Tactical Authenticity in the Production of Mad Narratives

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Abstract

First-person accounts of madness and of encountering psychiatric services provide important sociocultural and psychological knowledge about the subjectivity of distress. The importance of such accounts is often based upon a claim of the *authenticity* of personal experience. However, authenticity is a highly heterogeneous concept: a popular current manifestation of the discourse of authenticity is in positive psychology, where it is often underpinned by humanist assumptions such as the rational autonomous self. The post-structuralist critique of humanism challenged such essentialist notions some time ago. The purpose of this article is to argue that this tension - between the value of narrative methods as a legitimate source of knowledge regarding the subjective experience of madness on the one hand, and the problems with an essentialist conception of the 'authentic' self on the other - can be addressed by the deployment of a reconceptualised form of authenticity based on Gayatri Spivak's (1988) notion of 'strategic essentialism', especially when modified by Michel De Certeau's (1984) distinction between 'tactics' and 'strategies'.

Key words: authenticity; madness; narratives; positive psychology; mental health

Introduction

R.D. Laing once wrote in the preface to *The Divided Self* that he wanted to "make madness, and the process of going mad, comprehensible" (Laing, 1960, p. 9). The problem, Laing argued, was that the categories used by biological psychiatry often bear little relationship to the actual experience of patients. Thus, by presenting madness in purely reductionist biological language, our understanding of what it is like to go mad becomes entirely mystified. Although Laing did not have direct experience of madness himself when he wrote *The Divided Self*, the purpose of making madness comprehensible to those without first-person experience has arguably been a key driver behind the growth in psychiatric 'illness memoirs', 'autopathographies' and 'patient narratives' of psychiatric experiences. Such accounts arguably provide an important source of knowledge about the experiences of madness 'from the inside' (Woods, 2012). There are several well-known narratives of this kind that have influenced the development of clinical theory and practice (Schreber, 1903; O'Brien, 1954; Greenberg, 1964; Barnes and Berke, 1990; Saks, 2007), and a plethora of lesser known works that are often used in medical training programmes (see Hornstein, 2008). Such accounts "have a vital role to play in our comprehending, mapping, and negotiating of madness" (Baker et al, 2010, p. 2).

More recently, the emancipatory potential of first-person accounts of madness has been recognised in terms of offering "new ways of understanding mental distress and of working with people to identify new ways of living with or overcoming distress and providing services" (Faulkner, 2017, p 509). Grant et al.'s (2011) anthology, *Our Encounters with Madness*, which combines satire, observation and reflection, is one example of how service-users/survivors utilise first-person experience in the service of challenging established

psychiatric practices and assumptions. This 'experiential knowledge', Faulkner (2017) argues, "has a significant contribution to make where some of the basic premises of professional knowledge are strongly contested" (p. 509).

First-person accounts thus afford something important and unique that performs two distinct, but at times related, functions: to provide information and insight into an often ineffable and mysterious experience; and to challenge the very paradigm of bio-medical psychiatry itself from the perspectives of those who use, or have used, services. These two functions have not always co-existed easily but when their concerns overlap we would argue that this relates to a shared value regarding the *authenticity* of the first-person account, along with a recognition that such authenticity provides a possibility for valid knowledge claims. We would also argue that it is in the authenticity of such accounts that both the instructional and political possibilities cohere.

Yet authenticity, precisely as a term with extensive cultural capital, is hardly neutral or homogenous, relating as it does to a whole range of practices, values and concepts in public life (Vannini and Williams, 2009). It is also a term that is laden with considerable conceptual baggage (Ferrara, 2009), to the point that some writers have dispensed with it completely, whilst also trying to establish the value of first-person accounts on an entirely separate basis (e.g., Lather, 2009; Grant et al, 2013). In our opinion, these latter attempts have not been very successful.

In what follows therefore, we wish to outline a theory of authenticity that we believe may support the valorisation of first-person accounts of knowledge in mental health research without falling into several persistent traps. In doing so, we will be making the following claims:

1. Authenticity is a heterogeneous concept, but one which encompasses a series of values and practices that do cohere;

2. Homogenising the concept of authenticity, conversely, opens the door to methodological difficulties and dubious practices and affiliations;

3. Attempts to support first-person knowledge claims inevitably centre on some implicit variation of what we will call 'the argument from authenticity', even when they explicitly deny it;

4. A modified concept of authenticity can be a viable basis to support first-person knowledge claims in a non-essentialist way – we will call this approach 'tactical authenticity'.

