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ABSTRACT There is a growing interest in both psychoanalytically informed theory and practice in the social sciences. Psycho-social studies and psychoanalytic studies address serious social and political issues through a critical welding of sociological and psychoanalytic perspectives. This raises the question: how do we actually use this form of analysis in the practical research environment? In this article, the author seeks to outline a psycho-social research method – in other words, how we do it – and to introduce the reader to both the advantages and problems of doing psycho-social research. This is framed within the context of a research project in which the author explores racism in higher education.

Introduction

This article has been formulated out of a research project that seeks to address the experience of black and Asian students in the British higher education system. The purpose of the project was to address the emotional factors and subtle interpersonal communications that shaped students' experience whilst at university. To do this, it was clear that a research methodology was called for which addresses both the social and psychological elements of the student experience whilst retaining a high level of functionality in the field. This article seeks to outline this method by focusing on and describing a systematic psycho-social research method for use in the social sciences.

Building on the work of Hunt (1989) and Hollway and Jefferson (2000a, 2000b), this article suggests ways in which psychoanalytic tools and concepts may enhance traditional ethnographic research methods (see Denzin, 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Addressing unconscious forces and motivations adds another level of analysis to sociological research providing us with a deeper understanding of both individual experience and the social psychodynamics that operate in the construction of the research environment. This is not a critique of contemporary research methods; indeed the

ethnographic open interview informs the whole process. Rather it seeks to address the unconscious factors and psychological mechanisms that play a role in shaping the type of data that are gathered and the way in which they are interpreted. The aim of this article is thus to demonstrate the use of sociological and psychoanalytic perspective in an actual piece of empirical research. Therefore, the method used in this article is tentative and has been grounded in the actual data collected, with the intention of using psychoanalytic concepts in a systematic way within sociological research.

The article first provides a brief overview of the research project. It is not my intention to discuss the project in depth – this has been done elsewhere (Clarke, 2000a, 2000b) – but to provide some contextual information behind the research methodology. The article then goes on to identify the key elements of the method: first, the use of unstructured interviews; second, a minimum of intervention from the researcher – the ethos behind this is to encourage *free association* which allows unconscious ideas to come to the fore; third – and most important – as we are not psychoanalysts, psychoanalytic interpretation does not take place in the interview, but in the analysis of the data collected. Finally, interviews are transcribed in great detail which allows researchers to ‘immerse’ themselves in the interview material.

After describing the method, there is a discussion of the interview techniques used and the way in which data have been collected and analysed. Using interview material collected during the research project, the article illustrates how we may be able to demonstrate empirically different forms of unconscious communication and psychological mechanisms. Three examples of Melanie Klein’s (1946) concept of projective identification are identified. These concepts are discussed in more detail later on in the article but, essentially, projective identification is an unconscious communication whereby we transfer our thoughts, feelings and emotions to someone else. Finally, the article discusses some of the problems associated with taking psychoanalytic concepts out of the consulting room and into the social arena. This is particularly important from my point of view as I am not a psychoanalytic practitioner, but a sociologist whose epistemological position is influenced by psychoanalysis (see the epistemological note in the Appendix).

The research project

As several authors have indicated (Skellington and Morris, 1992; Leicester, 1993; Bird, 1996), the data available on minority ethnic groups in the UK education system are often misleading and tell us little about the actual first-hand experience of black and Asian students in higher education. The statistical sources that are available tend to concentrate on access, application and acceptance into higher education institutions (see also Clarke, 2000b). Bird (1996) notes that black students do comparatively well in gaining entry to university in relation to their white peers. In terms of actual representation,

this may be misleading as the minority ethnic population is relatively young and, therefore, Bird argues 'there is a large number [of minority ethnic students] passing through school and hence a potentially large population demanding access to higher education' (p. 12). Similarly Modood (1993) and Modood and Shiner (1994) argue that where entry to university is successful, it tends to focus on a small handful of new universities with a large concentration of minority ethnic groups. The implication of this, as Bird (1996) argues, is that in the majority of universities there are very small proportions of minority groups, with resulting problems of isolation and possible discrimination. The task of this project was to unpack and examine the experience of minority ethnic students in this position and to examine some of the emotional and psychological barriers that they face as they progress through university.

The research took place in a large 'new' campus-type university in southern Britain which has approximately 17,000 students in various geographical locations. The 'typical' student is white and of middle-class origin. Minority ethnic students represent about the same ratio as the population of Britain as a whole at around 5 percent (see Modood, 1993; Modood and Shiner, 1994; Bird, 1996). The students who were interviewed came almost exclusively from the social science department which is situated in a large out-of-town campus, with the exception of one student from housing studies and one from the law department.

The sample of 15 students was obtained by 'snowballing'. After my initial attempts at gathering a sample group failed, I asked colleagues to approach students and ask them if they were interested in taking part in some research. This was far more successful in that I did not know the students, and they seemed far more willing to talk to me. After two interviews I had obtained the names and contact information of several other students that the respondents had given me. Although, in some sense, snowballing is a fairly haphazard way of obtaining a sample frame, it worked well in this instance (see Gilbert, 1993). A larger-scale piece of research would necessitate a more systematic approach to the sample frame. In this case, approximately 30 people were approached to obtain 15 respondents. The ethnic background of each respondent was designated by the respondents themselves and represents a fairly typical spread of minority ethnic students in the university. There was some gender bias in that 10 males and 5 females were interviewed.

