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Main Article:

Surrendering to the Dream: An Account of the Unconscious Dynamics of a Research Relationship

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Abstract

Recent years have seen psychoanalysis move out of the clinical area into the arena of empirical social research. This article uses a case study from a psychoanalytically informed media research project to explore conceptual, ethical, and methodological implications in research design in the light of this shift. The ideas of unconscious communication between interviewer and interviewee, the role of the researcher's subjectivity, and the impact of unconscious defences on the generation and interpretation of data are explored. In addition the free association narrative interviewing (FANI) method is evaluated.

Index Terms: research process; research method; empirical social research; unconscious process; affective response; psychosocial studies; defended subject; object relations; ethics of interpretation; free association narrative interviewing

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1. Psychoanalytically Informed Audience Research

The last decade has witnessed a significant methodological development in qualitative research: the use of psychoanalysis to shed new light on social and cultural phenomena. The relative novelty of adopting psychoanalysis for empirical projects means, however, that researchers face significant challenges in designing their interventions. These issues revolve around important ethical questions, concerning the transfer of concepts and techniques, designed to aid in the treatment of emotional difficulties within a clinical setting, to another sphere of activity, namely academic research.

Qualitative research and psychoanalysis are both interpretive endeavours—the difference lies in their aims. Specifically, in clinical practice, interpretations are offered to the person undergoing psychoanalysis in order to provide the interviewee with an understanding of his or her unconscious emotional difficulties. In contrast, in qualitative research, interpretations are made of interview data in order to answer a research question. This article draws on a case study from a media research project on "favourite" films and television programmes and where some blurring of these boundaries occurred. In contrast to established media and film theory, concerned with the interpretation of texts, the research sought to develop theory and asked the question: What role is played by individual biography in processes of identification and taste in film and television viewing? Biography, something previously neglected, was chosen as a way into the emotionally significant features of identification and the overall viewing experience. This case study was chosen because it encapsulates some of the tensions occurring when psychoanalysis is used in nonclinical research and offers a specific opportunity to examine and evaluate the practical, ethical, and conceptual use of psychoanalysis.

The use of psychoanalysis in the humanities and film studies is nothing new. It has been widely adopted in forms of textual analysis to explore issues of culture and the repressed unconscious. Identification, a key concept in the research, was linked to the ways films create subject "positions" with which the audience could identify. Freudian psychoanalysis was used as an interpretive template and a universal audience response was read from the media text, but was unable to attend to the unique ways in which emotional dilemmas are experienced by individuals (Layton, 2004) and how this influences identification. Conversely, but with similar limitations, media research has adopted a sociological approach to identification, concentrating on the significance of the social categories of viewers (in particular, class and gender, to understand the ways in which media texts offer opportunities for subjective engagement and interpretation.

Psychoanalysis is not a single unified perspective and the research discussed below is one of a growing number of projects that have been influenced by ideas from *object relations*. Object relations is a branch of psychoanalysis that is particularly associated with Melanie Klein's development of Freud's ideas. Later prominent theorists associated with a British tradition include Ronald Fairbairn, Donald Winnicott, Wilfred Bion, and more recently Christopher Bollas. Objects in Freudian theory are the "targets" or objects of the instinct, although objects can include nonhuman "things," such as ideas or, in the case of this article, favourite texts. Later theorists have concentrated on the relational aspects of identity and subjectivity (for an accessible introduction, see Gomez, 1997). In object relations, the emphasis shifts somewhat from the libido and instinctual drives and focuses on a self that develops, and exists within the context of relationships, with other human "objects" as well as with nonhuman objects and "things" (Bollas, 1995), such as media texts.

Accordingly identification indicates an emotional connection with an object or text. Nancy Chodorow argues in her book, *The Power of Feelings*, that meaning is actually an "inextricable mix" of the "socio-cultural and historically contextualised" and the "personally psychodynamic and biographically contextualised" (Chodorow, 1999, p. 3).