We will begin by briefly locating the concept of authenticity in terms of its linguistic, historical and conceptual background. To indicate some of the traps associated with it, we will then show how the recent positive psychology movement has re-appropriated the concept of authenticity in service of a neo-positivist and neo-liberal agenda. We will then explore how the poststructuralist critique of humanism has already complicated the idea of authenticity, but in sometimes contradictory ways that are arguably less useful to the ethical and political stakes of mad narratives. Nonetheless, in the final section we extract from these debates the notion of a tactical concept of authenticity which, we argue, may be politically useful in both asserting, and deploying in transformational ways, the value of first-person accounts of madness.

Before proceeding however, we would like to clarify our chosen terminology (already a political question of course). We have deliberately opted to use the term 'madness' for the specific purposes this article. Although controversial, this term is preferable, in this context, to the narrow medical symptomology represented by other clinical definitions such as

'psychosis' or 'schizophrenia' (Baker et al, 2010). 'Madness' encompasses the broader social, psychological and cultural dimensions which are often the ones that matter most to the subjects experiencing mental distress (Burstow, 2015). With the emergence of sub-disciplines such as 'Mad Studies' and political movements focussed on the emancipation of service-users from stultifying institutional discourse (Starkman, 2015), the choice of 'madness' already reflects the strategic approach to discourse we will be arguing for.

We also recognise that various terms have been used to describe the recipients of mental health service treatment, including 'patient', 'service-user', 'consumer', 'client' and 'survivor' (Noorani, 2013). Others argue that recovery from mental illness and its treatment is very often an achievement in itself (sadly, sometimes despite 'services' rather than because of them), and so prefer the term 'survivor' (Beresford, 2007). In recognition of this, we have therefore decided to use both terms interchangeably here to refer to people experiencing or who have experienced madness or distress within a mental health institutional context.

Authenticity: Linguistic and Cultural Roots

We will begin with a sketch of the extremely broad semantic reach of the term 'authenticity' before going on to give it some theoretical precision.

Unsurprisingly, the origins of the word are complex and diverse. It first appeared in English from the mid-14th Century onwards when it had the now-defunct sense of 'authorised', 'authenticated' or 'recognised by legitimate authorities' (for example, the acceptance of new doctrine by the Church authorities). It was borrowed from the Old French word *autentique*, which had the related meaning of 'canonical', as in, entitled to be included in the cannon of sacred knowledge. The French *autentique* derived in turn from the Medieval Latin term *authenticus*, which itself was directly derived from the Greek term *authentikos*,

meaning ‘original, genuine, principal’. The root *of authentikos* is *authentes*, which combines *autos* (‘self’) and *hentes* (‘doer, being’) to mean - in contrast to its later relation to external authorities such as the church - ‘acting *on one’s own* authority’. This Greek word *hentes* comes in turn from the Proto-Indo-European word *sene*, meaning to ‘accomplish’ or ‘achieve’, implying an action that produces recognition. Even this brief etymology then highlights a tension between authors and authority at the heart of the notion of authenticity, as well as foregrounding agency and recognition over and above the accurate representation of ‘reality’ that dominates our contemporary understanding of the term: for example, the Oxford English Dictionary currently defines authenticity as being “in accordance with fact, as being true in substance.” Indeed, some interpreters also cite the Greek word *authenteo* which means to have ‘full power over’ to the extent of ‘usurping another’ or even ‘committing a murder’ (Trilling, 1972).

Given these diverse etymological roots, it is no surprise that modern usage is equally diverse. ‘Authentic’ can mean ‘real’ in the sense of not a copy (e.g., an ‘authentic’ or verified Van Gogh painting, with a corresponding market value); or it can denote the subjective fidelity of an artistic representation (e.g., Virginia Woolf’s *The Lighthouse* is an ‘authentic’ depiction of manic depression); or it can be used to describe the integrity of a person or behaviour (e.g., Jeremy Corbyn is an ‘authentic politician’ in that he doesn’t just tell people what they want to hear etc.). In terms of personality descriptors, we generally describe someone as authentic in terms of their genuineness, forthrightness, honesty and congruence. One could still understand it through the ancient Greek rhetorical theory of *ethos*: authenticity is what gives truth-value to someone’s speech or discourse because of the personal integrity and relevant experience of the speaker. It is not just that the content of the speech is factually true, but that the one who speaks is especially, perhaps even uniquely, entitled to speak on this topic by dint of their personal experience.