Participants were guaranteed confidentiality and made aware of their 'right to refuse participation whenever and for whatever reason they wish' (British Sociological Association: BSA, 1992). The interviews were taped with the permission of the respondents and the tapes kept securely – as were the subsequent transcriptions of the interviews. One respondent withdrew and the tape recording of the interview was returned to him intact. All interviews were conducted on campus with the exception of one that was conducted in the respondent's home.

Describing a method

This section outlines the method used; the following sections discuss the context of the interviews and the way in which the data were collected. Subsequent sections of this article address data analysis and the different patterns of experience and response that were identified among the research subjects. The key elements of this method are:

1. The use of qualitative unstructured interviews.
2. A minimum of intervention by the researcher.
3. The research subject is able to 'freely associate'.
4. Psychoanalytic interpretation does not take place within the interview but is confined to interpretation of the data collected.
5. The use of free association allows for unconscious ideas and motivations to come to the fore, rather than following any logical interview schedule.
6. Interviews are transcribed in detail.

This allows researchers to develop a bank of raw material from which they can then:

7. Identify different patterns of experience.
8. Identify different patterns of response.
9. Analyse substantive issues, for example the subject's experience of racism.
10. Identify unconscious mechanisms such as projective identification both in the subject's response to the interviewer and in the material the subject describes. This allows analysis of the way in which research data are constructed by both researcher and respondents.

This methodology thus points at several layers of analysis. First, there is an analysis of the interaction between researcher and researched; this enables us to address the mutual construction of the research data, and to identify unconscious mechanisms at work in different patterns of response within the research environment. Second, there is an analysis of the substantive content of the interview; this enables the researcher to identify both common and different patterns of experience. The third point follows on from the second in that, in some instances, we can get away from the realist/relativist debate by both identifying common experiences in the analysis of the research data as well as recognizing that people also have very individual and personal experiences of, for example, racism. This facilitates both contextual and holistic analysis of the data in which certain key themes may point toward a communal voyage through the education system without denying the individual experience of the subject.

The interview and data collection

As Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) note, before data can be analysed they have

to be produced. I chose an interview method that was unstructured and in-depth but with some loose, very open-ended questions that I hoped would facilitate conversation. My aim at the start of the interview process was to collect data on the respondent's experience of higher education that would allow me to identify some of the psychodynamic processes and mechanisms at work in a large-scale institution. The interview was to be as informal as possible with respondents allowing themselves to 'freely associate', to tell stories and narratives about their lives with as little input as possible from me as the researcher. I wanted to avoid putting words in people's mouths and any implicit or explicit suggestion of racism. This method of interviewing is similar to what Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) describe as the 'biographical interpretative method'. I cannot claim to have followed this method in detail, as Hollway and Jefferson's work had not been published at the time of the interviews, but it provides a very good description of the method that I have used, and is therefore invaluable as a guide.

For Hollway and Jefferson (2000a), the biographical interpretative method 'can be summarised in terms of four principles, each designed to facilitate the production of the interviewee's meaning frame' (p. 34). The first is to use *open-ended questions*. Thus, for example, I could have asked the respondents 'Have you experienced racism in higher education?', a fairly closed and leading question which may have evoked either a 'yes' or 'no' answer, or made the respondent feel that he or she had to think of a particular incident. Instead, I asked: 'What has been your experience of higher education so far?'. This question was designed to encourage respondents to talk about the meaning and quality of experience of higher education – in other words, how it related to their life.

The second principle of the biographical interpretative method is that of *eliciting a story*. Again, a request such as 'Tell me something about your background' is more likely to elicit a story or narrative, than, for example, a question such as 'Where were you born?'. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) note, story-telling shares many things in common with the psychoanalytic method of free association: the particular story told, the manner and detail of its telling, the points emphasized, the morals drawn, all represent choices made by the story-teller. Such choices are revealing, often more so than the teller suspects (p. 35).

This principle also allows the researcher to look at various forms of projective communication, of transference and counter-transference, that are present in the interview relationship. Why do people tell certain parts of certain stories? Why are they telling them? What form of response are they trying to elicit from the interviewer? In the following section, I examine some of these issues in detail by trying to identify different forms of projective communication in the interview data.

The third principle is to try and *avoid using 'why' questions*. Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) note that this may seem counter intuitive as people's own

explanations of their actions are useful in understanding them. The problem with a 'why' question, however, is that you often get a sociological or cliched answer. When I asked respondents 'why' they came to this particular university, a typical answer would contain reference to league tables or teaching quality assessment. If I asked instead 'Was this university your first choice?', then the response was more likely to be in the form of a story or narrative, even a journey, about the respondent's pre-university experiences.

The final principle is that of *using respondents' ordering and phrasing*. This involves careful listening in order to be able to ask follow-up questions using the respondents' own words and phrases without offering our own interpretations. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) note, although appearing a relatively simple task 'it required discipline and practice to transform ourselves from a highly visible asker of questions, to the almost invisible, facilitating catalyst to their stories' (p. 36). This does not imply the stance of an objective observer, rather it means not imposing a structure on the narrative.

The interview was necessarily a case of learning from experience for me, both in terms of listening to the respondent and picking up on some key themes to discuss with other interviewees. I have no doubt that my choice of questions that seemed important to me were mediated by conscious and unconscious desires to complete the research project successfully. In some sense this was a key element in that I had to learn to listen to the experience of others in order that I may learn from it. This may seem a relatively simple task, but when respondents want to talk about everything except what you are researching, it becomes frustrating and difficult. It is not until you step back and listen that you realize that their past experience in the wider community exists in a diluted form in their experiences of university. Thus if you ask informants about their experience in higher education you invariably get a reply that encompasses their wider world.

