

## **Chapter 5: Method**

Narrative is synonymous with both story and method of inquiry (Polkinghorne, 1995), and, as such, the narrative form shall be the basis of this chapter on methodology. The chapter contains three sections. The first covers epistemological issues around the kinds of knowledge this research seeks to produce and the methodological frameworks within which the research is situated. The second section explores the ethical and political questions related to the research, including the personal and reflexive aspects, examining the impact of the research on both my own life and those I seek to examine. The final section addresses the difficult issues of selection in this study.

Before I begin, it is worth emphasising why I have chosen to use the narrative approach to examine people's accounts of madness. First, the emphasis in narrative work is on listening to the written/spoken voice and by doing this the skilful and attentive researcher can diminish the dominance of their own voice in favour of the researched. Stanley (1994b in Roberts, 2001: 74) argues this disturbs notions of science, bringing to the forefront power issues that are marginalised in much of scientific research. Second, attention to the narrator's voice highlights the importance of multiple and alternative narratives to those of science, therefore a pivotal aim of narrative research is "to enable voices to be heard that are usually silent" (Plummer, 2001: 248). It is not, as Plummer notes, that these voices had no means to tell their stories. As is evident in the extensive bibliography of firsthand accounts of madness, people overcame both individual and social obstacles in order to recount their experiences. Many of these accounts though, including those written by the wealthy or powerful, remained at the margins until recently, with their voices constrained by social and political forces. Narrative

dispossession therefore resulted from external political, social and cultural forces. This said, in the wake of the anti-psychiatry movement, there has been an increase in the number of firsthand narratives of madness and, as Plummer has noted, the more that marginal voices speak, the more they speak not only of themselves, but of others. As Frank states; “taking the other perspective is a necessary step in constructive social change” (Frank, 2000; 94). Thus an individual account helps to create collective awareness (Plummer, 2001: 90), which brings me to the third important feature of narrative research. By linking the personal experience to the moral debate, the individual story can lead to social change, and in this way memories become political (Plummer, 2001: 236). For example, survivor movements such as the Hearing Voices Network give individuals an identity for their experience, a connection with others and a platform for social and political action (Riessman, 1993: 4). Blackman argues that such groups provide an ethical space in which the experience through stories becomes embodied (Blackman 2001). Furthermore, by understanding how individual accounts of certain life experiences are located in contemporary social and cultural settings, it is possible for the researcher to identify the dominant discourses alongside major institutional and social changes, and by doing so have a greater understanding of the present. The narrative can therefore be a place to explore the dialectical relationship between the individual and society, or “a tool for history” as Plummer describes it (Plummer, 2001: 39). Whilst Plummer writes of life histories, his comments are equally applicable to narrative work when he speaks of charting historical change through the relationship between biographical history and social history. Sociological research has examined racial oppression, gender inequalities and other sites of power by analysing the culturally and historically contingent themes within the individual narrative (Riessman, 1993: 5). Similarly in my research on madness, I anticipate it will be

possible to examine the narratives alongside the wider social and historical context of madness. This has important contemporary relevance. Readers who identify with either the narrator's stories or the researcher's metanarrative may be moved to understand their own experiences in new ways, finding new meanings and new forms to tell their stories differently (Chase, 2005: 668). The narrative can become a powerful tool of resistance, strengthening communities, augmenting the voice and social position of those marginalised.

## **Epistemological Issues**

### Researcher as Quiltmaker

Muller states that the idea of narrative:

is firmly grounded in qualitative traditions and stresses the 'lived experience' of individuals, the importance of multiple perspectives, the existence of context-bound, constructed social realities, and the impact of the researcher on the research process. (Muller, 1999 in Roberts, 2001: 117)

As outlined in this quotation, narrative method is embedded in the qualitative tradition, whose premise is the pluralistic and constructed nature of reality. Denzin and Lincoln observe that "an embarrassment of choices now characterises the field of qualitative research", as researchers are presented with an increasing number of theoretical paradigms, strategies of inquiry and methods of analysis from which to draw upon (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 20). Qualitative research is, as Denzin and Lincoln describe, a "bricolage", a pragmatic patchwork that reflects the negotiation through the

many, often confusing, array of methodological genres (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 4).

Denzin and Lincoln extend their metaphor of the patchwork by referring to the researcher as a *bricoleur* (quiltmaker):

The qualitative researcher as *bricoleur* uses the tools of his or her methodological trade, deploying whatever strategies, methods or empirical materials as are at hand...The *bricoleur* is adept at performing a large number of methodological tasks...the *bricoleur* reads widely and is knowledgeable about the many interpretative paradigms...that can be brought to bear on a particular problem...the *bricoleur* understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting.

(Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2-3).

This is a subversive position, going against formalised qualitative approaches such as grounded theory, empirical phenomenology and discourse analysis. By using the metaphor of the researcher as *bricoleur*, Denzin and Lincoln illustrate how knowledge is not produced by method, but by an in-depth understanding of the different philosophical and interpretative paradigms. Two of these paradigms, phenomenology and hermeneutics underpin the field of qualitative research, and these shall be discussed in turn, to assess their appropriateness for narrative research.

### Phenomenology

One cannot write about phenomenology without reference to Husserl. As outlined in chapter three, Husserl's philosophical aim was to find a method that would reveal the

ultimate truth, the certainties that underlay the foundations of human experience. This involves describing the essence of everyday experience, ‘bracketing-off’ one’s own experience, theories, beliefs and so on in order to dwell in the experience of the other. In this way it is argued, the essence or truth of the experience can be distilled into an exhaustive description. Husserl’s phenomenology was always intended as a critical approach, questioning taken for granted assumptions. He was not concerned with the subjective experience of events such as death, more the objects of human experience, for example the structure of grief, in order to make broader generalisations. This contrasts with what some describe as the ‘new phenomenology’, seen for example in the fields of psychology and health research (Crotty, 1996 in McLeod, 2001). Here, the emphasis is on describing the subjective experience, and whilst it looks at taken for granted assumptions, it fails to call them into question. There are three fundamental reasons why phenomenology is at odds with narrative research. First, perhaps misconstruing Husserl’s call for bracketing-off, recent phenomenological research has overlooked the social context, actively avoiding examination of the cultural and historical contexts so that subjectivity becomes separated from the contexts that make it meaningful (McLeod, 2001). Second, following the arguments of Heidegger outlined in chapter three, there has been serious doubt cast over whether it is indeed possible to ‘bracket-off’ pre-existing assumptions, thus denying their impact on the phenomenological field. Such bracketing off is more in line with the objective, positivist stance of science than the focus on meaning that concerns narrative research. Furthermore, as I shall go on to argue, an awareness and inclusion of one’s own cultural, political and theoretical positions can enrich the research. Finally, a strict

Husserlian phenomenology seeks *the* truth of a human experience rather than *a* truth as espoused by a constructivist position.<sup>1</sup>