Authenticity and Existentialism

Whist the term and the meanings it conveys have undeniable social currency, authenticity is more than just a cultural value or useful social heuristic: it has also enjoyed status as a recurring concept in philosophical discourse. As a fully formulated intellectual understanding of the world, modern academic concepts of authenticity derived largely from the work of continental philosophy in the 1930s through to the1950s, particularly Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre (Kaufmann, 1975). Both explicitly used the term 'authenticity' in their works, although in very different ways (Medlock, 2012). Early Heidegger formulated his version of authenticity, in the second section of Division Two of *Being and Time* (1998), according to the neologism *eigentlichkeit*, which names the attitude in which one engages in projects *as one's own* (*eigen*). Heidegger was playing on the ordinary German term 'eigentlich', meaning 'truly', but which has the root 'eigen' meaning 'own' or 'proper to'. Adding 'keit' to *eigentlich* turns it into a transitive project, an unfolding 'ownedness' which also implies 'owning' or 'propering'. Therefore, for Heidegger, authenticity involves taking ownership of one's life in terms of one's relation to Being, in contrast to the majority of people who are content with a form of inauthentic 'thrownness' into the everydayness of 'the-they'. For Sartre (1948), relatedly, authenticity consists in avoiding the 'bad faith' that comes from denying the inescapable tensions between choice and circumstance. The authentic person here is the one who makes choices, and takes responsibility for these choices, despite the horror or disgust they may feel towards the ultimate meaninglessness of the universe (Kaufmann, 1975).

Heidegger and Sartre's work was subjected to sustained criticism on both ethical and philosophical grounds. Adorno (2003), in particular, characterised the terms used in

Heidegger's 'jargon of authenticity' as a rootless and ahistorical form of obscurantism that "gives itself over either to the market, to balderdash, or the prevailing vulgarity" (2003, pg. xix) and takes the form of religious belief but without the content. According to Adorno such terms individualise subjectivity according to a spurious essentialism (i.e., in Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*) that could ultimately be used to legitimise both the bureaucratic tyranny of Nazism and the exploitative language of advertising in late Capitalism: authenticity for Adorno (1973) would involve confronting the negative dialectics of non-identity. Regarding Sartre, Jacques Derrida (1972) pointed out that he never quite dispensed with the notion of a Cartesian self that can make choices, and analyse those choices, somehow outside of the constraints of societal context or language. Indeed, for Derrida Sartre's project was "nothing other than the metaphysical unity of man and God, the relation of man to God, the project of becoming God as the project constituting human-reality", so much so that "Atheism changes nothing in this fundamental structure" (Derrida, 1972, p. 116). Authenticity for Derrida would smack of onto-theology and metaphysics.

Authenticity and Positive Psychology

Both Adorno and Derrida's influential critiques represented the vanguard of an intellectual movement that led to the decline of existentialism in academic circles and popular culture. However, at the same time that existentialism was beginning to decline in influence in Europe, some of its main theoretical tenets were to be revived, albeit in a very culturally idiosyncratic way, in American Humanist psychology. Carl Roger's articulation of the 'actualising principle' at the centre of human striving owed much to that precursor of existentialism, Søren Kierkegaard, whilst Abraham Maslow's famous 'hierarchy of needs' and 'peak experiences' similarly borrowed from Friedrich Nietzsche (Medlock, 2012). Of

course, the profoundly disturbing, even deconstructive, nature of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche's thought is noticeably absent from Rogers and Maslow; instead, the individual is conceived of in terms of 'positive striving' and the drive to 'congruence', rather than in terms of their relation to sin (Kierkegaard) or power (Nietzsche).

If American Humanism seemed to borrow from an existentialist language shorn of its more pessimistic and challenging elements, then this probably represented something of the culture of both the United States and the growing discipline of psychology. The spectre of the essentialist Cartesian self, present indirectly in Sartre's thought, is very much in the foreground in empirical psychology. Indeed, the entire project of a scientific psychology is predicated on the notion that such a self can be objectively measured and analysed according to the principles of propositional attitudes and independent causal laws of human behaviour (Parker, 2007). Without such a commitment, the very notion of a scientific study of human persons begins to dissipate.