The importance of the psychoanalytic technique of free association cannot be overstressed in this method. By allowing the respondent to structure the interview and choose what they 'feel' like talking about, we are able to gain some indication of unconscious feelings and motivation, something that is not possible with traditional research methods.

Data Analysis

One of the key problems with this form of research is organizing the data in such a way that they facilitate systematic analysis. All interviews were recorded on audio tape with the permission of the respondents. The tapes were then transcribed in detail. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour and in one case nearly 4 hours. Notes were also made directly after the interview to make a record of the general 'feel' of the interview. All this represents a huge amount of material. It is tempting when in this position to use a computer package such as 'Ethnograph' or QSR-Nudist to organize and analyse the

data. However, as Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) note, there is a tendency in qualitative data analysis to remain descriptive. This is not to undermine the use of these packages as they do serve a very important function in the categorization and sifting of interview material, but computer analysis is designed to complement established ethnographic practices. There is also a problem in that the use of computer software not only tends to fragment data through the use of coding and retrieval methods, but also 'the common tendency' of 'clerical coding' is to dominate the research material and 'analysis is postponed' (p. 68).

The first stage of data analysis is therefore the actual listening to and transcription of the audio tapes. This is also the first stage of interpretation of the interview material. It is imperative with this method that researchers actually do the transcription themselves in order to familiarize and immerse themselves in a particular transcript. Again, as Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) note:

After a whole day working on the transcripts of a particular participant we would feel inhabited by that person in the sense that our imagination was full of him or her. The impact such work had is best demonstrated by the fact that the interviewees would appear in our dreams and waking fantasies. The process of dreaming about them suggests that our developing insights into a person were not occurring just at a conscious intentional level. (p. 69)

This immersion allows researchers to start thinking in a theoretical way about the material that has been transcribed, and to note themes and issues which emerge from reading the whole text.

Second, it is important to have some form of theoretical understanding of the subject; for example, in this project, the theory is grounded in Kleinian psychoanalysis. Each interview transcript was accompanied by a set of notes identifying key themes and experiences as well as theoretical observations of psychological mechanisms.

Third, the researcher can start making links and looking for similar occurrences of experience. For example, in the next section of this article, I identify different forms of projective communication and unconscious experience from the interview material. This is only made possible by careful and painstaking comparisons between interview transcriptions and notes. Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) suggest that using two forms of structured reference may be more helpful: (i) a pro-forma detailing biographical details, key themes and ideas that arose from the interview; and (ii) a written 'portrait' which is largely descriptive and enables the respondent to 'come alive' for the reader.

The use of this technique of data analysis allows the researcher to identify similar experiences and feelings across a sample group, whilst not forgetting the very individual experience of each respondent. In the analysis of my interview data I have addressed two sets of themes and organized them accordingly. The first set of common links surrounds the actual interview

process and the psychodynamic that exists in the research environment. These are reported in the following sections of this article. Analysis of the psychodynamic between researcher and researched is regarded as an integral part of data analysis and data construction. This is particularly the case in this project where I, as a white researcher, have been interviewing black and Asian students. An extended discussion of this can be found in the paper 'On White Researchers and Black Respondents' (Clarke, 2000a).

The second level of analysis is that of common themes and links found in the transcriptions of the subjects' experience of higher education. These are portrayed in the form of a communal voyage through the education system. When analysing the data, certain experiences cropped up time after time; for example, name calling and bullying in the school playground, the threat of exclusion from school and college, and a sense of not belonging. In this way, individual experience can also be seen as a collective experience (see Clarke, 2000b).

The following sections address the relationship between researcher and researched by pointing to different forms of projective identification, and the way in which this form of unconscious communication has shaped the research environment and data collected.

A note on projective identification

Projective identification is a psychological mechanism originally identified by Melanie Klein (1946) and could be loosely used to describe the way in which we transfer our thoughts, feelings and emotions onto someone else. It is, as Klein notes, one of the earliest mechanisms of defence – that is defence of the self – and has implications for the way we think and feel about others, and most importantly, how we make others feel. Whilst the idea of projection has become assimilated into everyday language, projective identification remains a concept used by clinicians and psychoanalytic sociologists (for an extended discussion of the concept of projective identification, see Clarke, 2001).

A useful way of understanding projective identification is to contrast it with the term projection. Thus, for example, projection per se is a relatively straightforward process in which we attribute our own affective state to others. We may feel anger and perceive some other person as being angry. In other words, we project our feelings onto another. The other person may be blissfully unaware of this process. Projective identification, however, involves expelling the unpalatable parts of the self into some other, forcing them to feel the way we do, or feel how we feel about them. Craib (1998) explains: 'Projective identification is a more profound form of projection. Instead of just seeing the feared quality or emotion in another person, I behave in such a way as to lead the other person to experience that quality in themselves' (p. 17).

Bion (1962) develops Klein's idea of projective identification to talk about

the concepts of 'container' and 'contained'. The recipient of the projection acts as a container of feelings, such as love, hate and anxiety. These feelings are the 'contained'. In optimal conditions the recipient can re-process feelings and return them to the projector in a more manageable form. An obvious example would be the relationship between mother and infant. Projective identification is therefore a form of communication, and for Bion it is at the heart of the thinking process. Ogden (1990) reformulates Bion's ideas, describing a manipulative coercive form of interpersonal projective identification. In Ogden's schema, unwanted feelings are dumped onto others by inducing the experience in the recipient in a manipulative way, thus altering the behaviour of both parties. The work of Bion and Ogden is particularly useful for psychoanalytic sociology as both theorists place an emphasis on the environmental and intersubjective experience of the child. There is less reliance on forms of biological reductionism and a real emphasis on the social psychodynamics of interpersonal communication. In other words, projective identification involves a communicative mediation between self, groups and society. In the next section of this article, I provide some empirical examples of the concept and attempt to show how psychoanalytic ideas can add real depth in the analysis of interview material.