### Hermeneutics

The narrative method above all else is interpretative and as such is embedded in the hermeneutic tradition, which was influentially changed by William Dilthey, a nineteenth century philosopher and literary historian. Dilthey recognised that the human world was fundamentally different to the natural world and, as such, required a different means of investigation. He argued that hermeneutics, as the art and practice of textual interpretation, was the most appropriate methodology for understanding “recorded expressions” of human experience (Dilthey, 1900 in Tappan, 2001: 47). Expression is a key feature of Dilthey’s hermeneutics as the ‘lived experience’ is a private, subjective phenomenon, one that no other can experience; lived experience is essentially an issue of interiority. Only when experience is expressed and symbolically represented through, for example, language (spoken or written), music, visual images or performance can the process of understanding and interpretation take place (Dilthey, 1910 in Tappan, 2001: 47). Dilthey, like his contemporary Husserl, believed that philosophy was the science of sciences and, as such, hermeneutics was a *science* of interpretation, whereby patterns and generalisations could be made from objective observations and objectively valid interpretations (Tappan, 2001: 48). With meaning as a determinate object, there is an inconsistency in Dilthey’s hermeneutics between scientific objectivity and subjective experience. One response to this illustrated in the writings of Heidegger and Gadamer, is to deny the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity, accepting instead that the hermeneutical activity of interpretation is not

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<sup>1</sup> Towards the end of his career, Husserl shifted away from this position of an absolute truth (see chapter

simply a matter of methodology, but a fundamental feature of human inquiry (Schwandt, 1998: 224). Understanding is always a matter of interpretation from a particular perspective. McLeod describes this as the ‘true’ hermeneutic approach, differentiating it from a merely interpretative hermeneutic approach (McLeod, 2001). McLeod contends that a ‘true’ hermeneutic approach is, first, culturally and historically informed, and, second, reliant on publicly accessible data. As regards his first point of differentiation, narratives are culturally and historically situated and, as such, context has to inform interpretation. Moreover, it is the juxtaposition of the context of the narrative with the social, historical and theoretical context of the researcher that deepens this interpretation, what Gadamer refers to as our “historical consciousness” (Gadamer, 1975 in McLeod, 2001: 22). In contrast to Husserl, Gadamer argues that it is our belongingness in the world, our situatedness in terms of cultural traditions that are needed in order to understand and interpret another’s experience (Gadamer 1979 in Freeman 1993: 140). In listening to or reading a narrative, we do so from a certain context with particular questions in mind. Interpretation thus becomes a dialogue, a process of mutual understanding or what Gadamer refers to as a *fusion of horizons*, and it is this dialogue that confers significance onto the narrative. Ricoeur writes that “it is the act of reading which completes the work...its power of being interpreted in new ways in new historical contexts” (Ricoeur, 1991a: 27).<sup>2</sup> The meaning of the narrative therefore lies in its possible future interpretations from different historical perspectives. As both Freeman and Ricoeur note, Gadamer’s writings offer the research community no method or formula for understanding the other, but rather he offers us an attitude, a way of being in relation to the data which requires receptivity and respect (Freeman, 1993; Ricoeur, 1991a). It is the dialogical relationship between past and present,

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three footnote 9).

interpreter and interpreted, part and whole, data and theory, which forms the hermeneutic circle. Within this circle there is no such thing as ‘nonpositional understanding’ rather understanding is shaped by the researcher’s perspective and their cultural-historical location (Tappan, 2001: 49). Engaging with the hermeneutic circle may lead to increased clarity for the researcher, but more significantly McLeod argues “it signifies an act of continuing and deepening, or enriching, the cultural-historical tradition of which the interpreter is a member” (McLeod, 2001: 23). By embracing our own cultural and historical realities within the research process, hermeneutics becomes a ‘tradition-informed inquiry’ that enables a richer understanding of human experience.

McLeod differentiates ‘true’ hermeneutics from interpretative hermeneutics by a second feature; that true hermeneutics studies publicly accessible texts. His argument stems from the origins of hermeneutics, which were the Biblical interpretations of the Scriptures by religious scholars. Transferring this to research, by studying texts that are publicly available, the researcher opens the document up to four possible consequences. First, there is the possibility of discovering something that takes the researcher beyond their own current understanding. Second, interpretations may inform cultural understanding. Third, interpretations based on a public document enable verification or refutation of interpretations. Fourth, the reader can induce alternative interpretations to those offered by the researcher. Such research based on public documents engages less in the ‘rhetoric’ of truth claims and evidence, as the data source and its interpretations can be read and judged by the reader, a validation issue I shall return to later in this chapter. McLeod sums up his description of hermeneutic inquiry thus:

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<sup>2</sup> As I shall illustrate in my chapter on Kempe, such interpretations may be positive or negative in relation

the criterion of a satisfactory hermeneutic study is that both text and researcher are changed...the emphasis on fusion of horizons and arriving at consensus over meaning reflects the dialogical nature of hermeneutic work.

(McLeod, 2001: 28)

### Hermeneutic methods: Discourse Analysis

There are a number of methods that could be used within the hermeneutic approach, two of which were considered to be suitable for this research. Before going on to describe the chosen method (narrative analysis), I want to pause briefly to consider the alternative: discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is an approach to the study of meaning that does not stem from a single unified position. Like narrative analysis, there are no procedures or protocol on how to carry out a discourse analysis. Rather its proponents, such as Jonathan Potter, describe it as an approach more akin to a craft or skill, rather than a formulaic recipe. The fundamental basis of discourse analysis is that texts play a pivotal role in generating, enabling and limiting particular subject positions, both empowering and disempowering (Hook, 2001: 528). Whilst all of its proponents emerge from the constructionist school of social psychology, they place different emphases on the meaning of discourse analysis. Potter and Wetherell concentrate on the micro-analysis of naturally occurring talk and texts, focussing on linguistic content and language as action, whilst Billig examines rhetoric as a means of understanding how individuals position themselves in relation to alternative discourses, a stance not dissimilar to Bakhtin's (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Billig, 1987). Ian Parker takes a more critical political stance, focussing on the deconstruction of institutional discourses and the discursive power of particular disciplines, as opposed to the specifics of

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to judgements and values made on the narrator.

language (Parker, 1997). Foucault, who has been influential in discursive psychology, takes a loose definition of the word “texts” including not only speech and writing, but also objects such as computer images, paintings or films, and activities such as giving an injection, all of which become a discursive practice linked to the reproduction of institutions and power (Foucault, 1979). Importantly, Foucault not only focuses on the meaning within discourse, but the absence of meaning or what cannot be said in certain discursive spaces (Hook, 2001: 527). Discourse is therefore a potentially violent action, acting in particular on the body, as outlined in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1979). For Foucault then, the focus on discourse is less about language and more about materiality, knowledge and power, dimensions that Hook argues, are absent from the approaches taken by Potter and Wetherell, and Parker (Hook, 2001).

There are five reasons why discourse analysis was not chosen as the analytic method for this research. First, the focus in discourse analysis is on the collective, societal level, rather than the individual level. There is little concern for individual agency within the production of discourse; in other words, considering discourse as a performance that is directed towards a particular audience, serving a particular function. Second, as McLeod highlights, there is a tendency in discourse analysis of limiting the analysis to immediate social relations, overlooking the broader cultural and historical influences that are central to people’s experiences and stories (McLeod, 2001: 103).<sup>3</sup> Even Parker’s suggestion that discourse is historically situated has been accused of having an “after the fact” feel (Hook, 2001; 534). Third, one of the central concerns in discourse analysis is the examination of power relations and resistances. I acknowledge this has a critical role in people’s experiences and indeed I will be examining the dynamics

between different forms of power in my analysis of Kempe and Barnes. However, I also want to widen the analysis to look at how the broader social and cultural context impacts on the individual experience. Fourth, the loose definition of ‘text’ and the focus on language within discourse analysis actively lessens the voice of the individual in favour of the social, thereby reducing subjective meaning (Roberts, 2001: 119). Fifth, discourse analysis is often presented as an authoritative interpretation of research participants’ material, so again, there is little concern with subjectivity. As subjectivity and identity are central concepts to my research questions, the narrative method is more suited than the deconstructive method of discourse analysis. The narrative method, whose definitions and terms are sometimes used interchangeably with discourse analysis, resists being incorporated into the discourse method for two fundamental reasons. First, it seeks to make more intimate inquiries than the socio-political stance of the discourse method. Its emphasis is on plot, story, identity and the interplay between the individual and the social (Roberts, 2001: 119). Whilst it interprets the individual experience within the social and historical context, its aim is to elucidate individual meanings, rather than power relations. Second, for data purposes, the narrative definition is confined to either a written or spoken story, in which events are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot (Polkinghorne, 1995: 5). However, this said, the narrative method does draw some insights from textual methods. For example, the examination of social life and culture through the individual story; the use of individual narratives to form collective identities and initiate social change (e.g. narratives of people living with AIDS); and the interaction between the storyteller and reader in the production of meaning (Riessman, 1993).

