences' (McKee, 2007) in stories about mental illness that ultimately framed mad people as violent, criminal, and/or dangerous. Similarly, the study found that 10 out of 10 stories examined in this study fit neatly into two of Haller's (2015) disability news media models (Medical Model; Social Pathology Model) which also frame mad people in terms of violence, crime, and/or danger.

The following is a breakdown of the four main narrative themes and news frames that were discovered in newspaper stories about the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, all of which relate to violence, criminality, and/or the dangerousness nature of mad people. Theme 1: Stories portraying psychiatric professionals as authority figures, but mad people as violent, criminal and/or dangerous.

The first example tries to enlist medicalized psychiatric authority to establish authenticity, wherein doctors are interviewed to provide "facts". McLaren (1981) of *The Globe and Mail* reports on a man diagnosed with schizophrenia who apparently became violent (unbeknownst to his family and lawyer) with a nurse, which resulted in his being transferred to the maximum-security facility in Penetanguishene, Ontario, Canada. The

story features an interview with a doctor who was in contact with Ontario Minister of Health of the time, Dennis Timbrell, to inquire about the shortage of medium-security beds at Queen Street (a neighboring psychiatric hospital). Likewise, Turner (1979) of *The Globe and Mail* interviewed a psychometrist and psychiatric hospital medical director to comment on overcrowding and increased incidents of hospital ward violence among patients due to the closing of the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, which saw an increase of patients transferred from the closed hospital. By analyzing the structuring absences we see that the patients being assaulted in this story may or may not be from the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, and since patient perspectives are absent, mad people are assumed to be unimportant—a point that is reinforced by the fact that they are left out of the narrative.

In 1995, Monsebraaten of *The Toronto Star* interviewed research director Dr. Jalal Shamsie about the long-term benefits of a youth mental health program partly located on the grounds of the former Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. Dr. Shamsie noted how research was beginning to prove the positive benefits of consistent treatment and long-term rehabilitation involving “at least one adult”. This assertion is an example of three models that shape how madness is framed in newspaper stories. In this example of exnomination, psychiatric professionals are the implicit “adult” spoken of in the quote, most probably employed by the institute. This is also in line with the “medical model” of care that presupposes that the best treatment for mental illness must always be psychiatry. Additionally, the story fits with the Haller’s “social pathology model”, in that the youth discussed in the article are framed as disadvantaged and in need of economic support to fund the institute which would potentially lead to better outcomes for them.

The majority of texts examined in this study had similar examples of medicalized perspectives and models claiming authority over mad peoples' perspectives. There were three stories which overtly framed mad people as violent, criminal and/or dangerous. One of these stories is an article in *The Globe and Mail* (Keating, 1987), which reports on the murder of a police officer by a former patient of the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. Years prior to the murder, the former psychiatric patient apparently had asked police to take him to get psychiatric treatment, but was released from the institute shortly after and was given no follow-up treatment. Medical model perspectives presented as factual evidence were used to counter the former patient's testimony. These perspectives suggested that it was up to the patient to follow-up on his own treatment. Once again mad absence is structured into the narrative when a psychiatrist claims the man would likely be unfit to stand trial.

Another story from *The Globe and Mail* (Fatal beating lasted 90 minutes, 1979) explained that an alcoholic man beat an alcoholic woman to death because she drank excessively one evening. They had met at a Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital alcohol abuse treatment program. The story exploits the issue of partner abuse as well as alcoholism. The narrative is once again structured around medical professionals (psychiatrists) as eminent expert witnesses, which is yet another example of McKee's theory of structuring absences focused on mad people—many of whom do not drink and have never assaulted their partners.

The final example of the overt framing of mad people as violent, criminal, and/or dangerous comes from a 2006 story from *The Hamilton Spectator* (Wilson, 2006). The story could be considered a retrospective piece as it retells the story of a night when six

people were burned to death in a fire presumably set by Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital patient, Vaughan Copp. The story reports that Copp was found guilty of murdering the six individuals, and was institutionalized for these crimes. Copp was eventually taken “off the lieutenant-governor’s warrant” (Wilson, 2006) and ultimately filed a lawsuit against the province of Ontario for the harmful psychiatric treatments that he claimed he was subjected to. Copp’s lawsuit ended when he was denied legal aid. In this case, the story used exnomination by way of normalizing dominant medical, psychiatric, and legal perspectives as the obvious, unquestioned authoritarian entities of the story.