Projective identification as communication: Colin's interview

Rosenfeld (1988) and Sandler (1987) identify a communicative form of projective identification which is exemplified in the work of Bion (1962) and Ogden (1990). This form of projective identification is intersubjective, communicative and exists in both internal and external worlds. I would suggest that the interview with Colin described and analysed later is indicative of this type of projective identification where the recipient of the projection acts as a container, re-processing the feelings evoked and returning them in a more palatable or manageable form.

The interview with Colin, a black British student studying economics, was the first that I conducted. Generally, Colin seemed reluctant to talk about his experiences and often replied in a single word or sentence. I asked Colin what his overall impression of university was:

It's a very good uni, they make a lot of effort, the lectures are good.

This continued throughout the first 20 minutes of the interview. Colin continued to give short answers to what I had perceived were really quite in-depth questions, often talking about how other people may think rather than himself. It seemed as if anything bad he split off and projected onto other people, other people experienced racism, other people thought that the university system disadvantaged them. He thought the course he was doing was "bang on", the university very good, "nothing has disadvantaged me . . . but I can't talk for other people." It was almost as if he felt guilty because he was happy but

his unhappiness that he had left behind had been projected onto and contained in others. I had asked a series of questions that I felt were important, in some sense projecting my prejudice into the interview. I think we both found the experience frustrating; Colin was not forthcoming and I'm sure that he felt that I was not listening to him.

When I terminated the interview, Colin was reluctant to go. He sat there in silence for what felt a very long time. I said to him "You look like you are deep in thought." What followed was a long and detailed story of Colin's journey through the education system and the experiences he had suffered. Colin opened up and stopped talking about the experience of others and talked about himself; this was an intense moment of interaction where I felt that I had now become the 'container' of Colin's thoughts. Colin was very keen for me to know about the racism he had suffered at college. Having failed to learn through experience from the first part of the interview, I tried to change the subject. I asked Colin if this university was his first choice, he replied:

Yeah, yeah . . . she was a lot worse, she was a blatant racist, it wasn't just implied . . . she actually used the word black people . . . she said to a friend of mine, Julian, she actually said to him, she called him a dreadnought. When she talked about race and culture she would be looking at him when she was saying it, saying 'you know what I mean don't you'. She just stereotyped him as being from a certain background. She was so rude. When it came to minorities, she wasn't holding back.

Although Colin had failed to answer my question directly, I think I had succeeded in gaining his confidence whilst providing a platform to release some of the feelings that had been contained in others. I had repeatedly failed to listen to what Colin was saying and what was important to him. Colin's experience of the education system was at the very least unpleasant and informed his experience at university. Although he felt that he was happy now, because of his previous experience, he did not feel that others could be. His final words were:

I went to the worst possible places and . . . yeah . . . I went to the worst possible places . . . it's hard to be motivated . . . it's hard.

Of course it is easy to see in retrospect where I went wrong and the dynamic that existed between myself and Colin. I obviously had preconceived ideas, both conscious and unconscious, about the way the interview would go – as Hunt (1989) notes, the transferences. I prefer to call them *projective communications* that both inhibit and enrich the relationship between researcher and subject. I already had some idea of the sort of answers that I would receive and the questions that were important. One version of the story might be that I had failed to listen to Colin and was unable to learn from this during the interview. Another version might be that I had learned from this practical experience, was now able to listen rather than direct; thus Colin was able to extract and come to terms with the unhappiness he had contained in others.

I terminated the interview before I should have done. Initially, I felt that Colin was eager to please me and sensed my frustration, hence the short but very positive replies to my questions. However, between us we had managed to split off Colin's negative experiences; Colin projected them onto others and I encouraged him to do so. It was as if terminating the interview gave Colin permission to talk about how he really felt; he had said what he thought he ought to, and now he could talk candidly about his experience. In other words, Colin's projection became a positive form of communication in which he used me to filter unconscious feelings in a way that enabled him to develop these feelings into conscious thought.

Thus, in this example, projective identification is communicative and constructive. The crucial turning point was that moment of silence when I terminated the interview and Colin was reluctant to go. Before this point, very little was gained in conversation. Rather than dialogue, or even narrative, there seemed to be monologue in stereo – two unheard voices in the same environment.

I now examine projective identification as an evacuation, as an attempt to control the object, regulate the environment and to invade the recipient's mind.

Projective identification as control: Trev's interview

A form of projective identification identified by Rosenfeld (1988) is that of control of the analyst's or object's mind. The projector forces his or her thoughts into the recipient's mind; often bad or unpalatable thoughts still dominate and the projector lives in fear of being re-contaminated by the analyst. The following extract from the interview with Trev was particularly interesting because Trev completely guided the interview, literally unloaded all his thoughts onto me and took over the environment. He seemed completely oblivious to this; it felt as if he were controlling both me and the interview.