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault is the exception here, as his conceptualisation of discourse is intrinsically related to historical

### Hermeneutic methods: Narrative Analysis

The narrative method is clearly grounded in the ‘true’ hermeneutic approach in four fundamental ways (Freeman, 1997: 171-4). First, it is an idiographic approach to research, with the primary unit of analysis being the individual life. On the whole, it does not seek to make generalisations, but focuses on the specific and the singular. Second, it is a contextualist approach; the lives of others are studied in their natural environment and through the means by which they choose to present themselves (in this case the text). Third, narrative research is explicitly cultural insofar as by studying human life we are, as a consequence, studying culture itself. Fourth, its orientation is quintessentially historical, both studying the lives of others in their historical context and engaging in our own historical consciousness

Bruner distinguishes between narrative and paradigmatic cognition whereby narrative cognition is grounded in emplotted storytelling, and paradigmatic cognition is based on abstract conceptualisations that make generalisations from constructs such as categories, laws and variables (Bruner, 1986). Paradigmatic knowledge has been dominant in the Western world and can be seen not only in conventional science, but less obviously in qualitative research, with methods such as grounded theory and content analysis attempting to generate a paradigmatic framework through the construction of categories (McLeod, 2001: 159). Polkinghorne (1995) has examined the use of paradigmatic and narrative knowledge in narrative research, contrasting research that collects stories which are then analysed and organised in terms of categories (what Polkinghorne refers to as *analysis of narratives*) with research that collects descriptions of events, but uses analysis of structure and themes to produce a storied account (*narrative analysis*).

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contexts and, in this respect, my research is very much embedded in the Foucauldian tradition.

Polkinghorne's distinction between these two types of analysis may seem pedantic, but he makes a crucial theoretical point. Stories can be analysed paradigmatically using grounded theory, content analysis or empirical phenomenology, and whilst these methods may capture the fragmented themes and meanings within the story, they would fail to convey any meanings expressed by the story as a whole, and in this sense they are non-narrative approaches (McLeod, 2001: 105). What is required in narrative analysis is a sensitivity to stories, so that the researcher becomes both the "story-gatherer and storyteller" (McLeod, 2001: 159).

As with other qualitative approaches, narrative analysis has no prescribed method, but instead is "rather loosely formulated, almost intuitive, using terms defined by the author" (Manning and Cullum-Swan, 1994 in Roberts, 2001: 118). This does not mean however, that 'anything goes'. Narrative analysis is an artistic, creative and explicit process that integrates interpretation with emergent theory (Josephs, 1997: 366-7). This said, within the field, there is some disagreement on what constitutes narrative analysis. I will outline two opposing perspectives on narrative analysis, a structuralist approach and an aesthetic approach, before going on to state my position. For structuralists, the narrative is identified within the text as a discrete account of an event, so distinguishing what does and does not count as narrative becomes a central concern. Within this tradition, the narrative is defined as a linguistic unit distinct from other discursive structures such as jokes, plans or explanations (Mattingley, 1998). Labov and Waletzky (1997) [1967] and Labov (1972; 1982 in Riessman, 1993), focusing primarily on oral narratives, argue that fully formed narratives have six formal, structural properties, each of which performs a function: an abstract (summary of the substance of the narrative), orientation (time, place, situation, participants), complicating action (what happens

next), evaluation (significance and meaning of the action, attitude of the narrator), resolution (what happened in the end) and coda (returns to the present perspective) (taken from Riessman, 1993: 18-19). Of these six elements, it is the evaluation clauses that provide the analyst access to the meanings of the experience for the narrator. By analysing the structure of the narrative in this way, Riessman shows how it is possible to study the sequence of stories within an interview/text, examining the thematic and linguistic connections between them for the narrator (Riessman, 1993: 40). Riessman adds to this systematic, structuralist approach by offering some basic principles for the analysis of interviews, which can be utilised with texts. These are;

- Collecting data from a number of texts to enable understanding on different experiences and themes
- Selecting a few key texts for closer reading, whose stories are representative of the broader themes
- Identifying exemplar narratives from within these texts for analysis
- Writing the researcher's metastory around the intact narrative text, which is reproduced in full (adapted from McLeod, 2001: 105)

However, there are several problems with taking such a formal approach. First, to help identify the narrative within the text, the boundaries of the narrative have to be defined. In interviews, participants can signal the start of a story by using clauses such as 'for example', thus entrance and exit references can help define narratives. However, as Riessman observes, narratives within a text are rarely so clearly defined, making locating a narrative a complex, interpretative task (Riessman, 1993). Second, it could be argued that attendance to the structure of the text is atomistic, as individual narrative

structures are isolated from the context of the text at the expense of content and meaning.<sup>4</sup> Third, Labov and Waletzky's structuralist framework is dependent on the text having an underlying temporal organization, amenable to specific genres of narrative (journalistic stories for example), but less useful for thematically constructed stories. With the increasing importance placed on the role of stories in clinical settings (e.g. taking a case history), such assumptions of coherence marginalise fragmented chaotic narratives, labelling those who narrate differently as deficient, favouring traditional, hegemonic narrative structures (Riessman, 1997: 158). Stanza analysis provides a creative non-chronological approach to narrative theory and was introduced by Gee (1986; 1991). Gee argued that stanza analysis revealed more of the meanings and emotions within the narrative than traditional prose. In his 1991 paper, Gee presents an account of a woman diagnosed with schizophrenia transcribed into lines, stanzas and strophes, and by doing so enables the narrative to achieve coherence not evident in the continuous prose account, highlighting how textual representation and meaning are interdependent. However, stanza analysis has been employed solely with spoken texts, as the paralinguistic features of speech (pitch, intonation, pause) aid patterning into stanzas, making convincing results. Its use in written prose is less well known and, as an analytic tool, would be less useful for the historical documents I want to analyse.