By excluding mad voices (as well as Mad Studies and a psychiatric survivor approach to analysis) from the context of the story, important issues were ignored or minimized in the narrative. Ignored was the fact that Copp was a homeless person with a long-term history of mental illness, most likely untreated due to gaps in the Ontario mental health care system. Also minimized was the fact that the hotel that was burned down had no fire suppression system in place, and that the hotel staff habitually (and intentionally) shut off their own fire alarms (Wilson, 2006). While the criminal actions of Copp are not to be excused with a diagnosis of mental illness, there are other factors that the story minimized to create a sensationalized retrospective piece of an event that occurred over three and a half decades ago. Interestingly, the hotel was not considered even partially responsible for deaths of the six people who burned to death; the narrative ultimately framed the hotel owners as benefactors of a good lesson in fire safety.

While the overt medicalized framing of mad people as violent, criminal, and/or dangerous was common in sensationalized newspaper reporting of mad people related

to the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, there were two (2) stories which only subtly implied this narrative theme. The first example of subtly implied violence, criminality and/or dangerous mad people comes from *The Globe and Mail* (Residents Still Resisting, 1982). This story employs the social pathology model to inform readers on how community members opposed the opening of a group home for ten young males who were “mental handicapped” (Residents Still Resisting, 1982). The 10 youth had experiences with the law, but “were neither sex offenders nor anyone who has committed violent crimes” (ibid.). The article highlighted how the closure of the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital had flooded local neighborhoods with boarding houses crammed with former psychiatric inmates.

But coverage of this issue is incomplete as it omits important political elements that occurred during the 1980s deinstitutionalization period in Ontario, Canada. Asylum historian Scull (as cited in Simmons, 1990) noted that deinstitutionalization was not a government strategy designed to better the lives of mad people, but instead a political method of controlling mad people while providing private-sector social services organizations with an opportunity to profit from the burgeoning mental health services industry of the period (p. 158). While fault-finding in newspaper stories is not the goal of the present study, the identification of omitted perspectives (structured absences) reveals many subtle influences of dominant group narratives in constructing a particular perception of the world where dominant groups create a cultural “reality” that no one else but themselves and members of their group are able to live up to.

In the above article (Residents Still Resisting, 1982), young males with experiences of madness and criminality are framed as smaller pieces of a larger

“problem” of madness, which apparently prowls the streets at night looking for trouble (although there is no evidence of that provided in the article). As this “problem” is being addressed by valiant community members who protest the practice of psychiatric overcrowding within the community, the prevailing narrative is that mad people are dangerous criminals who require psychiatric control and incarceration.

The second example with subtle implications of madness as violent, criminal and/or dangerous comes from a story in *The Toronto Star* (Javed, 2011). Here, a local event is framed as a light-hearted Halloween holiday attraction. The event was to be held on the grounds of the former Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. The narrative frame of the story employs themes of “horrors—zombies, serial killers ... fear of darkness” and forced incarceration (Javed, 2011). The attraction was built and performed with 200 volunteers and “at-risk students” who would develop skills in film production techniques. The story also suggests that the former Lakeshore asylum was an appropriate venue for this kind of event as a group of paranormal investigators had apparently reported (on their website) that it was haunted.

This newspaper story, as with all of the stories examined, excludes the voices of actual mad people. As an example of structuring absence, the exclusion of critical mad voices from this story—like the protest organized against this event, in which the present author was personally involved—presents mad people as socially indifferent entities, existing somewhere on the dark periphery of society... probably engaged in the kind of violent, criminal, and/or dangerous activities that the event promoted. In the absence of critical mad voices, mad people are problematically framed as dangerous psychiatric entities’ deserving strict medical/social control and incarceration.

Theme 2: Absence of critical mad perspective within newspaper stories

As is the case in the above news stories, exnomination, structuring absences, and medical model framing contributed to the exclusion of critical mad perspectives from stories about mad people. Mad people were not presented as authorities in these contexts and in each example, they were absent from the discussion (except in the case where their words were used to ridicule and demean them (Fatal beating lasted 90 minutes, 1979; Wilson, 2006)).

Theme 3: Mad issues as human rights issues

There was one example of a news coverage that framed madness through a 'minority/civil rights' framework. Weingust (1981) effectively discusses flaws within the *Ontario Mental Health Act*, which gave institutional psychiatry in Ontario the power to "shamefully" transfer non-violent patients to prison-like hospitals, simply due to a "mental illness" diagnosis which, by definition, automatically presupposed that these people were dangerous, even if they had never engaged in criminal activity. This mad-positive story is an example of Haller's (2015) minority/civil rights model, which identifies disabled people as having legitimate grievances against harmful policies and practices that work against their attainment of civil rights. This kind of story, while not proposing mad participation, offers a key piece of news journalism that could effectively reduce the negative stigma caused by extreme news stories that feature mad people as violent entities. Such reporting acts as a preventative form of intervention that helps lessen the stereotyping effect of negative newspaper stories (Thornton & Wahl, 1996).