If, initially, it was hard to get Colin to talk, then the interview conducted with Trev, a mature Afro-Caribbean student, was the opposite. In response to the question 'What would you say your ethnicity is?', Trev replied:

My ethnicity, I am actually Afro-Caribbean, my late father came from Jamaica, my mother came from St Thomas, my father from Kingston. They moved here in the 1930s. My dad was a travel agent, in terms of my dad, not only was he a travel agent, he was involved in a number of things, the community, he contributed some 20 odd years to the St Paul's carnival, helped promote, so a lot of the front operations were actually conducted through him, and other organisations as well, but he was actually the front line. As far as I can remember the St Paul's carnival first began in Cabot school, it then moved down to St Werburg's, then they moved back to St Paul's where it's been going for some 31 years now. It's quite a continuous thing, over the years as far as I see it. . . . There has been some difficulties in it, because it's moved from being reasonable, it

then improved, then slowed down, then it's come at a moderate level, it's like a social trend, it's gone at different levels. The way I see it, the main entertainers have since pulled out and they have done since the early eighties, like the Wild Bunch. When the Wild Bunch were there, St Paul's festival was the place to be, 'cos, no doubt about it you used to have a lot of mixed minorities who stayed there to early morning, because the music they used to promote to the crowd. When they pulled out, very few people stayed to early morning, plus the police imposed restrictions on it where they had to close by five o'clock. With these short restrictions there wasn't a lot that organisers could do, at the end of the day it's police powers, and they had the authority. Moving on well, not only does the St Paul's festival bring entertainment but it also brings peer group conflicts. On a number of occasions, I admit that I didn't personally witness it, on one occasion it did actually, my friend said that he was actually walking through the crowd and all of a sudden a big shoot out broke out, that was actually to do with a conflict where two individuals fell out and they met up at St Paul's carnival. Not only is that an issue, it puts people off from going because if you think that incident occurred this last year, what can occur this year. 'Cos a lot of people tend to use St Paul's as a meeting point. Um . . . people tend to use it as a meeting place I was down there once when I bumped into a girl that I used to work with ten years ago, it was like ten years since I last see her. So it has its good and bad points, it depends how people take it.

WHAT'S THIS INTERVIEW ACTUALLY ABOUT?

Where Colin had a story to tell that he had not been able to verbalize before, Trev's story almost seemed rehearsed. When I replied that I wanted to talk about his experience in higher education he continued carefully charting his life history, his journey through education and the world of work. In this instance, this was interview seven, I had given up with my formulaic questions and merely responded to Trev's story. It felt at one point that Trev was almost trying to force his life onto me in some way; it certainly felt like he was in control of the interview:

. . . returning to the subject of racism and also class, but first of all I'm going to start on the class subject.

In the interview with Colin, it seemed that projection was communicative; with Trev the opposite was the case. Trev took over the interview and projected or transferred the information he considered important onto me, dominating the research environment. This process of transference and countertransference as projective identification structures the whole research environment and the type of data that are produced. As Hunt (1989) notes:

Transferences are rarely one sided, and subjects may also project archaic images onto the person of the researcher. . . . The subject's transferences to the researcher are important to examine for the same reason as those of the researcher. They play a role in structuring the research relationship and the kinds of data gathered. (p. 76)

However, I think the term 'projective identification' better describes the communicative psychodynamic between researcher and researched. The

respondent can communicate in such a way as to make the interviewer feel what they have felt. I certainly came away from some interviews feeling traumatized and beaten by the experiences of others which were told with such forceful passion that I could not help but *feel* as well as listen. I now discuss the interview with Mark in which I believe we can see an example of two types of projective identification operating simultaneously.

*Projective identification as evoking a concerned object:
Mark's interview*

Rosenfeld (1988) argues that several processes of projective identification may operate simultaneously. In the case of Mark's interview, we can see processes of both communication and control which I argue Mark uses to create a 'concerned' object, to elicit a response in me, in some sense, by controlling my feelings.

Mark airs his views on his experience at university:

IT PISSES ME OFF SOMETIMES, IT PISSES ME OFF [shouting] there are some people in the group, a mature student, she knows, she's very perceptive, she can always tell from the look on my face. Some days I walk around with a face like thunder, it just says 'DON'T FUCK WITH ME', other days I have a really good day. It's just like a microcosm of wider society.

This interview, I argue, highlights the use of projective identification as a powerful tool for both researcher and researched in the interview environment. Here, after Bion (1962) and Ogden (1990), I am referring to a form of projective identification that is more communicative than internal – communicative in the sense that the projection is aimed at an external object and designed to elicit a response both consciously and unconsciously; in Mark's case, the response is what I would describe as a 'concerned' object. If we take Bion's model of 'container' and 'contained', then projective identification is a way of transmitting meaning in the form of empathy. The recipient of the projection, the container, can reprocess the feeling evoked and return it to the projector in a more manageable form. In Mark's case, it felt as if I were the container, he told me his life story, his experience of racism at school and work, he made me feel bad, in fact he made me worry about him, want to support him, and at the same time I felt controlled myself – I felt traumatized. Mark, however, seemed confident. As we finished the interview, he compared himself to another black student, it seemed, to show me he had a grip on this racism thing:

If you're isolationist and cut yourself off, you're not going to get anywhere . . . I've had that from another black guy on the course, he's not happy because when we started the course we were the only two black guys, but me and XXXX's views are worlds apart. You can't have problems with such a vast number of society and expect to get on, he cuts himself off from the rest of the group

and says it's because the rest of the group don't like him. Since we started university he's never made an effort to just be. . . . He says 'why do you get on, why don't I, we're both black?' . . . I can't answer that question for him. . . . He sees everything in terms of black and white, he won't let the race go. I say to him 'put it aside', it's not everything. I can't live my life reacting to racism.