There is a broader approach to narrative research than that taken by Labov and Waletzky, which is construing the narrative as a form of aesthetic expression. Rather than meaning emerging from an examination of linguistic structures, meaning comes from the poetic force of the narrative and its artistic qualities. This may seem far

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted however, that researchers such as Riessman often present the whole text from which

removed from both the fields of qualitative research and clinical practice, but Mattingley, drawing on the writings of Aristotle, describes it thus:

The poetic narrative offers knowledge about the human condition not available from history...because poetry offers an imitation of real life that condenses it, weeding through the irrelevancies that muddy ordinary perception and experience. (Aristotle, 1970 in Mattingley, 1998: 16)

“Literature”, Mattingley argues, “turns a philosophical eye on human experience” (ibid). The narrative as an aesthetic expression allows for incoherence, atemporality, unfinalisability and moral ambiguity as the protagonist negotiates the dilemmas and choices within the story. Examples of this broader narrative approach can be found in the writings of Arthur Kleinman and Arthur Frank. These theorists favour biography and the larger life story over discrete events, with the narrator as both protagonist and hero. This form of narrative research is grounded in what Kleinman describes as ‘empathic listening’, with the aim being to do justice to personal experience through attention to voice (Kleinman, 1988; Frank, 1995). Fundamental to this approach is the theorist’s ethical position in relation to the storytelling relationship, with the aim being to construct a broad metanarrative that attempts to represent the lived qualities or ‘core tone’ of the narrator’s story. The story for these analysts is not ‘raw data’ but an experience in a life, taking at times written narratives for their basis in the form of prose or poetry. For Frank, Kleinman and other narrative researchers such as Mattingley, the poetic force of the narrative also has special therapeutic powers in relation to healing and recovery. Engaging with voices and metaphors within the narrative can be used as

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the narrative is taken.

a clinical tool, what Mattingley describes as ‘therapeutic emplotment’ (Mattingley, 1998).

Atkinson (1997) accuses such accounts of being overly sentimental and romantic and, in such works, he states:

we can detect the dangers of narrative being misused. It starts to transcend the realm of analytic methodology and becomes a surrogate form of liberal humanism and a romantic celebration of the individual subject.

(Atkinson, 1997; 335)

Atkinson’s critique is based on two arguments. First, that Kleinman and Frank’s research is devoid of social contexts and, second, that it is devoid of methodology. In relation to his first argument, Atkinson contends that the narratives used in Frank’s and Kleinman’s work are studied in isolation from the therapeutic narratives of, for example, medicine or nursing. Atkinson misses the point however. First, Frank and Kleinman were interested in how the ill narrate their experiences, not the experience of being a patient, although this is an equally valid area of study. Second, as medical narratives are privileged in the social arena, lay experiences tend to be either silenced or used to support the prevailing hegemonic narrative of medicine. To separate illness narratives from medical narratives is not to decontextualise them, but to let the voice of the ill speak uninhibited and, as such, heard for its intrinsic value. Atkinson’s second accusation against Frank and Kleinman is that their research is methodologically unsound, with no attention to formal structures. He describes them as story-tellers as opposed to story-analysts, with Frank in particular failing to use any original field data

and with no detailed examination of first-person narratives. Ethical concerns and narrative morality unwisely take precedence over a systematic and formal analysis, argues Atkinson. In a detailed response, Frank convincingly rejects these accusations (Frank, 2000). First, he argues, a rigid focus on structure may miss the personal meanings within the narrative; “analysts risk misunderstanding if they move too quickly outside the storytelling relation as they transform the story into a ‘text’ for analysis” (Frank, 2000; 355). Second, stories are more than data, they are dialogical and, as such, are relational to both the self (narrator) and other (the narrated, reader). Third, Frank insists that in order to be a story-analyst, one has to enter into the relationship of storytelling, and this means putting ethics before methodology. Ethics, he argues, should always precede methodology, and it is entirely right for the researcher to engage with his/her personal convictions by taking an ethical standpoint. As he simply states, “the story is a call to enter relations of story telling” (ibid: 355).

This debate between Atkinson and Frank is pivotal to this study, as Atkinson’s critique could equally be applied to my research. In the analysis of Kempe’s and Barnes’ narratives that follows this chapter, ethics is favoured over a formal methodology; the larger life story over the discrete event; attention to voice over attention to structure; published stories over original field data; and I could be described as primarily a storyteller *in order to be* a story-analyst. However, whilst my narrative approach is largely influenced by Frank and Kleinman, I have also turned towards more traditional narrativists to provide an analytic model.

Mishler brings the structuralist and broader thematic approaches together by arguing that it is only by paying attention to both structure and the relationships between themes

within the story that meta-meanings can be identified (Mishler, 1986). He argues that there is no such thing as a separate, distinct discipline of narrative work, proposing that it be seen as a problem-centred line of inquiry that includes a diversity of approaches (Mishler, 1995: 88). Mishler suggests that narrative studies can be located within a typology of narrative analysis that contains three models; studies that focus on reference and temporal order; studies that focus on textual coherence and structure; and those that focus on narrative functions (Mishler, 1995: 90). The first model addresses temporal ordering by differentiating the ‘told’ from the ‘telling’, whereby the ‘told’ refers to an assumed sequence of actual events (i.e. in real time) and the ‘telling’ refers to an ordering of these events as represented in the narrative. This builds on Ricoeur’s theory of episodic (‘told’) and configurational (‘telling’) time outlined in the previous chapter. The second model, textual coherence and structure focuses on the use of linguistic markers and language in the creation of the narrative (see for example, Labov and Waletzky; Riessman; and Gee). Time is not privileged in these studies, but is analysed through narrative strategies such as parsing the text into strophes and stanzas. The final model, narrative functions, addresses the purpose and function of the narrative on four levels: persons, cultures, social process and institutions, and politics. Within the analysis there is a need to identify the culturally available narratives that social actors draw upon and which constrain the types of narratives they reproduce. Consideration also needs to be given to the dialectical relationship between these cultural narratives and the personal narratives (Lawler, 2002: 254). Mishler argues that rather than limiting narrative research to a single model, researchers should aim to include elements from all three, thus providing a more comprehensive account of how narratives work as a form of social action (Mishler, 1995: 117). This is a large task, however, and it is questionable whether any one researcher possesses all the skills to bring these three models together

in a single analysis. Squire (2004) argues how narrative analysis can focus on events and language (e.g. Labov), construction of identity (e.g. Ricoeur) or the narrative interplay with cultural stories (e.g. Plummer). Thus taking a single approach does not necessarily mean that richness and meaning are compromised. For the purposes of this research, Mishler's third, multi-layered model that addresses narrative functions, is of most interest and relevance. This model can help address some of the questions asked in this research. The 'persons level' explores construction of identity through the narrative, particularly important given Bakhtin's notion of unfinalizability and the shift in identity as a result of distressing experiences. The 'cultural level' will enable me to focus on local cultural and historical understandings of madness, for example, local folktales, myths and traditions, together with responses to such experiences. 'Social processes and institutional level' allows me to examine the effects of interactional and institutional contexts. The final 'political level' provides a framework for examining power, conflict and resistance in the narrative.

Although I shall use Mishler's narrative functions typology as a guide for my analysis, there is an absence of advice in narrative research on how to analyse large written documents. The texts I shall analyse are not only first-person narratives of madness, but also two substantial pieces of literature. Thus my research straddles both narrative and literary theories, and it is to literary theory, specifically Bakhtin, that I turn to for my tools for analysis. The first of Bakhtin's concepts I shall use in my analysis is dialogism and voice. All text is dialogical, being both a function of self and other (Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin's contemporary Voloshinov<sup>5</sup> explained:

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<sup>5</sup> There is some debate over the attribution of some of Voloshinov's writings. Some critics have argued that Bakhtin wrote of his Marxist thinking under Voloshinov's name, thus preserving his liberal, non-Marxist character (See Introduction of Simon Dentith's *Bakhtinian Thought*, 1995).

...word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant. As word, it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee.