This point of view is particularly relevant for a project on films and programmes that are presented as favourite texts, rather than as simple expressions of general taste. It is frequently the case that texts are referred to as favourites because they have had an emotional impact on the viewer. There should be no surprise here, since films and television texts are designed to connect with the audience both emotionally and intellectually. The only difference is that some texts seem to engage the viewer in a more intense and enduring way, carrying biographical and mnemonic significance. For this reason I use biography and identification as "psychosocial" concepts, attending to both the social and psychic dimensions of experience. This psychosocial combination is an important feature of current trends in the use of "psychoanalysis outside of the clinic" (Frosh, 2010).

Object relations accepts the existence of a dynamic and conflictual unconscious, whilst also recognising the idea that conflict is an ordinary and inevitable part of the "psychopathology of everyday life" (Freud, 1901/2000; Hollway, 2009). The interview below is used to illustrate a psychoanalytic perspective on communicative difficulties as conflict. Inner conflicts are the result of mutually constitutive processes of outer (sociological) and inner (psychological, unconscious) processes. They result from unique biographical experiences of disappointment, loss, ambivalence, desire, and trauma, conditions which generate unconscious anxiety. Subjects employ a range of defence mechanisms to deal with conflicts and the conscious and unconscious anxiety they generate, such as *projection*,*introjection*, *displacement*, and *intellectualisation*. Our experiences of anxiety and identification are also charged with unconscious *phantasy* (Isaacs, 1952, which is recognised as a representative statement of Melanie Klein's position on phantasy—the *ph-* spelling indicating the unconscious aspect). Conflict is generated both intra-psychically in the individual and inter-subjectively as the result of exchanges between subjects, which means that greater attention must be paid to the role of the researcher on what is said and what can be thought during interviews. Interpretations emerge, therefore, from the research relationship and not the individual mind of one person (Ogden, 1999; Symington, 1988). This recognition of the unconscious communicative features of research is vital if the researcher is to make claims about the accuracy and validity of interpretations.

The following section introduces the method and some of the salient themes and debates with which it is associated. This section is followed by a discussion of the issues concerning *researcher reflexivity* and those unconscious communication processes animated within the research setting. The study is organised in two parts, the first of which presents the case study itself (including empirical data), while the second discusses the issues in more depth. Ethical and practical implications as well as a reflection on the method are presented in the conclusion.

The aim of this article is to generate thought and discussion in order to improve research practice for nonclinically trained researchers. The case study section is inspired by the clinical vignette, where the clinician reflects on the difficulties that arise during the process of interpretation (including the role of his or her own subjectivity in arriving at an interpretation). This heuristic account expresses the author's understanding of the

emotional and interpersonal aspects of the research relationship. In adopting this focussed but idiosyncratic approach, I share Symington's (1988) hope that the reader can "cross-check" their understanding against my own, on the grounds that one's "own self-understanding is enormously enhanced by coming up against the personal understanding of another" (p. 11). This provides, I believe, a vital contribution to current debates about researcher reflexivity and subjectivity in research practice.

2. Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) Method

The research upon which this article is based adopted the Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI) method developed by Hollway and Jefferson (2000). This method is characterised by a form of questioning which has the aim of generating emotionally significant (biographical) narratives. The authors draw on object relations and use the phrase "defended subject" to capture the conflictual nature of inner emotional experience and the subject's need to allay or defend against unconscious anxiety. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) argued that interviewee anxiety impacts on the data, consequently they developed the method as a critical response to the limitations of conventional qualitative question-answer protocol: this tends to reproduce established discourse (including disciplinary utterances), whilst failing to grasp the internal conflicts and emotional significance of the phenomenon experienced by the subject.