My agenda in this relationship had also been satisfied; both consciously and unconsciously, I felt I had a desire to understand and empathize with Mark. As Casement (1985) notes, projective identification in the clinical setting enables the therapist to experience something that is beyond words:

If communication by projective identification is successful in reaching the other person, an affective resonance is created in the recipient whose feelings take on a 'sameness' based on identification. (p. 81)

I had allowed myself to feel the way Mark did by taking on his projections and, at the same time, Mark had evoked a response in me with these projections, a form of both control and communication aimed at producing this concerned object. This was mutually gratifying in one way in that it satisfied my need to understand and in some sense alleviate some of the feelings of guilt that surfaced around this project. These feelings of guilt centre largely around my position as a white researcher interviewing black respondents and, as such, the obvious conclusion from this is that the interview has therapeutic quality or value for both researcher and subject. I asked Mark how he found the interview. He thought it was great to talk, to share his experience with someone else. He had somehow detoxified some of his feelings through me, I through him. This again was common in many interviews. The interview seemed to provide a new environment for the respondent to talk about issues of identity and racism almost as if for the first time. If we return to Trev, he describes the interview as 'challenging'. The interview for Trev was not about his experience in higher education but about an opportunity to express his feelings to a white person about the way in which he had been treated by society:

It's different, I find, I find it's a challenging interview in terms of, it gave me an opportunity to express myself, my intentions, how I, how I've been treated in society over the past number of years. The interview in general has given me the opportunity to explain myself in detail where in the past I've always been able to explain myself but only to a social factor, unless you explain it to, normally I've always explained it to a black person because he or she has been faced with the same dilemmas, whereas an English person hasn't, because lots of English people find it very . . . oblivious to the issue because they're in 'noddy land' where they don't recognize a lot of the issues which have occurred.

This highlights two important issues: the first is the notion that the interview can be a therapeutic encounter; and the second related issue, in terms of this research, is that this encounter is with a white person.

To sum up thus far, I have discussed some of the emotionally intense qualities of the interactions between researcher and respondent in the interview

environment. I have highlighted three interpretations of projective identification and have used my research data to illustrate these psychic mechanisms. What I have shown is the importance of projective communication within the research environment, with both the interviewer and indeed the interviewee constructing and ascribing meaning to the type of data that are produced. Without some form of reflection on this, and I suggest that psychoanalysis is the ideal medium, then the data collected become devoid of meaning and context. I have used the term projective identification rather than transference because I think it better describes the psychodynamic between researcher and researched. This dynamic operates on several levels. I have argued that on one level both respondent and researcher shape the research environment and data through projective communication. On another level, respondents can make the interviewer experience to some degree what they themselves have felt, thus evoking some empathy. Finally, I have suggested, using Bion's (1962) model of 'container' and 'contained', that the interview can be viewed as a therapeutic encounter. The final section of this article addresses a distinct ethical area – can psychoanalysis, as a clinical therapeutic practice, be applied outside the confines of the consulting room?

Problems, problems, problems: out of the consulting room and into the social

At the beginning of this article I stated that I am not a psychoanalytic practitioner but a sociologist whose epistemological outlook is influenced by psychoanalysis. Where psychoanalysis becomes a particularly useful tool for sociologists is in the analysis of data and reflection on interview methods. As I have argued, a reflexive approach to interview methodology enables the researcher to assess how the material which has been collected is constructed by both interviewer and respondent. In other words, psychoanalysis provides an insight into the cognitive and affective forces that shape research findings. The interview therefore becomes a reflection of the experience of both interviewer and interviewed, and the analysis of the interview is an interpretation of experience.

This, however, raises the question – how far can we take psychoanalytic theory and practice out of the consulting room and into the social? Klein and Bion's work, for example, derives from the clinical setting and is not always easily applied to the practical research environment. In the method I have described I have been very careful to avoid any suggestion that I would, or could, psychoanalyse the research subjects during the interview. This is central to the tentative nature of this method or technique and it is the point at which interpretation that differs takes place, as Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) elucidate:

The primary difference between the two practices is that clinicians interpret *into* the encounter, whereas researchers will save their interpretations for outside it.

Put another way, researchers, not being therapists, will be careful not to interpret at the time that information is being provided by the interviewee. (p. 77)

In other words, interpretation follows the research encounter, is separate in some sense from the participant and has a different, wider audience. Interpretation is associated with data analysis rather than data production and is necessarily separate for the non-analytically trained researcher.

Hunt (1989) highlights some of the problems that non-analytically trained researchers may encounter. The first is the type of data collected. Some forms of data simply do not facilitate an in-depth psychoanalytic study. Second, conducting in-depth, 'free association' style interviews may prove painful and problematic for both researcher and respondent as the interviewee reveals events and parts of their self that have been traumatic. Third, few sociologists have received formal training in psychoanalytic theory and are unlikely to have experienced analysis themselves; awareness of theory and practice may therefore be partial and superficial. Finally, the researcher may be tempted to engage in 'wild analysis', to see instances of splitting and projective identification everywhere, and in every action.

These concerns point to the need for a systematic and reflective methodology. Hunt's first point that certain types of data may not be suitable for psychoanalytic interpretation highlights the need for a specific form of data collection as outlined in previous sections of this article – a method of data collection specifically designed to facilitate psychoanalytic interpretation.

The second point is more difficult in that this type of method does seek in some sense to unearth feelings and unconscious motivations that inscribe meaning in the respondent's life. There are two ways in which we can seek to ensure the wellbeing of the respondent. The first is an ethical issue. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000a) note, until recently the ethical interests of the respondent have not been taken seriously 'when weighed in the balance against the interests of science in advancing knowledge' (p. 83). The researcher must, as a practising analyst would, seek at all times to protect the interests and anonymity of the respondent, to respect the confidentiality of the material, and to adhere to the set of ethical guidelines set out by the professional organization to which they belong. The respondent must feel that he or she can refuse participation whenever, and for whatever reason they wish. This should be accompanied by the return of any tapes or notes that have been made. What I considered to be one of the most productive and interesting interviews that I participated in during the course of this research ended in this way. The respondent felt uncomfortable about the material under discussion. Several weeks after the interview, the respondent asked to withdraw from the project and the tapes of the interview (which had not yet been transcribed) were returned. This, of course, felt like a severe blow at the time but, in the longer term, I feel that an ethically sound piece of research is far more likely to yield productive data.