(Voloshinov, 1929 in Hermans, 1997: 388)

The polyphonic nature of the text and the dialogical relation is a primary unit of analysis, as I believe the meanings of the narrative can be accessed by identifying the voices and the relational positioning of these voices. Narratives of any distressing experience will inevitably be populated by many different voices, voices Tappan argues, that struggle for hegemony within the self (Tappan, 1997). In order to identify such voices, researchers need to go beyond isolating specific narrative structures and thematic categorisation, as Bakhtin argues, “the expression of an utterance can never be fully understood or explained if its thematic content is all that is taken into account” (Bakhtin, 1986a: 92 in Wortham, 2001:19). Instead researchers need to sensitise themselves to voice, the polyphonic nature of the text and the dialectical complexity of people’s personal, relational and cultural lives (Tappan, 1997: 383). Utterances are never original, they have been spoken before and as such are associated with particular social groups and cultural/historical contexts, what Bakhtin refers to as heteroglossia. Utterances position the narrator in relation to the past and also the future, as s/he anticipates future responses, and in this respect utterances are also actions. Importantly, they are actions that leave the protagonist unfinalised and, in this sense, attention to voice is critical. By ignoring the dialogical nature of the narrative, the researcher finalises the main character determining how they are viewed by others. For example, as I shall illustrate in the next chapter, interpretations of Kempe’s narrative categorise

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her as ‘psychotic’, determining what Kempe’s life was about. Frank argues that this is profoundly unethical:

For Bakhtin, all that that is unethical begins and ends when one human being claims to determine all that another is and can be; when one person claims that the other has not, cannot, and will not change, that she or he will die just as she or he always has been. (Frank, 2006: 966)

Of course, both Kempe and Barnes are dead, but death does not have the last word on their lives. These women still speak through their narratives and in this sense they can remain unfinalised, open to different interpretations, their lives constantly revised. As Bakhtin describes:

The text as such never appears as a dead thing; beginning with any text and sometimes passing through a lengthy series of mediating links – we always arrive, in the final analysis, at the human voice, which is to say we come up against the human being. (Bakhtin, 1981: 252-3)

It is the researcher’s ethical responsibility to ensure that participants (in this case the narrators Kempe and Barnes) remain unfinalised, so that a dialogue may continue in which the central characters are in a constant process of development. Wortham (2001), building on Bakhtin’s work on the dialogical self, highlights how an autobiography is more than a simplistic representation of the self. Narrators, argues Wortham; “act out particular selves in telling these stories and in doing so they can construct and sometime transform themselves” (Wortham 2001: 17).

The analysis of the dialogical nature of the narrative is aided by the Bakhtinian concepts of double voicing and ventriloquation. Double voicing is a part of the narrative where both the narrator's and the character's voices can get established, thus we see a juxtaposition of the main voices of the text within the same narrative description (Bakhtin, 1981: 185). In this way the narrator uses the voices of others to establish and reinforce their own position. It is double voiced as the narrator's speech is directed at both the reader and towards another's discourse, with the narrative's full meaning emerging from the juxtaposition of the conflicting voices characterised by heteroglossia, a positioning of official discourses against unofficial discourses. This is often done to display parody or hypocrisy, for example. The narrator asserts their stance not through direct speech, but by positioning themselves in relation to these conflicting voices. Bakhtin describes this indirect speaking as ventriloquation, which is characterised by spatial metaphors. Do they attempt to remain close to these voices, thus identifying themselves with this social/cultural position, or do they try and distance themselves from certain voices? By attending to the dialogical nature of the narrative, I am making two assumptions. First, that psychological life is dialogical and performative and, second, that the mind is constituted by and within these dialogical relationships (Gergen, 1999: 133). In addition to this analysis of dialogical interaction is the use of metaphor within the narrative. Metaphor aids identification of voices and is central to developing an understanding of the narrator's position. Importantly, metaphor can endure when narrative and temporal order fails, as metaphor articulates the "body's insistence on meaning" (Kirmayer, 1992). Gergen states that our understanding of emotions and our interiority "owes a debt to metaphor...when we speak of our minds we enter the world of poetry" (Gergen, 1999: 68). This world of poetry may contain the

beginnings of narrative, as Kirmayer argues “even the few words of an isolated trope invoke a whole conceptual space or world” (Kirmayer, 2000: 155).

The second theoretical construct taken from Bakhtin’s work that is also linked to metaphor, is the chronotope, which, as outlined in the previous chapter, refers to the ways in which time and space are represented in the text. I want to use the chronotope in two ways. First, I aim to distinguish the broader chronotope of the narrative, examining to what extent Kempe and Barnes draw upon age-old traditional forms of narrative in the construction of their stories and how this relates to their understanding and articulation of their experiences. Second, I want to examine the different ways in which time and space are represented in the narrative, revealing not only the temporal complexities of the narrative structure, but also the meaning of the experience for the protagonist, as Bakhtin suggests chronotopes embody ‘the meaning that shapes the narrative’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 250). Thus I will examine the subjective shifts in time and space, paying particular attention to the threshold chronotopes, which I envisage will occur at crucial junctures in the transformation of the self. It is not only the protagonist’s timespace that is of interest however, but also the chronotopes of others and how these relate to the protagonist and wider society. For example, what is the relationship between the chronotope of Mary Barnes, her psychiatrist Berke, the counterculture of anti-psychiatry and the institutional chronotope of psychiatry? In relation to time, direct references may illustrate the ways in which time is bounded; the values attached to time; whether time is controlled by another – either person or institution; phenomenological references to time and its direction – slowing down, speeding up, progressing, regressing, standing still; the rhythm of the story, the stability and routine of time, the impact of time upon the self and so forth. In relation to space,

what are the spaces occupied by both the protagonist and others; what is the significance of these spaces for both the experience and the story; what journeys, either symbolic or geographical, were embarked upon; where are the entrance and exit points; what spaces does the social body occupy; where are the protagonist and other characters positioned within the spatial and social landscape and how does this change in relation to experience?

To summarise this section on narrative analysis, my research draws upon three approaches. From Frank, Kleinman and Mattingley, I will take a broad aesthetic style to my story telling. From Mishler, I will be guided by his multi-layered model that looks at narrative functions from the individual, cultural, social/institutional and political perspectives. Finally from Bakhtin, I use his theory of dialogism and the chronotope as analytical tools.

### Validation

In quantitative research validation means that a tool (e.g. scale, questionnaire) is actually measuring what it purports to (e.g. attitudes). However, there is often a precarious relationship between the two. Plummer states that “the closer I am to the phenomenon I want to understand, the nearer I am to validity”, and validity, he argues, should always take priority over reliability (there is no point in cross-checking data that says nothing about the phenomenon in question) (Plummer, 2001: 155). Traditional understandings of validity from quantitative research, which rely on procedures of verification, are largely redundant in narrative studies. Neither the researcher’s interpretations, nor in fact the source text, are an exact record or truth of a particular experience. As Dilthey recognised, access to interiority is not possible. Rather

narratives are dynamic, fluid accounts that are interdependent on the social and historical contexts in which they are both written and read. They are, as Spence articulated, *narrative truths*; a form of truth which he distinguishes from *historical truths* (Spence 1982). Spence argues that well constructed stories contain a narrative truth that comes across as both real and immediate, regardless of whether it is verifiable or not. Narrative truth depends on coherently capturing a particular experience to our satisfaction and bringing the story to some form of resolution. Once constructed, the narrative truth becomes just as real as any other kind of truth and remains so as it can rarely be disconfirmed. It is in essence a *construction*, a creative enterprise. By contrast, historical truth is a *reconstruction*, an attempt to correlate with events in the past. Historical truth is temporally bound, attempting to come as near as possible to what actually happened, the facts. There is a relationship between the two forms of narrative however, as narrative truth *becomes the past* by fixing in language the form of our experience. Once constructed, we see the past in a particular way, so that “the construction not only shapes the past – it becomes the past” (Spence 1982: 125). It can be argued that narrative or subjective truth has greater importance than historical or objective truth as it reveals the significance and meaning of the experience (Spence 1982).