Of particular relevance to the case study is the "transparent account problem" (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 3) which refers to the idea that qualitative researchers make the mistake of assuming that interviewees know what their experience means and can present a logical, unproblematic, and transparent account to a researcher, who is then able to make sense of it (*ibid*., pp. 56-59). Psychoanalysis is able to offer reasons why interviewees might not actually offer factually accurate, truthful, realistic, or coherent stories. Standard question-answer formats rely on formulations that ask "why" something is the case, which presumes that the interviewee can fully explain the significance attributed to an experience or event. These types of questions close down potentially fruitful avenues of research, as they force interviewees to *intellectualise* their responses, forcing the information received into the straitjacket of a research pro-forma which is shaped by the researcher's, rather than by the respondent's concerns (see Mishler, 1986). Freud (1900/1991) recognised the need to defend against anxiety and designed the *free association* method (giving spontaneous voice to thoughts that enter the mind) to accommodate the illogical and seemingly irrelevant. As the unconscious is not tangible, Freud showed how it could be observed indirectly through affective and embodied states, fantasies, dreams, jokes, and slips of the tongue (parapraxes).

Narrative psychotherapy and biographical research have shown that narrative plays an important role in providing frames through which experience—both conscious and unconscious—can be made meaningful (McLeod, 1997; Schafer, 1980). Narratives can be used productively, as part of a free association method as they sometimes appear spontaneously. They often surprise the interviewee ("I don't know why this came to mind"), who may not therefore present a conventional storyline or structure, but who may nonetheless find that unconscious emotional concerns will emerge unwittingly. For this

reason, questions are avoided in favour of open-ended prompts, such as, "Tell me about x or y"—a method that allows narratives to surface.

In line with the process of free association, the researcher will follow the respondent's ordering of events. The data are viewed as a whole, in the belief that significant themes will emerge, but not necessarily from logical and coherent statements. Whilst this method depends to some degree on linguistic meaning, attention is also paid to the affect that exists within the research dyad, and which so often resists explicit linguistic articulation. Feelings are also regarded as essential evidence (see below).

3. Researcher Reflexivity, Unconscious Communication, and the "Defended" Researcher

Some theorists (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008), whilst sympathetic to psychoanalysis, have been critical of attempts by researchers working with the FANI method, to adopt clinical concepts such as *transference* and *countertransference* to inform data analysis. It has been suggested that these concepts are products of the clinical encounter and are based on the development of a therapeutic relationship between analyst and the person undergoing psychoanalysis, where the latter transfers feelings about figures from their past onto the analyst and cannot therefore be transferred to the research setting. Where this shift occurs there is a danger of the concepts being used inappropriately in the interpretation of the interviewee's unconscious anxiety. Taking up the idea of the defended subject, another criticism concerns the attribution of anxiety to the interviewee. It has also been argued that nonclinically trained researchers fail to recognise that the anxiety they attribute to the interviewee, is actually an unrecognised emergent feature of the interviewer's unconscious anxieties and desire (Frosh, 2010; Frosh & Baraitser, 2008), particularly for the production of relevant data. As the reader will see, these ideas are relevant to the case study below which explores the idea of the "defended researcher" whose anxiety impinges on the production of data.

Following feminist critiques of objectivity, qualitative research design protocol has acknowledged that the researcher impacts on data production and interpretation, and objectivity is an unrealistic and impossible aim (Harding, 1991; Oleson, 2000). This is usually discussed in terms of researcher reflexivity, and it is quite commonplace to find research accounts that start with some statement about the social categories of the researcher that, for instance, the writer is white, female, and middle class, based on the perception that these forms of identity are often linked to questions of disparity in social power within the research dyad (Seiter, 1999, p. 13). The reader is supposed to be able to make a reasonably accurate appraisal about the way in which this impinges on the research design and knowledge produced. However, *unconscious processes* also structure the research relationship, as well as having an impact on the data produced. For Jennifer Hunt (1989), the researcher's self is a "primary instrument of inquiry" and their mental experience "mediates their understanding of the cultural and psychological world of subjects" (Hunt, 1989, p. 13). In practical terms, this means researchers should keep a detailed research diary, recording thoughts, feelings, affective responses, dreams, visual

images, and fantasies to assess the impact of their emotional involvement on interpretation.