It is little surprise then that the concept of authenticity would experience something of a revival through a marriage between American Humanism and empirical psychology in the newer sub-discipline of positive psychology (Waterman, 2013). According to its proponents, positive psychology is "the scientific and applied approach to uncovering people's strengths and promoting their positive functioning" (Snyder and Lopez, 2006, p. 3). Distancing themselves from what they perceived to be mainstream psychology's preoccupation with the 'negative' aspects of human pathology, positive psychology instead focusses upon the 'positive' aspects of human nature conceived by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) as positive subjective experiences, positive individual traits, and civic virtues. These 'civic virtues' are tied to Classical character traits such as wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence, all formulated according to the basic assumptions of positive psychology: that there is a human "nature"; that action proceeds from character; that character

comes in two forms, both equally fundamental - bad character and good virtuous character (Seligman, 2002a, p. 125). As Seligman (2002b) summarises the positive psychology perspective on human functioning: "When well-being comes from engaging our strengths and virtues, our lives are imbued with authenticity" (p. 14).

If the assumptions underlying positive psychology seem somewhat simplistic (can character traits ever be understood outside of particular socio-cultural contexts, before even evaluating whether they can be conceived of as ultimately good or bad?), then this is probably in part the psychologist's tendency to formulate concepts that can be easily subjected to quantitative evaluation (Parker, 2007). A more recent trend in the growing conceptual amalgamation between humanist and positive psychology is the rise of empirical measurement of key humanist concepts (Joseph, 2005). On this basis, the concept of authenticity has been developed from Rogers' (1961) notion of congruence and investigated as an 'individual difference variable' leading to formulations of the 'authentic personality' (Wood et al, 2008). In this 'new' approach to authenticity, authentic living can be understood as "being true to oneself in most situations and living in accordance with one's values and beliefs" (p. 386), with psychopathology becoming the degree to which "the person experiences self-alienation between conscious awareness and actual experience (the true self)" (p. 386). Finally, "the extent to which one accepts the influence of other people" along with "the belief that one has to conform to the expectations of others" (p. 382) marks out the degree to which one is able to 'resist external authority' – the third component in Wood et al's (2008) tripartite conception of authenticity. This 'authentic personality' has then been measured in a number of ways familiar to empirical psychology including questionnaires, laboratory experiments and mood reporting via digital technology (Lenton, Bruder et al, 2013; Lenton, Slabu et al, 2013; Davis et al, 2015).

The tendency in the empirical psychology literature has been to look at associations between authenticity and popular positive psychology concepts such as 'wellness', 'flourishing' or 'flow' and this probably reflects the tacit assumption that authenticity can be used as a benchmark for other positive psychology concepts such as 'wellbeing' and 'self-actualisation' (Joseph, 2005). It is entirely possible that white supremacists in the United States, for example, could experience congruence between their actual experience of hating black people and their values of ethnic purity, whilst also resisting the external authority of Liberal political consensus through hate rallies and armed militias, but we have yet to come across a positive psychology study that has looked at authenticity and flourishing amongst the alt-right. This example may be extreme perhaps, but it does illustrate the tendency amongst some psychologists to assume their concepts are 'objective' and thus apolitical (Parker, 2007), whilst simultaneously employing standards of measurement and theoretical constructs that are tied very closely to political practices that are far from neutral or benign (Rose, 1999). Whilst it is beyond the scope of this article to look more closely at the links between happiness studies, positive psychology and the political practices of the wellness industry, much has already been written on the subject (e.g., Wright, 2013; Wright, 2014; Davies, 2016; Cederström and Spicer, 2009).

However, these issues aside, there are theoretical and methodological shortcomings of the theory and practice of authenticity research within the narrow disciplinary confines of psychology. For instance, people who are 'inauthentic' are, by definition, highly unlikely to be aware of their supposed inauthenticity and hence highly unlikely to reflect this quality in the type of measurements used by psychologists (e.g., questionnaires). The difficulty appears to reside in how the complexity of identity, and the varied manifestations of selfhood in everyday life, may alter considerably according to different contexts and the different roles people occupy in these contexts (Ferrara, 2009). This leads however to the paradox of an

inauthentic study of authenticity, one which ultimately relies on a binary notion of self that is built upon a true/false dichotomy often taken for granted by authenticity researchers. Psychologists have reprised the essentialist nature and meaning of a 'core self' (Parker, 2007), but a core self that is tied to the much narrower idea of living according to a pre-set criterion of 'strengths' and 'virtues'.

These complexities have led some psychological authenticity researchers to conclude that the best way of studying authenticity may be across a whole lifespan using autobiographical life-story narratives (Harter, 2005). Here, at least some form of developmental continuity in behaviour can be established beyond the immediate context of the psychological survey or experiment. As Harter (2005) elaborates:

> [N]arrative construction is a continuous process as we not only craft but also revise the story of our lives, creating blueprints that facilitate architectural development of the self. In so doing, one's life story can also emerge as a true story (p. 391).