Rather than dismissing validation altogether, there needs to be a reconceptualisation of the term that takes epistemological issues beyond standardised notions of reliability, validity and generalizability (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995: 128).

Validity is subjective rather than objective: the plausibility of the conclusion is what counts. And plausibility, to twist a cliché, lies in the ear of the beholder.

(Cronbach, 1982 in Bruner, 1990: 108)

Validity then, according to Cronbach is less about exercises in research design, and more about interpretations. In narrative work, meaning is made, not found, so that ‘trustworthiness’ not ‘truth’ becomes the central issue. Riessman (1993) suggests four means of approaching validation in narrative research. First there is persuasiveness; how convincing or plausible are the interpretations? Persuasiveness, Riessman argues, is strongest when there is both evidence from the source data and when alternative interpretations are considered. How does it fit with the analysis of similar narratives? Persuasiveness is also culturally and historically contingent; convincing interpretations at one point in time may be less so in the future. Second is correspondence; are the researcher’s interpretations recognisable to participants? Obviously, this is not possible with historical texts, and Riessman even questions its appropriateness with interviewees. Human stories and reflections on experiences are not fixed, but shift as consciousness changes (Riessman, 1993: 66). Another way of looking at correspondence for written texts is fidelity. Is the metanarrative faithful towards the narrator’s story and does it faithfully reflect the relationship between narrator and context (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995)? Ultimately Riessman argues researchers have to take responsibility for their own interpretations. Third is global, local and themal coherence. Global coherence refers to the narrator’s overall goals with which they justify an action (e.g. escaping incarceration on the grounds of rejecting accusations of insanity). Local coherence refers to the ways in which the narrator links events to one another by, for example, linguistic devices (e.g. metaphors). Themal coherence relates

to the content of the narrative, such as recurring themes. Riessman's final approach to validation is pragmatism, which relates to the impact and consequences of the research. To what extent does the story provide the basis for others' research? What value does it have to different communities (research, theoretical, mental health, service user, psychiatry)? Work in illness narratives by Kleinman, Frank and Charmaz has been influential in our understandings of the impact of acute and chronic illness on the self, progressing sufferer and carer understandings, together with sociological and psychological knowledge. Riessman does not suggest that all four of her approaches should be used in any one study, but there should be a pragmatic decision on their appropriateness. In this research, for example, persuasiveness, coherence and pragmatism would be useful, whereas correspondence is less so. Whatever means are used to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the research, it is accepted in the qualitative field that qualitative data does not yield neat, complete units of analysis. The lives we study are ambiguous, messy, contradictory and confused and it is the recognition of this state in both ourselves and others that deepens our appreciation of the unknowable (Ricoeur, 1988 in Erben, 1998: 12).

### **Ethical and Political Issues**

#### Ethic of Reading: Cultural and Historical Reflexivity

Research needs to find a way to renounce its authority and give equal weight to the voice of participants. There is the danger, particularly in qualitative research, of appearing smug as regards the ethics of presenting the other. One of the central features in narrative study is the primacy of the narrator's voice. Reflecting on notions of authorship and voice brings to the forefront the researcher's own voice and its

relationship with both the research and the participants, as qualitative researchers are encouraged to engage in reflexive practices. However, more recently in social science there has been a move towards a more critical reflexivity that examines how location in time (history) and space (social, cultural) impact on the research. Critical reflexivity builds on the work of Gadamer and Heidegger and seeks to examine not only the personal and social world of the researcher, but their historical consciousness. Just as narrators have their stories circumscribed by the social world, we too as researchers are influenced by our social and historical situatedness. My presence as a reader of the text shapes the account I give of that narrative; I make sense of their story by constructing a story of my own, my own narrative truth. Crucially though, the story I construct is constrained and embedded in the original narrative. As Freeman (1993) notes, this is all to the good if reader and writer share the same discursive space, with a comfortable shared meaning existing between the two. But what happens, as Freeman queries, when readers' and writers' worlds clash? Whilst I may share elements of the same traditions (e.g. English language), what level of understanding can I come to and how much meaning can I legitimately make from a narrative written by a medieval woman who experienced religious visions and voices? I am a twentieth century female trained within late twentieth century psychiatry, with no subjective experience of voice hearing, whose sanity has never been questioned; how do I find meaning in accounts of people whose reason has been put seriously in doubt? I have no means of lifting myself from my own culturally and historically based ways of understanding, and to claim that this is possible is disingenuous. However, Bakhtin argues that even when author and reader are centuries apart, they are bound together in a fundamental and meaningful way:

Of course these real people, the authors and the listeners or readers, may be (and often are) located in different time-spaces, sometimes separated from each other by centuries and by great spatial distances, but nevertheless they are all located in a real, unitary and as yet incomplete historical world set off by a sharp categorical boundary from the represented world in the text.

(Bakhtin, 1981: 253)

As Bakhtin infers in this quotation, there is a genuine dialogical interaction between the author and their reader/listener. Building on Bakhtin's work, Freeman suggests that when author and audience are separated by centuries, an understanding of the other can be achieved through a kind of ethnography, where the researcher attunes themselves to the writer's world "in all its potential otherness" (Freeman, 1993: 201). There needs to be then a "genuine receptivity to the otherness of the text" (Freeman, 1993: 141), thus interpretation involves dialectical, relational activity between narrator and reader. Within this relationship, detachment and neutrality are not only impossible, but undesirable as they impede understanding;

The hermeneutical attitude supposes only that we self-consciously designate our opinions and prejudices and qualify them as such, and in so doing strip them of their extreme character [only then can we] grant the text the opportunity to appear as an authentically different being and to manifest its own truth, over and against our preconceived notions.

(Gadamer, 1979 in Freeman, 1993: 141)

Scholes (1989 in Tappan, 2001) calls for an ‘ethic of reading’, arguing that the interpretative process is never value-free, but saturated with the ethical and political positions of the reader:

An ethic of reading...require[s] us to connect what is represented in the text with what we see in the world - in a manner that is ethical because it is political and political because it is ethical. This is a crucial point. The notion of textuality reminds us that we do nothing in isolation from others. We are always connected, woven together, textualized – and therefore politicized. This is why there can be no ethics of reading that is free of political concerns.