Freud recognised the fact that his feelings, thoughts, fantasies, and dreams were complex forms of communication with his patients, whilst being aware of the tricks the self could play; yet, "far from prejudicing the interpretive process, it was his belief that these skills and qualities can be employed in the service of facilitating research" (Freeman, 1989, p. 307). Freud (1915/2005) said, "it is a remarkable thing that the unconscious of one human being can react upon that of another without passing through consciousness" (p. 194). It is not, therefore, necessary to confine the use of concepts like transference and projection to the consulting room. Recent developments in neuro-science and neuro-psychoanalytic research have found empirical evidence linking the right hemisphere of the brain to implicit, unconscious, and affective information processing with more conscious processing associated with the left brain (Happaney, Zelazo, & Stuss, 2004), thus providing empirical evidence to indicate the human brain as responsive to, and generative of, unconscious communication. This offers a rejoinder to the idea of transference as unique to the clinic, as well as demonstrating the presence of unconscious factors in the conduct of all communicative encounters (Schore, 2003, 2010). Affects move between people in on-going everyday encounters and empirical experiments have shown transference as a form of unconscious and nonverbal communication (*ibid*., 2010) as part of on-going everyday communicative encounters (Andersen & Berk, 1998). These processes, of course, occur during the immediacy of the research interview.

4. Risky Viewing and Risky Method?

This article describes what happened in an interview and exchange of letters with Bill (not the real name), a recently retired teacher who is middle class and married with a grown up family. After a first interview, Bill was taken into hospital and so, for logistical reasons, we replaced the planned follow up interview with a series of letters. This has been shown to be an effective method in small-scale research (see Denscombe, 2007). Bill grew up in a working class home but experienced social mobility after winning a scholarship to an elite institution. He is best described as a cineaste (i.e., a film enthusiast), whose approach to cinema is one of intellectual appreciation. He "rarely watches TV."

On volunteering to be interviewed, the issue of anxiety was raised as Bill explained that he found an interview about cinema spectatorship "risky" and "exciting." He used the maxim "know thyself" to explain that he wanted to use the interviews to "learn about" himself. In previous interviews I had exercised care of the research subject by falling back on tried and trusted policies surrounding confidentiality, destroying data when appropriate, or stopping the interview if requested. Bill's wish to undertake a "risky" exploration of his identity posed an unanticipated ethical dilemma. I had no idea where Bill would go with his journey and what my role would be. I was forced in the throes of an interview session to consider the importance of my own investment in being in control of the interview and my fear that his aims might potentially conflict with my own and

that I might not generate usable data. Bill also brought the explicit language of therapy to the table. He said, for instance:

> Your method slips into some sort of therapy, whatever your intentions or mine. . . . From my point of view as an interviewee, I cannot assume you are competent as a therapist. From your point of view, I must beware of dumping stuff on you, with all the transference and countertransference that that could involve.

I was unsure if Bill wanted me to interpret what he said in a clinical language, which was of course not possible, as the method was an adaptation and not strictly clinical. He also identified the more problematic, clinical view of transference discussed previously and I felt anxious about the method.

Bill enjoyed himself however and talked enthusiastically about films that were his favourites. His responses were mostly logical, analytical, and intellectual evaluations of films, discussing their "painterly aesthetic qualities" and informed by ideas from auteur, genre, and narrative branches of film theory. Such a discourse would not look out of place on the pages of an academic film journal.

After the interview, my research diary records visual responses of beautiful filmic images, with Bill as a central figure in the frame. Despite the powerful lucid images, I found I lacked *affective responses* to the data. Matthews (1998) notes that the body is a physical instrument, which can also listen and attune unconsciously and emotionally with another being. With Bill, I could understand, but I wasn't feeling his perspective.