The second way in which one can seek to ensure the wellbeing of the

respondent is to make sure we do not attempt to analyse into the interview – to develop some form of resonance with the respondent and learn to listen to the experience of others. This requires both discipline and practice and it is inevitable that the researcher will make some mistakes. This is why some form of self-reflection on the interview process is central to this method, to be able to identify the construction of the interview process by both researcher and respondent. We must be careful not to terminate the interview too quickly and to make sure that the respondent is able to come back and talk, or debrief, should he or she feel the need to do so.

The third problem that Hunt draws our attention to is the superficial understanding that some researchers may have of psychoanalytic theory and methods. A psychoanalytic theoretical framework and a theory of the subject is explicit in the method that I have used. The temptation to indulge in 'wild analysis' may always be a problem, and this may stem simply from the enthusiasm of the researcher for his or her own research subject. However, there are ways that this can be minimized: first, by sharing the data with colleagues (although this may raise ethical issues); and second, by comparing and contrasting interview transcripts and experiences – in other words, by using a systematic method and, finally, by reflecting on the processes that have produced the data and recognizing that the researcher may well have projected some of his or her own fantasies onto the data. By doing this we can recognize the fact that we are not impartial and objective observers and are often ourselves prone to misinterpretation and mistakes.

The methodological problems that arise from taking the psychoanalytic method out of the clinical setting and into the social actually strengthen the argument for a method that points to, and identifies, unconscious forces. It does this in two ways: (i) the methodological problems posed are to some extent a result of these unconscious forces – for example the researcher imposing his or her criteria and unconscious fantasies on the research environment and data; and (ii) if we are not to carry out research in an ad hoc way, to make 'wild analyses', then we need some form of systematic method that can be applied to different subject areas, or the same subject area at a different time. The psycho-social method offers this. It is therefore not a psychoanalytic practice, but a research method informed by psychoanalytic ideas; as Richards (1989) has noted: 'psychoanalytic ideas emerge from traditions of thought in the wider culture; they are culturally embedded and thereby partially autonomous from clinical practice' (p. 29).

Some conclusions

In this article I have pointed to, and described, a psychoanalytically informed research method that may be used for the systematic interpretation of data which have been collected in unstructured qualitative interviews. The method described in this article is tentative and has been grounded in the actual data

collected with the intention of using psychoanalytic concepts in a systematic way within sociological research. I have identified several key elements in this research methodology: first, the use of unstructured qualitative interviews; second, there is a minimum level of intervention by the researcher – this facilitates ‘free association’ which allows for unconscious ideas to come to the fore; third, psychoanalytic interpretation does not take place within the interview, rather interpretation is made of the data collected; and finally, interviews are transcribed in great detail with supporting pro-formas which allow the researcher to ‘immerse’ himself or herself in the material. A bank of raw material is produced from which the researcher can: (1) identify different patterns of experience, for example, the subject’s experience of racism; (2) identify different patterns of response; (3) identify unconscious mechanisms such as projective identification both in the subject’s response to the interviewer, and in the material the subject describes; and (4) this allows analysis of the way in which research data are constructed by both researcher and respondent.

This method points at several layers of analysis. First, there is an analysis of the interactions and communications in the research environment of all participants. Second, there is an analysis of the substantive content of the interview which enables the researcher to identify common themes and patterns of experience. Third, this method recognizes that there are both common and very individual experiences of social phenomena. This allows contextual and holistic analysis of the data in which certain key themes point to a common experience whilst recognizing the individuality of the social actor.

In describing this method of data analysis, I have built on the work of Hunt (1989) and Hollway and Jefferson (2000a, 2000b) who have been instrumental in both describing a systematic method for researching psycho-social subjects and pointing to a framework for identifying the effects of unconscious forces in empirically derived data. Building on Hollway and Jefferson’s model – the biographical interpretative method, I have suggested that there are six guiding principles in the production of data: (1) the use of unstructured interviews; (2) the use of open-ended questions which allow us to explore meaning with reference to the respondent’s life experience; (3) eliciting a story tells us a great deal about the subject, or respondent, and allows us to identify unconscious communications; (4) the avoidance of ‘why’ questions discourages clichéd and rehearsed responses; (5) the use of the respondent’s ordering and phrasing avoids imposing rigidity on the structure of the interview, and lessens the risk of analysis taking place in the interview environment; and (6) central to this method is the use of ‘free association’ – by allowing the respondent to structure and guide the interview, we are able to gain some insight into unconscious motivations and anxieties.

I have argued that one of the main problems with this form of research is organizing the data in a way that facilitates systematic analysis. I have suggested several key ways in which we can overcome this problem and, again,

these are based on Hollway and Jefferson's method. The first stage of data analysis is the actual listening to, and transcription of, audio tapes. If we are to listen and learn from the experiences of others, as Bion (1962), Casement (1985) and Hinshelwood (1994) suggest, then we need to 'immerse' ourselves in the data. This immersion allows the researcher to start thinking theoretically about the data, and to note themes and issues that emerge from reading the 'whole' text. Second, it is important that we have some form of theoretical framework – a theoretical understanding of the subject; in the case of this project, theory is grounded in Kleinian psychoanalysis. Each interview is accompanied by a set of notes identifying key themes and experiences, as well as theoretical observations of psychological mechanisms. Third, when this has been done, the researcher can start to make links and to identify similar occurrences of experience. This is only made possible by careful and painstaking comparisons between notes and interview transcriptions.