(Scholes, 1989: 154 in Tappan, 2001: 53)

#### Ethic of Listening: Authorship

I use the word ‘participants’ in this study as, despite the fact I shall be primarily using public documents as a data source, I still have a relationship with the researched. On Plummer’s continuum of involvement between the researcher and researched, my study lies at the passive end of the continuum that is *the stranger role* (Plummer, 2001: 209). My method of data collection is non-intrusive, with no personal interaction, but this does not equate to no involvement. Interpreting and representing people’s stories (be they living or dead) involves an ethical and moral responsibility that the researcher has to address. The construction of a broader metastory begs the question of authorship; whose voice is present in the final report? One of the aims of my research is to give space to those voices previously marginalised or silenced. Riessman cautions, however, against the feminist position of “giving voice” arguing “we cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret” (Riessman, 1993:8). Frank argues that what is

required is an *ethics of listening*; “listening is hard, but it is also a fundamental moral act” (Frank, 1995: 25). To engage in an ethic of listening is to bear witness to the storyteller’s pain. It is not sufficient to engage in qualitative methods, interviews, narratives, participant observation, and so on, presenting our findings as authentically representing the voice of the participant. Our own narrative as researchers can become an authoritative discourse, shaping the subjectivities of the participants and transforming their narratives, so that they act in our own interests rather than the interests of the participants. Whilst many qualitative researchers work towards a collaborative relationship with research participants, in narrative psychology this is not always possible. In my research, I will be engaging with historical texts, which in no sense can be construed as collaboration with participants, but it can still be *a collaboration with their stories*. Bracken and Thomas (2005) argue that such research has its place:

The creative processes involved in respectfully imagining another’s life, a life that in its time was seen as valueless and meaningless, are transformative.

(Bracken and Thomas, 2005: 206)

Whilst we can attend to the narrator’s experience, perhaps even bear witness, our reading, interpretation and consequent metastory is a representation that does not speak with ultimate authority for the narrator, as Griffin observes:

When, as a feminist researcher, I ‘speak for’ other women (and sometimes ‘for’ men), I cannot avoid telling *my* story about *their* lives. I can use the

voices of Others from (my understanding of) their positions, but I can never speak/write *from* their positions. I cannot become them, I can only pass on selected aspects of (what they have shown me about) their lives.

(Griffin, cited in Sparkes, 1997b: 34, in Roberts, 2001: 127)

When we renounce speaking as an ultimate authority in research, we can begin a dialogical relationship with those we study, ourselves and our readers, renouncing the monological discourse for Bakhtin's polyphonic discourse (Frank, 2006). In doing this we avoid categorizing participants into constructed typologies and instead leave them unfinished, opening our participants and ourselves to further interpretation, as Frank states; "the point of any present story is its potential for revision and redistribution in future stories" (Frank, 2006: 967). However, to what extent is it possible for the narratives to 'speak for themselves'? As Chase argues, people's narratives are mediated by social, cultural and historical influences and in this respect voices can be silenced, multiple and contradictory (Chase, 2005: 655). How does the researcher do justice to the differing voices in the text? Riessman quotes Clifford stating that the researched "do not hold still for their portraits" (Clifford, 1986 in Riessman, 1993: 15). The meanings of a text shift with different social and historical contexts; "meaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal. All we have is talk and texts that represent reality partially, selectively and imperfectly" (Riessman, 1993: 15). The representation of the other in narrative analysis requires sensitivity and words such as power, authority, empowerment and voice should be used with caution (Sparkes, 1997b in Roberts, 2001: 13-14). Many qualitative studies privilege the author's interpretation, with the participant's story being selectively employed to support the evolving theory. The story therefore becomes the researcher's rather than the participant's, thus the researcher

becomes the authoritative voice. By what means can this be avoided? It can in part be addressed through some of the validation strategies discussed earlier. In interviews the researcher's interpretations can be taken back to participants so meanings can be clarified. Interview transcripts can be presented in their entirety alongside the researcher's narrative reduction, analytic interpretation and metastory. However, research with archive material poses problems regarding representing the other. Interpretations cannot be checked with participants, nor can entire documents be presented in the main report. However, as in the hermeneutic tradition, these are public documents, thus readers can return to the source material to judge the credibility of the researcher's interpretations. Moreover, selections of text can be reproduced, alongside the researcher's interpretations. This said, there is a critical balance between the presentation of empirical material and a conceptual framework. Too much empirical data can be provided with little conceptualisation (Dale Peterson's book *A Mad People's History of Madness* is one example of this) or perhaps more commonly conceptualisation and theory dominate at the expense of empirical data, which becomes lost in the text (Plummer, 2001: 191). Presentation of empirical data makes the analytic process more transparent and crucially opens up the text to alternative interpretations. Ultimately, as Riessman observes, the researcher has authorial responsibility for the production of the metanarrative (Riessman, 1993). Stacey concurs, stating:

The research project is ultimately that of the researcher. With very rare exceptions it is the researcher who narrates, who 'authors' the ethnography...a written document structured primarily by a researcher's purposes, offering a researcher's interpretations, registered in a researcher's voice.

(Stacey, 1988: 22 in Plummer, 2001: 224)

Plummer sums up the dilemma about voice and authorship with the blunt question “who owns the life to be studied”? (Plummer, 2001: 216). The answer obviously is the narrator, but this is often not the case. In my research I use documents in the public arena whose authors are dead, yet does this give me the right to examine, interpret and publish their lives? Might not Kempe and Barnes echo this subject of a community study;

It’s not your science I am questioning, but this: don’t we have the right to lead unexamined lives, the right not to be analysed? Don’t we have the right to hold on to an image of ourselves as different to be sure, but as innocent and unblemished all the same?

(quoted in Brettell, 1993: 13, cited in Plummer, 2001: 224)

This quotation may draw a sympathetic response from over-researched communities, but my research engages with first-person written accounts. These people wanted to tell their stories; they overcame many obstacles to do so; they risked ridicule, derision and charges of heresy. Their stories were written for one common purpose, to be read, understood and passed on.

### Ethic of telling

Added to the Scholes’ ethics of reading and Frank’s ethic of listening, I introduce a third moral dimension, an ethic of telling. Who needs to hear these narratives and my interpretations? Who would benefit from hearing them? People who have been diagnosed with a mental illness, psychiatrists, mental health professionals, advocacy

workers, students, academics? In an ethic of telling, the researcher needs to identify the marginalised voices, the powerful voices, gatekeepers and the policymakers, locating stories in the wider frameworks of power (Plummer, 1995: 30). If narrative research is to have contemporary relevance and impact there has to be an ethic of telling built into the research strategy that is meaningful to identified communities. Plummer places an ethic of telling central to the development of a sociology of stories (Plummer, 1995). Whilst he takes a critical discourse position regarding the nature and making of stories (what types of stories empower, degrade, marginalise, control and so on, and by what means do they achieve this?), Plummer also attends to the consumption of stories. Who has access to the stories? How is access enabled or restricted? Where are readers culturally, historically and politically situated? How can the consumption of stories be widened? As stated previously, firsthand narratives of madness have been publicly available for many years, with little attention paid to them. Why is this so? Plummer argues:

Some voices – who claim to dominate, who top the hierarchy, who claim the centre, who possess resources – are not only heard much more readily than others, but also are capable of framing the questions, setting the agendas, establishing the rhetorics much more readily than the others.

(Plummer, 1995: 30)

By locating madness narratives in wider frameworks of power and building a strategy that tells the stories of others to a wider audience, my modest hope is to increase awareness of the role and power of stories in the clinical arena.

### Personal Reflexivity

In addition to my cultural and historical situatedness, there is my own personal experience of writing narratives in times of trauma; how much of this do I commit to this research? Franks argues that detachment, objectivity and the denial of reflexivity produce a “morality of distance” which renders participants voiceless (Frank, 1995).

Thus there are moral implications of failing to engage in the research process.