I kept coming back and trying to identify exactly what it was that could be considered risky. One extract concerning a particular first-viewing experience stood out. What had begun along the usual lines, based on an intellectual evaluation of a particular film's form, shifted in tone:

> I went with a female student from school who had just put her kids and a few things in her car and run away from her marriage so she was pretty stressed. And I found her *very attractive* [Bill's emphasis] there was this additional buzz of sharing it with her. . . . There was something anarchic and wildly romantic about her. She was extremely good-looking with very beautiful eyes. I was swept away emotionally. Eventually it became a cooler, professional relationship.

Here was a situation where Bill expressed feelings of desire for a woman who was not his wife, which was clearly an identifiably risky situation for him. But also for me as the issue of researcher reflexivity led me to wonder if the similarities in age and situation between me and the student might have triggered this memory.

The second part of our research relationship was conducted through letters. Unconscious communication can occur even where physical presence is removed, such as through on-

line communication and letters (Suler, 2003). Once physical presence was removed, a new dynamic emerged. Each letter abounded with narratives that solicited interpretation from me and induced the logic of free association. For example: "something came to mind from way back," "there [was] not much logic to this story," and "perhaps it is your job to make sense of this." There were also other narratives associating young women with risk. For example, one story about an older poet whom he had met—who was the age that Bill was at the time of the interview, suggesting some identification with this man—who had expressed how hard it must be to work in an environment (i.e., a school) so full of young and beautiful women. Another letter followed explaining he had decided to begin psychotherapy and with a request to keep working with me as he found the work he had done with me on films "very exciting." I explained that I was unable to do this and suggested some books on film therapy that he might find interesting and could discuss with his therapist (see Hesley & Hesley, 2001). My diary noted anxiety and I was drawn to Bill's words advocating a "cooler professional relationship."

After various attempts to code the data I found myself unable to connect with the material intellectually. Eventually I decided I was not able to use the material for a research project on viewing as the data seemed only to reproduce established film theory discourse. I made a decision to drop this case study. Once I had let the material go, I found a change occurred; Bill's data kept coming into my mind. My research diary recorded a dream fragment which recaptured a narrative that concerned a "happy moment" when Bill forged a friendship with a highly intelligent and much admired man at university and "felt accepted." I began to tune into the mise-en-scène (i.e., the visual theme) of the image. I scanned the dream in the same way a spectator would in the cinema, guided by the camera and editing. I realised from Bill's *point of view shot* (a technical term from cinematography) that I sensed desire on his part towards this man. It was the kind of editing and camera work that might accompany the start of a romance. I recorded the fact that I had felt distinctly uncomfortable, rather like a voyeur who had seen something she should not have seen. But significantly, it was the appearance of a feeling, one that acknowledged desire and Bill's sexuality which marked this as a different response. I noticed also that there was a conflict taking place in my mind, as I wanted to avoid the uncomfortable feeling and to replace this with a discussion of the scene's artistic qualities, adopting Bill's words: "beautiful" and "painterly."

I realised that I was replicating something about Bill's viewing as I was watching the scene intellectually, like a piece of art, which helped me to avoid the difficult desirous feelings that had been generated. There was something about the camera work in the dream that led me to another extract from the interview. This concerned one of Bill's favourite films, *Peeping Tom*:

> This film breaks the fantasy . . . to make at least male members of the audience aware they have been enjoying some of the voyeuristic aspects of cinema, while the theme is portraying how dangerous and destructive such pleasures become in the protagonist. In the comic counterpoint, the unattractiveness of the older gentleman buying his girlie magazine, also make the male viewer uncomfortable.