In other words, the complexity of narrative construction and reconstruction, along with its relationship with the ongoing process of revision, mean that the 'truth' of the story (i.e., its 'authenticity') can emerge in the process of telling. Is the future for the study of authenticity therefore to be found in narrative approaches, and not in empirical psychology? In the following section, we explore this link between narrative research and authenticity more closely.

Narratives and Authenticity

In many ways, the place at which Harter arrives above probably represents more continuity with the concept's phenomenological and existential origins, than with the somewhat

incongruent position represented by much empirical positive psychology (i.e., narrative as self-making or autopoiesis as opposed, ultimately, to market research moods). Indeed, most research from the Humanist psychology stable tends to be qualitative for these reasons (Joseph, 2005). Yet, narrative research has its own narrative of authenticity about its legitimacy. Frustrated by research that failed to recognise the invisible and unacknowledged, yet very real, presence of the researcher (Ellis and Bochner, 2000), alongside disillusionment with what was perceived to be the increasingly sequestered and elitist position of academic discourse, many qualitative researchers sought to recapture something of the vitality of 'lived experience' in the research enterprise (Bochner, 2001). The development of autoethnography, whereby the researcher's own experience becomes the primary 'data' for ethnographic research, in some ways represented the culmination of these trends (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). "I become a detached spectator" write Ellis and Bochner (2006) when contrasting their autoethnographic approach with more traditional methods:

> I become only a head, cut off from my body and emotions. There's no personal story to engage me. Knowledge and theory become disembodied words on the page and I lose connection. I want to linger in the world of experience, you know, feel it, taste it, sense it, live in it. (p. 481).

This focus on lived experience prioritised both the stories of the researcher and researched, but also the first-person perspective as an important way of writing academic research (Ellis, 2004). The so-called 'narrative turn' in the social sciences was therefore predicated on what Grant et al. (2013) depicted as "a shift from a single, monolithic conception of what should constitute scholarly work in favour of a developing pluralism" (p. 3). In other words, the argument deployed against the perceived hegemony of academia and for the restoration of the first-person perspective was one of *authenticity*. In these terms, and

at first glance, narrative approaches would seem to provide an ideal basis for an empirical study of human life and subjectivity, both in terms of developing knowledge but also in terms of an ethical imperative to honour the experience of those being researched. Art Bochner (2001), a prominent autoethnographic researcher, phrased it in this way:

> Illness narratives have a major role to play in the ill person's quest for authenticity, a journey he or she may never reach but cannot resist. When I read or hear an illness narrative, I take note of the first-person voice, the struggle with adversity, the heartbreaking feelings of stigma and marginalization, the resistance to the authority of canonical discourses, the therapeutic desire to face up to the challenges and to emerge with greater self-knowledge, the opposition to the repression of the body, the difficulty of finding the words to make bodily dysfunction meaningful, the desire for self-expression, and the urge to speak to and assist a community of fellow-sufferers. (p. 147)

Bochner's (2001) arguments are persuasive, and are used as a foundation for narrative research. However, such 'arguments from authenticity' are not without issues.

The Problems with Narrative

In fact, many narrative approaches fall prey to a set of problems that also underlie the empirical positive psychology approaches – namely, the assumptions surrounding the self, particularly the true/false binary, or even the notion that there is such thing as a 'true' self to begin with, outside of the way in which the 'self' is performed in a particular social context.

For example, Atkinson (2009) has developed a scathing critique of narrative research which contends that "narratives are treated as proxies for the direct apprehension of subjective, personal experience" (S1.3) and are thus "treated as sources of authenticity, grounded in the biographical particularities of speaking subjects" (2.11). One of the issues Atkinson highlights is the notion of supposed narrative exemplarity, but which ultimately results in a reductionism that leads to "the equation of the social with the personal" (2.14). Atkinson (2012) refers to such approaches as 'sentimental realism' whereby "the narrating speaker is celebrated as an atomised subject" (2.14) with an emotional truth to convey.

In a very real sense, Atkinson's critique indicates the dangers of trying to establish arguments based on authenticity that appear to be self-evident but are in fact fraught with difficulties and challenges that are neither acknowledged nor worked through. Authenticity in the terms described by Bochner (2001) and others leads to the deployment of arguments for authenticity which result, paradoxically, in practices that are, even on their own terms, inauthentic. In other words, by taking the first-person perspective as a given, and by assuming an uncomplicated relationship between language and experience whilst displaying what Atkinson (2013) calls a "failure of nerve" in terms of textual experimentation, narrative researchers end up undermining their justification for the use of personal experience in research through the unreflexive nature of their recourse to it.

