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**Rethinking Psychiatric Experience Life Narratives, Ontological Insecurity, and Collaborative Knowledge Production in Mental Health Research**

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**Abstract**

This article examines how psychiatric experiences shape life narratives while proposing innovative methodological approaches for mental health research. Drawing on four case studies of individuals diagnosed with bipolar disorder, the research initially reveals how psychiatric service users' life stories often become "pathographies"—narratives predominantly organized around illness and medical interventions. However, through a shift to collaborative research methods, participants moved beyond these initial illness-centered accounts to develop more complex understandings of their experiences. The analysis employs R.D. Laing's concept of ontological insecurity and Michel Foucault's framework of historical ontology to examine how psychiatric interventions affect individuals' sense of reality, identity, and time. The findings demonstrate how collaborative dialogue can transform ontologically insecure experiences into shared grounds for generating new meanings and critical insights about psychiatric systems. This approach addresses key methodological challenges in mental health research while contributing to debates about experiential knowledge and the democratization of mental health knowledge production. The study suggests that, although biographical narratives provide valuable research foundations, their greatest potential lies in creating opportunities for collaborative examination and critique that empower individuals to develop more restorative and emancipatory understandings of their experiences.

**Keywords**

Bipolar Experience; Ontological Insecurity; Historical Ontology; Collaborative Research; Mad Studies

RETHINKING PSYCHIATRIC  
 EXPERIENCE  
 Life Narratives,  
 Ontological Insecurity,  
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 The author reports no conflict of interests.

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**KEYWORDS:** Bipolar Experience; Ontological Insecurity; Historical Ontology; Collaborative Research; Mad Studies

**I**N A CONTEXT where mental health expertise has historically flowed from North to South and from clinicians to patients, the PSYGLO-

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