I had previously found myself unable to connect emotionally with this account, which reproduced established aspects of film theory (see Mulvey, 1975/1988). However, I found an affective connection with the dangers and pleasures of voyeurism and the discomfort of the older, male viewer that was similar to my own response to my dream. I was able to feel some of the danger and risk that had so perplexed me. I realised I had been unable to recognise this because of my own defensive reaction to anxiety. I recognised that I had been adopting processes of intellectualisation towards the material. I was aware that I was also resistant to the parts of the data which were conflictual for Bill, in particular his sexual and gendered identity, made more acute as he enters a period of transition to a later life identity, which is recognised as generating conflict (Erikson, 1980). The process of the retrospective attribution of meaning to past events which Laplanche (1992, 1999) termed "afterwardsness," can provoke anxiety. The concept of afterwardsness (*Nachträglichkeit* in Freud's original German) is concerned with the retrospective attribution of meaning to an event and it is through this process that an event is identified in varying degrees as traumatic (often in relation to issues around sexuality). This is usually done after the event in response to new experiences and impressions (Perlberg, 2006). In particular Laplanche notes the attribution and acknowledgement of desire as one prominent feature of the anxiety generated. Bill clearly recognised the research provided an opportunity for this process and therefore "risks" were involved.

5. Discussion: Thinking and Feeling

I now discuss the relevant concepts and theoretical perspectives I utilised for explanatory purposes to illuminate the process of data production and interpretation. I will proceed with a discussion of affective responses to research texts.

Lorenzer (1986) promoted the use of psychoanalysis to understand the relationship between society, culture, and the unconscious. He argues that cultural texts provoke the reader subjectively. The filmic responses I have detailed evoke Lorenzer's notion of "scenic" provocation, which evokes a filmic or theatrical setting containing actors, action, and meanings (Froggett & Hollway, 2010). It is the researcher's task therefore to attend to this process of provocation, through a process of emotional*attunement* to the scene. This involves becoming alert to the range of affective and sensory responses one encounters when confronted with a text.

This process of attunement also appears in post-Kleinian object relations theories, which deal with the role of affect in communication, thought, and knowledge. Wilfred Bion, for instance, begins from the premise that affects constitute facts and emotional experience is a basis for knowledge (W. Bion in Sandler, 2005, pp. 284-291). Affects are knowable, to researchers through listening and observation, even when specific affects have not been verbally articulated. Likewise, interviewees may experience the researcher's thoughts and feelings without linguistic communication (Spezzano, 1993, p. 53). I propose my experience of constrained thought, affect, and hampered attunement are also indicative of the relational dynamics of the defended subject and of the defended researcher. This suggests an intersubjective appreciation of the two and fro traffic between the research dyad. In particular, I draw attention to the defensive use of intellectualisation and how

this restricted affective knowing. The use of intellectualisation as a defence represents a novel contribution to existing film and media theory which has largely understood intellectual appreciation and "taste" as a form of socio-cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

Bion (1962) understands empathy (something thought to be the necessary basis for a successful research relationship) as the product of communication, based on sensory and projective processes that occur between people. He argues that thoughts do not occur just because the mental apparatus for thinking exists. He adopts the concept of *alpha-function* to explain the importance of affective and sensory material in our ability to think. Bion describes how raw sense data (what we see, hear, smell, as well as sensations and feelings) are turned into elements that provide the psyche with material for dreams and other unconscious work (as well as conscious thoughts). Raw sense data, however, are not meaningful on their own. It is only when they are linked up, a form of alpha-function ("linking"), that these alpha-elements become meaningful. It is the coming together of sensory data elements that allows thinking to occur (Bion, 1962, pp. 43-47).

Bion develops Klein's idea of projective identification. For Klein this was an aggressive relationship, as it is concerned with the projective evacuation of malevolent impulses and feelings into another object. Significantly, this is meant to induce feeling states in the recipient that are congruent with the ejected feelings so that the receiver can come to know how the unconscious phantasies of the transmitter feel (Schore, 2003, p. 59). Bion's (1962) "container-contained" model of intersubjective communication is based on earliest experiences of a more benign form of projective identification between infant and parent. The child projects difficult feelings and sensations that they are not mature enough to understand, into the mother, who is able to contain and mollify these feelings and return them to the child in a form that can be tolerated (Segal, 1992, p. 122). The mother learns to attune herself to the child. She responds to, for example, slight changes in mood, temperature, and gesture. Eventually, they both learn to adapt and respond to each other's emotional state. Knowing, therefore, in Bion's terms, is the activity through which the subject becomes "aware of the emotional experience and can abstract from it a formulation that represents this experience in a relatively adequate way" (Grinberg, Sor, & Tabak di Bianchdi, 1993, p. 100). Thus, reality is captured emotionally. My incapacity to think, then, can be related to my inability to feel.