It is no surprise therefore that some qualitative researchers dispense with the concept of authenticity entirely. For example, Patti Lather (2009) writes that "I see a desire for personal revelation that constructs the appearance of authenticity as having much to do with the abjection of theory and inscription of presence" (p. 20). This critique of 'presence', of course, derives from Derrida's (1976) celebrated notion that 'there is nothing outside the text' (i.e., no ultimate 'presence' outside textual representations). According to Lather (2009) this "nostalgia of presence" (p.18) in qualitative research supposedly "makes present the truth and

reflects the meaning of an experience that has already happened" (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009, p. 4). In a similar vein, Lather's colleague Lisa Mazzei (2009) argues that a pursuit of the 'impossibly full voice' "constitutes itself in a resistance to classification and a desire for authenticity" (p. 46).

And yet, problematically, Lather (2009) christens her alternative to this problem of metaphysical 'authenticity' a 'validity of tears', defined as an "opaque personal confession outside formulas, personal writing that is scandalous, excessive and leaky but based in lack and ruin rather than plenitude" (p. 22). Unfortunately, this attempted deconstruction of the idea of authenticity (at least in humanist terms) still legitimises her research on the basis of its affective or emotional resonance (its 'validity of tears'), presumably relative to some kind of centred subject. Lather's (2009) and Mazzei's (2009) arguments become paradoxical, appearing to be doing *away* with authenticity by appealing to an argument *for* authenticity, albeit one that works through the disruption of singular identities and the proliferation of multiple voices and, ultimately, through a valorisation of untheorized affect. Whilst they acknowledge the dangers of emotionalism, their proposed strategies, although very much grounded in postmodern and poststructuralist arguments for the disruption of the metaphysics of presence, appear to be based upon the very same arguments of authenticity that substantiated narrative research in the first place.

These and similar arguments are also rehearsed in order to establish the validity of autoethnography. According to Grant et al. (2013), narrative research should favour "the poststructural narrating voice of the emergent 'I'" over the "narrative voice of the predetermined I" (p. 8). The task of writing research is thus more to "show how subjectivity is produced rather than to display a privileged and secure, transcendent narrative identity position" (ibid p.8). In a similar vein to Mazzei and Lather, they favour privileging of the

distinctive voice, including the use of irony, humour, mockery, silence and textual disruption of the singular voice.

However, like Mazzei and Lather, such an enterprise still leads Grant et al. (2013) to try to establish validity for narrative research against the criticisms of positivism. There is an important dilemma here: how can narrative research be legitimised, when the main argument for its validity has resided in an argument for authenticity? It appears to be something of a contradiction when Grant et al. (2013) repudiate the role of authenticity so fully in their chapter because of its humanist assumptions of presence, and then assert that:

> Arguably, academic-, discipline- and profession-based practice based on personal knowledge and experience is more credible, ethical, imbued with integrity, empathic and potentially effective. This marks the difference between implicational and propositional knowledge: between knowing, feeling, connecting and doing, from the heart, based on personal experience, rather than solely on the basis of rationally acquired information. (p. 11).

We concur with everything that Grant et al. (2013) argue in this passage and believe that they have very succinctly summarised why narratives are so important. Such arguments also provide a strong basis for narrative mental health research. However, they are still arguments for authenticity that surreptitiously employ the same categories used by earlier, humanist researchers.

Of course, it is possible that both Grant et al (2013) and Lather's (2009) arguments are based on an overly-simplistic reading of Derrida (1976), maintaining, as they do, some of the binaries of presence (e.g., feeling/intellect, implicational/propositional etc.) that Derrida was

at pains to deconstruct in his work. However, if we do abandon notions of authenticity on the basis that they re-inscribe humanist notions of presence, on what basis can we still emphasise the *strategic* importance of such narratives?

Strategic Authenticity and Mad Narratives

The psychiatric survivor and mental health researcher who wants to pursue narrative approaches to voicing their experience is caught in a peculiar double-bind. On the one hand, the values of such approaches may seem self-evident in terms of challenging stigma, whilst also providing the opportunity to educate professionals, lay people and students as to the actual conditions and experiences of people who use services (Russo, 2016). On the other hand, there is a risk of falling into unhelpful binary oppositions when invoking concepts such as 'voice' or 'lived experience' (Voronka, 2016) that risk creating a different set of problems.

The postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Spivak (1990), recognised a similar dilemma in the position she often found herself occupying as a 'spokesperson' for 'subaltern' Indian women, but it was a dilemma she attempted to turn to advantage:

> But it is not possible, within discourse, to escape essentializing somewhere. The moment of essentialism or essentialization is irreducible. In deconstructive critical practice, you have to be aware that you are going to essentialize anyway. So then strategically, you can look at essentialisms, not as descriptions of the way things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a critique of anything. (p. 51)

In other words, the essentialist categories of 'Indian' and 'woman' may indeed be problematic, but they do provide the ('Indian', 'woman') speaker with a certain degree of

legitimisation in the mainstream discourse, a place from which to speak and from which some form of resistance and challenge can be mobilised. As Spivak (1988) elaborates, "it is within the framework of a strategic interest in the self-alienating displacing move of and by a consciousness of collectivity, then, that self-determination and an unalienated self-consciousness can be broached" (p. 14). Could the same approach work for mad narratives, that is, a legitimisation of the survivor's 'voice' based upon this 'strategic' version of authenticity?

Whilst this approach may be superficially attractive, there are at least three problems when applied to madness narratives. Firstly, madness can be described as a 'limit experience' which, according to Foucault (2001), has the "function of wrenching the subject from itself, of seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself, or that it is brought to its annihilation or its dissolution" (p. 241). Madness is therefore an inherently deconstructive experience; when speaking or writing about such experiences there can be "a disjunction between the content to be narrated and the possibilities inhering in conventional narrative forms" (Stone, 2004, p. 18). Secondly, madness is not a homogenous experience; some experiences may be constructed differently in different contexts (e.g., religious voice hearers in church and voice-hearing psychiatric patients in hospital) and so-called 'mad identity' incorporates a vast range of conditions, experiences and even treatments (Miller, 2017). It is thus difficult to essentialise an experience that is as heterogeneous as extreme psychological distress when the conditions for some experiences (e.g., eating disorders) are bound to differ significantly from others (e.g., psychosis). As Miller (2017) observes, "the experience of psychiatric oppression in its various forms is presumably an important commonality, but there seems no reason to presume any further unanimity" (p. 17).

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it is questionable whether intervening through essentialising experiential or identity categories actually works. Sometimes, the place you are

given to speak from is simultaneously a major constraint on what you can say, or be heard as saying. Indeed, Spivak eventually rejected the concept of strategic essentialism precisely because "my notion just simply became the union ticket for essentialism" (Danius et al, 1993, p. 35): in other words, it led to the very essentialist tendencies she was seeking to avoid in the first place. In the field of mental health, where differences between experiences are even less likely to be anchored to singular identity categories, "using experience and identity as a commodity to gain entry into systems of power", as Voronka (2016) observed when laying claim to authenticity in experience, can result in "entrenching and naturalizing difference" (p. 199).

When discussing her eventual rejection of the concept of strategic essentialism, Spivak added a further important qualifying observation: "As to what is meant by strategy, no one wondered about that" (Danius et al, 1993, p. 35). This raises an important question regarding the limitations of 'strategy' itself that may provide some clue as to why her project was unsuccessful. One possible solution, we would argue, might be found in the work of Michel De Certeau and specifically in his distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics'. Drawn from the language of the military, De Certeau (1984) calls strategy "the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated." (p. 35-6). Once isolated in terms of the demarcation of place, strategy results in important effects including: the ability to establish time according to an autonomous place; the mastery of place through sight and the ability to read this space (in terms of a 'panoptic practice'); and, finally, the legitimacy to define the power of knowledge via the transformation of the uncertainties of time and history into definable spaces and indeed narratives. Although Spivak attempted to use 'strategy' in the sense of a political pragmatics that compromises with the status quo in order, nonetheless, to pursue change (see chapter 3 in Spivak, 1990), de Certeau brings out the

term's connections to top-down rational control, often through the spatialised administration of identities: the overlap between these two meanings of 'strategy' arguably accounts for the complexity of so-called identity politics, especially in Spivak's US context (Wright, 2002).