This method allows the researcher two levels of analysis. The first is that of the actual interview process and the psychodynamics that exist in the research environment. We can thus identify certain psychological mechanisms and unconscious forces and see how the data have been constructed. This is particularly important for me as a white researcher interviewing black and Asian respondents. The second layer of analysis is that of the common links and themes found in the respondents' experience of higher education, which has been discussed elsewhere (Clarke, 2000b). In the analysis of the data, certain experiences cropped up time after time. For example, name calling in the playground, bullying at school, the threat of exclusion from both school and college, and a sense of not 'belonging'. In this way, individual experience can also be seen as a collective experience, a communal voyage through the education system.

In the final section of this article, I discussed some of the problems that may arise when taking psychoanalytic concepts out of their clinical context and using them in social research. These concerns in many ways point to the need for a systematic and reflective methodology for investigating unconscious forces and motivation. We can only learn from experience if we acknowledge that we may mis-interpret and make mistakes; we are not impartial and objective observers, but part of the actual research environment. If we are to formulate solutions to issues of racism and exclusion then we need to look beyond traditional sociological method and explanation which tends to point at what we already know and start thinking in terms of 'how' and 'why' these phenomena occur. A psycho-social research method adds another layer of interpretation addressing unconscious communication and motivation.

APPENDIX: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL NOTE

The author would like to acknowledge in this note that psychoanalysis as both a discipline and practice has been at the centre of a long-standing philosophical and sociological debate regarding its epistemological basis. These epistemological problems

largely stem from Freud's claim that psychoanalysis is a science. This idea is quite untenable as psychoanalysis lacks any form of systematic universal laws, any form of prediction and empirical facts that are open to proof. Arguably, then, what Freud developed was a systematic hermeneutic method for analysing the human condition. In other words, psychoanalysis is a method for *understanding* rather than *explaining*. Freud's claim that psychoanalysis is a science largely stems from his own position as a doctor of medicine, his training in neurophysiology and the position of science as the dominant form of cognition of the time. The dismissal of psychoanalysis as a science, as Craib (1998) notes, 'is the usual ground for the philosophical dismissal of Freud', and this dismissal is based on positivistic notions of science. Freud, as we have seen, proposed a new theory and practice. The practice – 'the talking cure' – is very much based on an interpretative and hermeneutic understanding of the human psyche. Freud, however, as I have noted, claimed throughout his life that psychoanalysis was very much a science and, in doing so, left himself open to constant criticism from medical, philosophical and sociological traditions.

The debate on whether psychoanalysis is a science, as expressed in the views of Popper (1971), Gellner (1985) and particularly Grunbaum (1984), exploded in 1993 when the *New York Review of Books* published Frederick Crews's (1993) essay 'The Unknown Freud', a damning report on psychoanalysis and Freud's theory in which Crews describes psychoanalysis as an explanatory worthless hobbyhorse. The problem with taking this as definitive is that it detracts from what Freud does give us in terms of interpretation and it detracts from other less scientific interpretations of Freud's work in terms of its hermeneutic and philosophical quality.

Craib (1998) argues that a hermeneutic reading of Freud opens up many new possibilities. Citing the work of Paul Ricoeur (1970) and Jürgen Habermas (1972), Craib argues that philosophers can learn from Freud rather than trying to teach him: 'they do not destroy psychoanalysis but take it beyond itself' (p. 133). Habermas uses psychoanalysis as a way of maintaining a hermeneutic approach to his philosophical sociology and pointing to forms of ideological domination. Ricoeur uses Freud's ideas to point to the unconscious distortion of meanings in tandem with a more traditional hermeneutic approach to conscious interpretations and meaning. As Elliott (1999) notes, despite the recent round of Freud 'bashing' and the debate around psychoanalysis as a science, Freud's intellectual and cultural influence remains profound. It is Freud the philosopher that is often forgotten in lieu of Freud the biologist, but there are many more interpretations of Freud's work than mere biology. These range from the philosophical discussions mentioned above to Lacan's reconstruction of Freud with his emphasis on language, to the writings of so-called 'third-wave' feminists, for example, Juliet Mitchell's (1974) book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* and the work of Julia Kristeva (1989, 1991) and Luce Irigaray (1985). As Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) note, after Ricoeur (1970), the entities that Freud discovered in the psyche, the id, ego and super ego, are not entities at all, but interpretations – 'the unconscious becomes something that does not really exist, but is an ascribed meaning' (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 94). Alvesson and Skoldberg argue that the concept of hermeneutics has undergone a fundamental change in that psychoanalysis can be seen as belonging to the *hermeneutics of suspicion* . . . which, apart from Freud, is also represented by Marx and Nietzsche. All three have probed behind what they conceived as an illusory self-consciousness to a more profound, more unpleasant or 'shameful' one. In Freud the latter appears as the libido, in Marx as the economic interest, and in Nietzsche as the will to power (p. 95).

Alvesson and Skoldberg argue that the history of hermeneutics has been a history

devoid of such suspicion; psychoanalysis adds another dimension on the periphery of the hermeneutic tradition seeking the irrational elements behind societal phenomena. It is from this position that the author uses psychoanalysis. Rather than a Freudian biological reductionist approach, the model used in this article is psychodynamic and intersubjective. The emphasis is therefore on understanding the relationship between individuals, environment and society in a hermeneutic psychoanalytic sociology of the human imagination.

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