Whilst this might present a normal process of communication and thought, there are also specific reasons why unconscious anxiety might frustrate knowledge production in research interviews. For Bion (1962, pp. 43-47), all experience falls into three groups of emotion: Love (L), Hate (H), and Knowledge (K), which are discussed in terms of a "link" describing the emotional experience present when two people or two parts of a person are related to each other. K is particularly relevant to the research situation, as it dominates where there is a "subject that tries to know an object and an object that can be known" (Grindberg, Sor, & Tabak di Bianchedi, 1993, p. 99). The K link has a particular shade of its own. It is characterised by painful feelings of frustration inherent in the subject's ability/inability to know anything. To acquire knowledge, the subject must relinquish the desire to possess and control knowledge and learn to tolerate doubt (Bion, 1962, p. 36). This also requires a form of *reverie*, a state of being open to musing,

dreaming, and sensory data, which is an essential part of alpha-function; without feeling we cannot think (Bion, 1962; Ogden, 1999).

I have argued that defensive processes of intellectualisation were circulating between Bill and me. Intellectualisation, as a defence, is characterised by explanations that are "logically consistent or ethically acceptable" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 225). This is the basis on which much qualitative research rests. Bill's interview was replete with statements that could be described as intellectual and ethically and politically sound. Researchers need to produce data which enable them to produce this type of account for it to be credible. Bill's data also contain examples where this defence is used to manage risk. For example he recognises the risk in his identification with the old man in *Peeping Tom*and he takes control of the risk through an academic analysis of the film which enables him to distance himself from uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. According to Butler and Strupp (1991, p. 10), when intellectualisation is being used defensively, it is marked by a lack of affect. This defence can also be used projectively. Responses to what is said can unwittingly start to mirror in content and style of the subject who is using intellectualisation defensively. This could therefore, account for my desire to interpret my visual responses in the language of aesthetic criticism. The tentative requests for interpretation provoked anxiety for both of us. For Bill, the possible risks were that I might do precisely what he feared and interpret something risky, whereas for me it was the challenge of trying to contain the risk and produce usable data, acceptable to the disciplines I work within.

In Bion's container-contained model, knowledge acquisition results from the modification of pain (frustration) in the K link. However, knowledge possession can also be used defensively to avoid pain and frustration. There is a negative instance of the K link, minus K (-K), where the container-contained model is reversed, and meaning and emotion are actively denuded of vitality and sense so that discovery becomes impossible (Sandler, 2005, pp. 381-384). Intellectualisation is a form of -K which involves "knowing about" (an intellectual process), rather than learning from emotional experience and connection with an object. This is particular relevant for qualitative research with human subjects. Bill clearly knows a lot about films, but the risk emerged when he began a process, precipitated by my request for an interview, involving coming to know the films and himself emotionally.

I also want to argue that research situations are predisposed to particular defensive processes for researchers. The reality of economic and disciplinary constraints and the demands to produce publishable research makes the research situation anxiety provoking. This creates the ground for the emergence of instances of omnipotent thought (a primitive defence mechanism involving control) and instances of minus K (-K) as researchers unconsciously seek to control the research situation. The lack of sensory affective connection was actually beginning to close down my thinking. However, once I had relinquished my desire to control the data, then unconscious anxiety was reduced. Kleinian epistemology would suggest that this represents a move from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position. Froggett and Hollway (2010, p. 189) suggest, the latter allows the object to "reveal itself rather than trying to impose preconceptions on it." The

fact that I was able to dream about the research suggested that I was able to convert my sensory experience into alpha-elements forming the basis of thought (Bion, 1962, p. 16).