In contrast to strategies in either of these senses, De Certeau (1984) defined 'tactics' as "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus" (p. 37), that is, of a space of its own, which also occurs in a different temporality, one that seizes the opportune moment (what the ancient Greeks called *Kairos*) rather than conforming to the metronymic regularity of rationalised time (*Chronos*). These are the methods of the other (i.e., the 'weak', the marginalised, those with very little power), the only recourse of those without "the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a distinct, visible and objectifiable space" (p. 37). Due to the colonisation of space by strategy, tactics make use of "a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment" in terms of "making use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers" (p. 37). Tactics are thus "procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time" (p. 38) by occupying the strategy from inside, but then disrupting that space through "a clever utiliziation of time, of the opportunities it presents and also the play that it introduces into the foundations of power" (p. 38-9). In this way, "strategy is transformed into tactics" (p. 37).

Tactics are thus adaptations to environments that may well be shaped by strategy, but are in opposition to it. For example, town planners might determine the streets of a city with expectations of how people will use them, but those who know the environment, the 'users', will spontaneously adapt the routes they take to suit their experience (e.g., taxi drivers using shortcuts, or so-called 'desire lines' that traverse planned pathways). One could perhaps also define the relationship of psychiatry and the service-user/survivor movement in a similar way: psychiatry as a discipline maintains a presence through strategies of place (hospitals, clinics,

university faculties and training institutions); sight (technologies linked to measurement - scans, tests, questionnaires etc.); and, finally, bodies of knowledge (classification systems such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*). However, service-user movements have been able to gain a foothold within these institutions through neo-liberal policies of patient engagement, which give them some kind of space in which to speak, so that service-user representation in national health services in fact became mandatory in the UK (Rose, 2015). In a telling example (Rose et al, 2003), service-user researchers have been able to utilise the methods of positivist psychiatry (e.g., the systematic review), and the injunction for 'gold standard' evidence-based practice, to show that when participants were interviewed by service-user researchers, satisfaction with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) was significantly lower than previously estimated when the research was conducted by professional researchers or clinicians (Rose, 2008). Thus, the tactics employed by 'the weak', based upon contextualised knowledge which was then employed using the *language* of strategy (the rhetoric of 'evidence-based practice'), were used to subvert the knowledge claims of the dominant (by showing the lack of rigour in previous studies that did not consider the contextual effects of the researcher), resulting in changes to policy in terms of how ECT was administered. As Rose (2008) later elaborated, "We intervene on the terrain drawn by psychiatry and try to re-shape its priorities in a user-focused direction" (p. 642). Tactical interventions differ from strategies in these fields, by displacing the identity-categories that are part of the problem.

Mad narratives may offer a similar tactic in terms of intervening into the discourses of psychiatry via the discourse of authenticity. As Charles Taylor (1991) recognised, "the moral force of the ideal of authenticity" (p. 17) is still "one of the constitutive ideals of modern culture" (p. 18). Similarly, the liberal representational stance of Western culture (i.e., 'I respect your experience and I'm listening to what you have to say about it') provides

opportunities for mad narratives to occupy a space within psychiatric research and practice, but in order to tactically disrupt it. This may be through Grant et al.'s (2013) method of privileging of the distinctive voice, including irony, humour, mockery, silence etc., or it may be in terms of Frank's (2005) 'dialogic' approach to narrative research based on the recognition of multiplicity of voice; but all such approaches would have to take into account Spivak's point, *a propos* of Derrida, that the metaphor of voice itself carries the danger of essentialising 'representationalism' (Landry and Maclean, 1992).

Better still then, mad narratives might lay claim (or, indeed, re-claim) the original meaning of the term 'authenticity' in terms of the importance of gaining recognition, and establishing authority for one's experience precisely there where the 'owness' of experience is put into radical question. This reclamation might take place through the medium of what De Certeau (1984) called the 'poetics of everyday life', including time spent in writing, talking, cooking and other activities that live in the interstices of strategic spaces such as the psychiatric ward. In tactical madness narratives, such poetics might take the form of using the 'official' discourse of psychiatry (e.g. in the form of clinical notes) presented alongside thick descriptions of the experiences of survivors and carers (e.g. Clarke, In press), in order to show how the everyday experience of a psychiatric patient is transformed into a discourse that serves strategic purposes. Such narratives might juxtapose fragmented personal accounts with theoretical analysis and reflections on method in a 'layered account' (Rambo, 2013) that attempts not to impose the 'panoptical' view of any particular 'voice'. It may also take the form of biographies with multiple discontinues timelines (Clarke, In press) whereby the disorientation of the narrative inducts the reader into the disorienting experience of madness. Such methods do not claim to offer what the late poet Geoffrey Hill called "a naive trust in the unchallengeable authority of the authentic self", but deploy, instead, an authenticity in

which “the instrument of expression and the instrument of self-knowledge and self-correction is the same” (Phillips, 2000).

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