However, Sparkes cautions against “self-absorption” and “narcissism” intruding on the research process, and whilst I agree with her position, I believe there is still a place for the researcher’s stories if they are related to or influence the direction of the research (Sparkes, 1997 in Roberts, 2001: X). My position on reflexivity reflects that of Garro and Mattingley when they state:

These personal stories are more than seductive ploys that serve to draw the reader in – though they may also be that. They are produced to undermine any pretence to objectivity. They further the reflective stance of anthropology precisely by bringing the researcher out into the open where she, too, may be seen. (Garro and Mattingley, 2000: 21)

As researchers, we occupy a certain position in the social and historical world and, as such, we need to reflect on how our lives affect our activities, assumptions and interpretations, both before and during the research process (Roberts, 2001: 87). Many theorists achieve a sensitive balance between the theoretical and personal story. Arthur Frank in his book *The Wounded Storyteller*, integrates his personal experience of serious illness (heart attack and cancer) into his theory of illness narratives in such a way that it never intrudes or overpowers his theoretical purpose or indeed the stories of

others. There is no gratuitous detail, but succinct elegant reflections on how his own experience became the theoretical focus of his academic career. For myself, my interest in narratives evolved from how writing effectively became a restoration project for me after the death of my twin boys. For me, it was not time that healed, but narrative, the opportunity to tell my story, make physically tangible memories and experiences that were slipping away, to ensure there was legacy from loss for my other children. I could, as some researchers do, make extensive use of my own experience to illuminate different aspects of narrative study. For example, I could analyse it alongside my chosen narratives of madness as a narrative of psychological distress (which at the time felt like a descent into madness). For me, however, this borders on narcissism. The critical questions for me are, first, what would be my motivation for including my personal narrative and, second, to what extent does my experience relate to and illuminate the research question? All too often, the researcher's personal narrative overshadows participants' narratives or theoretical arguments. Vickers (2002) wrote a highly readable paper on the researcher as storyteller. In it were lengthy extracts from her diary highlighting how living with a serious, debilitating condition (multiple sclerosis) and a husband with a recent permanent brain injury, impacted on her academic career as a researcher. I enjoyed reading this paper, I became absorbed with her story. Would she get her PhD, did her MS stabilise, did her husband die? I have however, virtually no recollection of the extensive theoretical argument she constructed around these diary extracts. Perhaps this is my fault. I read it on a warm afternoon, in a sunny, comfortable room, just after lunch. Perhaps I just glossed over the theoretical part. Perhaps though, the quantity and emotional content of the author's text detracted from her central argument. This is my fear with integrating my narrative into this study. As a narrative of psychological trauma, it would have much in common with firsthand

narratives of madness, but its relevance to my research questions is less obvious. I feel little would be gained by admitting it into the study, whilst too much would be lost. My story would distract from the stories of others, my voice competing with theirs for space, when one of the functions of this study is to expand the space for the marginalised. The decision on how much of oneself to reveal is of course entirely subjective and dependent on the relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon in question. Had my research been on narratives of neonatal deaths, I would have undoubtedly included my own, but this not being the case, I choose not to do so.

### **Selection of Narratives**

One of the reasons determining the transhistorical approach of this research was my knowledge of the extensive bibliography dating from 1436 to the present day, compiled by Professor Gail Hornstein (2005). There are several advantages to utilising such public documents. First, most, although not all, are easily accessible from either publishing companies or the British Library. This not only enables access for me, but also for the readers of my analysis should they wish to check the plausibility or trustworthiness of my interpretations. Second, as the narratives are not written for research purposes, the production of the narrative is therefore uninfluenced by the researcher. Third, historical research methods that make use of public documents avoids intruding upon a community who may already have research fatigue, purely for the purposes of further study.

The bibliography of firsthand narratives of madness currently contains over six hundred accounts, so methodological decisions had to be made on which accounts to select and

why, as to a large extent, the selection of narratives dictates the course of the research. Whilst it was fortunate that I had a bibliography of narratives available to me, I had no information on the nature of these accounts other than the title, author and date of publication. For example, do they describe so-called psychotic or depressive experiences? Is the function of the narrative to aid personal understanding, to rally against an institution/ social system, or is its primary purpose to initiate social change? Was the narrative written retrospectively or during a period of madness? There were other crucial questions regarding selection; which time periods should I select narratives from and how many narratives should I select? Some accounts of madness run into volumes, most are lengthy publications, so how should I sample within a given narrative? The issue of selection was a source of anguish in this research for a long time. A qualitative narrative approach to meaning negated any form of sampling strategy, yet texts had to be chosen on some reasoned basis. My first idea was to take a selection of texts from seven historical periods that marked the growth in the social and medical management of madness. Quickly appearing too large a task, a decision was made to look at narratives from three different decades, three centuries apart: the 1790s, when madness entered the public domain following the madness of George III; the 1890s, which witnessed the publication of Kraepelin's *Textbook of Psychiatry*; and the 1990s, which George Bush Snr. declared as "the decade of the brain". What became apparent however, was that I was attempting to access the voice of madness within a historical framework based on the voice of psychiatry. This was akin to exploring feminism through the patriarchal eras of kings and wars. Searching for advice, I went back to the compiler of the bibliography who suggested that the only meaningful historical distinction to be made when selecting narratives across different time periods was between those written before or after the birth of psychiatry (the end of the 18<sup>th</sup>

century). Avoiding the hegemonic discourse of psychiatry still further and following in Foucault's footsteps, I decided to make the historical distinction between pre and post Enlightenment, which would provide a wider cultural context in which to examine the way madness is spoken about. Whilst this crude distinction between pre and post Enlightenment made intuitive sense, I was still left with the difficult decision about which narratives to select. Deciding to limit the number of narratives to ten, the most pragmatic choice was to select the five earliest and the five most recent narratives. However, identifying the latest narratives was problematic. How would I select five when, for example, three were published in 2007 and six in 2006? Moreover, what counted as a firsthand narrative of madness? Those identified by Professor Hornstein, a book on the shelf at Waterstones, a report from a mental health trust or a blog on the internet? Unable to resolve this and with time seemingly slipping away, I put issues of selection to one side and started to read. Margery Kempe, Hannah Allen, Alexander Cruden, George Trosse, Samuel Bruckshaw, William Belcher, Daniel Schreber, Christoph Haizmann, Chad Stafford, Richard Mabey, Vanessa Sawyer and, because it was the only firsthand narrative of madness on the University of Bradford's library shelf, Mary Barnes. It was by immersing myself in different narratives that the issue of selection resolved itself. Reading Barnes, I was struck by the similarities with Kempe. Both were English women with a devout Catholic faith; both women were sanctioned by male authority figures within established cultural discourses (religion and psychiatry); both women were ambiguously received by their peers, inciting extreme emotions and reactions; both women saw their chastity of central significance; finally, both women's narratives were mediated through a male voice – Kempe's dictated to a scribe, Barnes' co-authored with her psychiatrist. The selection process culminated with these two texts, which whilst written five centuries apart, had many parallels. One

final note regarding selection, the small sample size typical in qualitative research is often criticised, but such criticism misconstrues the purpose of these research endeavours, where insights and understandings are the goal rather than facts and generalizability (Plummer, 2001: 153). Sample size does not determine theoretical significance. Whilst not aligning my endeavours with those of Piaget, Freud and Goffman, these theorists all produced culturally influential studies based on single cases. I engaged with a pragmatic process which was driven by the research question and its underlying moral and ethical issues, rather than empirical concerns around methodology. My aim was to engage with these women's stories rather than analyse 'data', and the analysis that follows, whilst influenced by theoretical concerns, makes no claims to truth or neutrality, but is embedded in the tradition of storytelling. My hope for the following two chapters is that Kempe's and Barnes' experiences shine through the theoretical story that surrounds them and that there is a sharing of space between their story and mine.