6. Conclusion

I have argued, using insights from psychoanalysis, that it is essential for researchers to be able to draw on their emotional as well as their cognitive experience to understand interview texts. Clinicians, as a matter of course, are supported in the emotional aspects of their work through regular supervision. In this case I was fortunate to have a sensitive and theoretically informed team. As this adoption of psychoanalytically informed methods such as FANI continues to grow, particularly for PhD research, questions of supervision are important.

Hollway and Jefferson (2012) present a summary of the recent developments in this area. They describe the approaches to supervision some projects have taken up, which include adopting methods and insights from infant observation training and group psychotherapy, which take into account the subjective responses of the group/research team as well as individuals to support the research. Funded research projects are in a position to engage the professional services of experts in supervision, but postgraduate researchers are often isolated, as they work alone and on limited funds. This implies that such research is best located at established centres where recognised and experienced supervisors are available. Examples of such centres include: University of East London (UK), University of West of England (UK), The Open University (UK), Roskilde University (Denmark), Centre for Advanced Study (Oslo, Norway), University of Hanover (Germany), and University of Bremen (Germany). Supervisory support is also available through professional and research networks, such as the International Research Group for Psycho-Societal Analysis (originating from Roskilde University, Denmark) and the Psychosocial Studies Network. At the same time this could also be seen as a potential constraint and could discourage independent researchers adopting psychoanalytically informed methods. I would argue that the way forward would be to create awareness about the use of psychoanalysis in empirical social and cultural research, this special issue being one important example of how it might be done. Those working in the field must press for postgraduate research training programmes to include psychoanalytic approaches, which can offer guidance on working subjectively and with emotional experience.

Finally how should we assess the FANI method in the light of the case presented in this article? The interview generated a question about risk, which I used to highlight aspects of current debates about unconscious anxiety and the defensive processes at work. Risk was produced out of the circulation of conflictual unconscious processes of both parties. However, this did not work against the production of knowledge. Though psychoanalysis is often criticised for being used as an interpretive template imposed on the data, I have detailed elsewhere that adherence to particular disciplinary and political aims can also obfuscate data interpretation (Whitehouse-Hart, 2010) and this is not unique to psychoanalysis. In this case, the concepts that I eventually used to help me explain the research process were generated in response to the data. The interview began with the question of risk, which pointed to the idea of anxiety and conflict. The concepts of

defended subject and defended researcher opened up useful avenues for thinking through what this idea of risk might be, serving, therefore, an important generative and explanatory function.

The *ethics of interpretation* have been much debated, with particular reference to questions of power and involving the interviewee in the interpretation constructed by the researcher. There are a variety of reasons why this might prove difficult. I draw attention to the lapse of time between the finished interpretation and the problems of going back to an interviewee after such a time lapse; there may be other ethical reasons in specific cases. The research project described here had the advantage of utilising participants who enthusiastically volunteered to be interviewed. Bill had an agenda of his own which involved him doing some of his own interpretation of narratives and he "enjoyed" the interviews. As Hollway and Jefferson (2012, p. 6) note:

FANI allows interviewees to follow the threads of their emotional experience as they transform it into freshly discovered meaning . . . Its aim is to enable interviewees to give answers that reflect their own concerns even when these are not immediately consciously accessible.

This is part of the process of unconscious meaning making necessary for emotional well-being (Bollas, 1995; Chodorow, 1999).

This study also indicated that further research is needed on the question of psychosocial viewing. This could be done through consideration of concepts such as intellectualisation, an idea which has not figured prominently in media and film theory. Yet such concepts could provide a new angle on the question of internal responses to social class and spectatorship. The FANI method enabled me to work productively with my subjective responses even if this was a difficult learning process. Ultimately, this approach helped me identify my defensive feelings of omnipotence which could have worked against knowledge production. I have argued that these processes are not unique to psychoanalytic empirical research. Once I surrendered emotionally to the dream communication, I was able to reap the full benefits of the creative approach to data analysis that psychoanalysis is able to offer the empirical social researcher.

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