

Divergent Reaction: Consideration of a Globalized Psyche

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Author Note

This paper is a reaction to the author's first reading of *Crazy Like Us* (Watters, 2010), including consideration of the following prompts:

- Emotional/affective response(s) What did you like or enjoy on an emotional or affective level about the book?
- Did any of the information bring more negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, displeasure, avoidance, distaste, etc.) How do you understand your reactions?
- Cognitive reaction to the material in the book. What ideas were you attracted to and felt positive to you? What ideas did you like cognitively or intellectually?
- What ideas do you disagree with in the book and why?
- How do you see the material affecting your practice?

Divergent Reaction: Consideration of a Globalized Psyche

While reading *Crazy Like Us* (Watters, 2010) I found myself considering what is sure to be an unusual connection when compared to my peers in Diagnostic Psychopathology class. A level of bemused satisfaction over how well I could relate to the people who were described as suffering erasure at the hands of unthinking actors of beneficence surfaced early on. The sheen of my epistemic privilege continued throughout this journey into descriptions of varying conditions and locales in this critical view on the globalization of saviorism. One might be wondering how I might claim an insider view on we-know-better-than-thou treatment.... Only very recently are autistic voices granted credence in consideration of a persistent, and persistently fallacious, and damaging pursuit of “normal behavior” (Yergeau, 2018, Walker, 2021). My initial take on this reading? I’ll write a 5th chapter regarding the erasure of populations within our saviors’ own local contexts and idioms. I hold multiple marginalized identities that fit the bill (not only are socially functional autistic adults a thing, trans is OK, and even bisexuals are real). We don’t need to mobilize landing crews in hostile territory to explore such spaces. Americans already live behind enemy lines.

Those passages that brought any glimmer of joy through such a devastating tale about the inertia of privilege surrounded themes of recognition. When Watters explored “deep understanding of each patient’s subjective experience” as essential to therapeutic success (2010, p.62), or how “the best therapy will be a sound social policy” (p. 124), I felt right at home. It conjured dreams of universal minimum income and people working with whatever inspires hope, dreams of just treatment, self-determination, and agency. It ultimately left me sad, fearing a continuance of the lack of safety present in my own social network over the long term. It also

left me resolved to invest in building neurodivergent community; inspired to maintain both literal and metaphorical gardens for nourishing bodies and minds.

When I consider activating passages, here too themes of recognition dominate, I peer through a much more sinister lens clouded by euphemism, eugenic thought, and ethnocide. I've suffered countless team huddles where I was expected to act "as if the renaming solved the inherent problem" (p. 82). The ask-forgiveness-not-permission reek of management teams from my past holds strong similarity to enticement of "experimental counseling or therapy for the purposes of determining that treatment's efficacy" (p. 85). Those leaders in technology advised my teams to publish first, deal with accommodations later, never realizing their reports truly needed some accommodating in order to allow for anything approaching equitable space. Then I think of "best practices" in treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and obvious parallels to Watters discussion of how "early interventions were either ineffective or actually caused harm" to trauma sufferers (p. 118). We've come a long way from the abuses of the Feminine Boy Project and the Young Autism Project, but much of the same thoughtless exclusion and bullying into compliance still lingers in ABA clinics and residential facilities all over the USA.

Reading of Oshima Ichiro averaging 47 overtime hours for weeks on end (p. 217) brought my own burnout into stark relief. Before I made the decision to sunset my technology career I was spending at least 80 hours every week working to keep pace with unreasonable demands from business leaders. I am certainly grateful for new opportunity via healing arts, though thoughts linger over how adversely those many overtime hours impacted my long-term health.

As with many of the papers I've prepared in pursuit of a mental health counseling degree, I find myself at ease when considering how my future in practice will be affected by integration

of these lessons. The depth of understanding afforded to those who have suffered and moved through is a privilege I value greatly. It has afforded me many transferrable skills, from de facto leadership among leaderless teams to confidential consultancy demanding that one manage cognitive dissonance without revealing the burden to the holders of either truth, so the frequency with which I am overlooked and misrecognized expands my awareness of the difference between the things that I don't know that I don't know, the things I think I know, and the things that I actually do know. A humble approach in listening deeply for understanding (as opposed to listening for selection of a response) while centering the needs and stories of clients will overcome much of the potential for damage described throughout this tome. Honoring the unique context and experience and perspective each and every one of them holds will manifest the best support I could possibly hope to offer my future clients.

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