Theme 4: *Story initially framed madness in a positive light but, upon closer inspection, served to advance a dominant group agenda.*

One story considered in this study initially appeared to frame madness in a positive light, but upon closer inspection, shifts to what Harper (2009) refers to as “subtle manipulation” of a story. This manipulative tactic involves incorporating mad positive language which, upon closer inspection, expresses the political and ideological agendas of another (more powerful) group. O’Toole’s (2012) *National Post* special interest story discusses a Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital’s cemetery restoration project. The story focuses on a former employee of the institute who found the cemetery while walking around and decided to restore it. Yet while describing this worthy endeavor which included psychiatric survivor activists and academics as primary partners in the restoration project (Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto and Lakeshore Asylum Cemetery Project, circa 2011), the article ultimately failed to appropriately acknowledge the substantial contributions of said psychiatric survivors. This narrative provides additional examples of structuring absences and exnomination, as the narrative focuses on a member of a dominant group (a sane, white, male former asylum professional) that appears to have assumed authority over the project. Although by no means the fault of the former asylum employee, such structured absences within the story reveal subtle power enactments within society over mad people that reinforce the necessity of mad exclusions and prevent mad people from constructing their own histories.

As in the above newspaper stories, O’Toole (2012) indicates a preference for a medical model of knowledge, which again implies that the presumed professional in the story must obviously be an on-hand authority figure, because he was a former asylum employee. Therefore, his perspective is framed as the only worthy perspective within

the piece. Such framing unfairly places psychiatric survivor participation as something that is necessarily absent from legitimate news media coverage.

Conclusions

Curiosity encouraged me to begin examining newspaper representations of madness related to a local psychiatric hospital, closed over 4 decades before the start of this study. McKee's (2007) textual analysis reinforced by Haller's (2010; 2015) news media critique and proposed analytical models offers a relatively uncomplicated way of examining such narratives as cultural texts that are imbued with, and serve as relics of, power enactments within a given society. This study has revealed how many newspaper stories about mad people are almost always negative and sensationalized. The perspectives and lives of everyday mad people, such as myself, are rarely reported on. The above analysis of relevant texts and intertexts reveals that madness, in these contexts, is always framed through stigmatizing portrayals of mad people as violent, criminal, and/or dangerous. However, there is also evidence of positive portrayals of institutionalized people that have emerged from mad communities that include their writings and oral histories. Examples from Mad Studies scholarship has provided this study with a solid ideological framework in which to explore critical issues of madness in the media, while Disability Studies discourses have offered an alternative lens in which to locate cultural representations of disabled people that serve to resist an ongoing stream of stigmatizing ableist and sanest mainstream news media stories.

This brief study, while having significant contextual and design flaws—for example, it lacks sufficient intersectional analysis and would benefit from a more

rigorous search method—accomplished what it set out to do: specifically, the crafting of an alternative history which allows both researcher and reader to learn something about mad people and the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. The selected newspaper texts (and background intertexts) were cited as a narratives—and in some cases counternarratives—related to a stigmatizing processes that have emerged in Ontario at different points in time, and offer evidence of the dynamic nature of cultural relics which were (and still are) being created, imbued, and reinforced with power. Such a perspective allows us to read into numerous and subtle aspects of Canadian society in relation to madness and the cultural production of “acceptable” knowledges.

This study located four main themes within the newspaper stories it examined. These themes provide textual evidence of “sense-making” practices (McKee, 2003) within the dominant culture of news media. These 10 newspaper stories portray psychiatric professionals as authority figures, but mad people as violent, criminal, and/or dangerous. Critical mad perspectives are absent from stories about mad people in the selected stories. One story appropriately framed mad issues as a human rights issue within the minority/civil rights model, but failed to propose the active participation of mad people in the solution. The stories about madness may initially frame madness in a positive way, but ultimately are usurped and used to advance dominant group member perspectives and agendas.

These articles demonstrate some of the ways newspapers typically have framed mad people as psychiatric entities, perpetually chained to medicalized psychiatric professionalism which, consequently, constructs mad people and madness as a bothersome, but controllable (via psychiatric intervention) menace to society.

Subsequently, other research has found that the stigmatizing effects of such harmful newspaper representations are lessened, and in some cases reversed, when journalists craft balanced, professional narratives that include the perspectives of disabled (Haller, 2010) and mad people. The product of this balanced reporting is a de-stigmatizing narrative that acts as a preventative barrier that has been proven to effectively reduce knee-jerk reactions to exaggerated newspaper stories about madness and violence (Thornton & Wahl, 1996).

Prevalent throughout this paper is the idea that mad people themselves—and their allies—need to continue engaging in alternative news-making practices to counteract the damaging effects of sensationalized news journalism and to counter the problematic assumption that mad people are inherently dangerous and therefore deserving of medicalized psychiatric control and incarceration.

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