Psychoanalysis

P. T. Kingsbury, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada
© 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Glossary

Analysand The patient in psychoanalysis.
Ego The part of the mind that concerns the sense of self and mediates between the unconscious and conscious, as well as the Id, Superego, and social reality.
Hermeneutics A branch of knowledge that concerns the art, science, and philosophy of interpretation.
Id An unconscious part of the mind that is associated with immediate gratification and the primary instinctual impulses of aggression and sexuality.
Inductive Reasoning The process through which general conclusions are reached through the evaluation of particular events and observations.
Method A systematic means or particular procedure that is used to collect data and is guided by methodology.
Methodology The systematic theoretical analysis of methods, as well as the study of the directions and implications of empirical practices, techniques, and the research process.
Superego The part of the mind associated with moral agency, self-critical conscience, as well as social standards and imperatives.
Transference The redirection to a substitute, typically the analyst, of former infantile feelings toward a significant person – typically one’s parents.
Unconscious, The A partially inaccessible and dynamic part of the mind that mainly consists of repressed thoughts, injunctions, and feelings that profoundly influence our conscious lives.

Introduction

Psychoanalysis is characterized by ongoing critical reassessments of its clinical methods. Although psychoanalysis is composed of different and often contrary theorizations about the human mind, all psychoanalytic ‘schools’ are united by a reliance on the methods of talking, listening, and interpretation. Much of the literature on psychoanalytic methods is underpinned by enduring debates about psychoanalysis’s relationship to science. On the one hand, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), who founded psychoanalysis during the late-nineteenth century, always strived to establish psychoanalysis as a scientific project. On the other hand, Carl Jung (1875–1961), who in 1913, famously ushered in the first major break from the Freudian paradigm, was unconcerned about whether psychoanalysis was scientific or not. Beyond psychoanalytic circles, numerous scholars working in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities have passionately lauded or vehemently condemned psychoanalytic methods vis-à-vis questions about scientific validity.

While debates about the (un)scientific status of psychoanalysis are obviously bound up with different understandings of science and psychoanalysis, the following questions have been regularly raised ever since the early twentieth century: First, to what extent can psychoanalytic objects, processes, and hypotheses such as the unconscious, libido, repression, transference, the death drive, and the Oedipus complex be empirically observable, testable, and causally explained? Second, how can psychoanalytic concepts become usefully and rigorously integrated into non-psychoanalytic methodological practices? Third, to what extent can clinically based and individually centered psychoanalytic methods be used for the investigation of social contexts by social scientists and texts by scholars working in the humanities?

In response to the above questions, some commentators have argued that psychoanalysis is nothing but a glorified sectarian dalliance composed of fairy tales that demand absurd, that is, unscientific conceptual leaps of faith. Other commentators, however, dismiss such condemnations because of their single mindedness, lack of rigor, and narrow understandings of what constitutes science, scientific inquiry, and psychoanalysis. To be sure, whenever psychoanalysts make theoretical propositions about psychical life, they are often at pains to avoid falling into the traps of reductive reasoning and totalizing knowledge claims. Whenever one reads a psychoanalytic text (especially Freud’s), one is sure to encounter as much doubt and hesitation as certainty and assuredness. For the most part, psychoanalysis relies on inductive reasoning whereby general theories of the mind are derived from and based on particular and repeated empirical observations in clinical settings.

Given the psychoanalytic goal of explaining seemingly ‘irrational’ behavior, the alleged idiosyncratic even ‘crackpot’ psychoanalytic concepts such as the unconscious, the death drive, and Oedipus complex are used not so much as an attempt to faithfully capture or mirror psychical ‘reality’, but rather as a conceptual strategy in which to explain or take into account the iterations of enigmatic and hitherto fore inexplicable psychical phenomena. It is on the question of how to
explain the psychical dimensions of seemingly irrational social and spatial behavior that human geographers increasingly began to turn to psychoanalytic theories during the mid-1990s. As a result, psychoanalytic geographies have become an important subfield in human geography. And yet, extensive critical assessments of the validity, value, and potentiality of psychoanalytic methods in human geography are rare. Put simply, geographers have found psychoanalytic concepts much more valuable than psychoanalytic methods. In addition, the use of psychoanalytic methods in geography usually involves adding psychoanalytic concepts to already existing methods and methodologies.

There are at least three main reasons for this situation: First, psychoanalysis has been frequently viewed by a significant number of geographers with a cautiousness that borders on suspicion that even borders on paranoia. Geographers' paradigmatic commitments to social constructionism, historicism, and cultural studies have meant that we are easily disturbed by the allegedly a-cultural and a-historical psychoanalytic concepts such as the unconscious, the drive, and desire. While many geographers are correct to assert that these concepts cannot be entirely reduced to the effects of discourse, the social, history, culture, and biology, most geographers find the theoretical use of an abstract psychoanalytic concept much more palatable and legitimate than the prospect of methodologically enacting psychoanalytic concepts and methods in the lived spaces of research. Second, because geographers have, for the most part, selected concepts and literatures that conform to and emerge from the above dominant paradigms in human geography, much of the radicality and thus the very points of psychoanalytic epistemologies and ontologies have been elided. Thus psychoanalysis is widely viewed in geography as both an extravagant and redundant theoretical detour: psychoanalysis spends too much theoretical time on problems that could be more easily tackled with other, thriftier theoretical frameworks. And so, geographers have parried or simply foreclosed discussions about the commensurability of psychoanalytic methods with existing methods in human geography. Third (and related to the first reason), the methodological tenets shared by psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic practices have convinced some geographers, most notably Stuart Oliver, that psychoanalytic methods are simply best confined to clinical rather than social settings.

Despite this lack of engagement and uncertainty about psychoanalytic methods in human geography, there are a number of ostensibly psychoanalytic methods in geography. Before turning to geographers' rendering of psychoanalytic methods, let us first briefly elucidate some key psychoanalytic methods.

**Key Psychoanalytic Methods**

In a psychoanalytic session, it is the patient, rather than the analyst, who does most of the work. This is why in psychoanalysis, the patient is often referred to as an 'analysand' – the gerund term highlights the active role of the person under therapy. Here, 'work' refers to analyst's job of facilitating the analysand's task of discovering and 'working through' unconscious material that has, for example, been repressed (expelled from consciousness into the unconscious), foreclosed (expelled from consciousness and the unconscious), or disavowed (unconsciously denied yet acknowledged). During the early years of psychoanalysis, Freud noted how difficult it was for analysands – despite their best intentions and efforts – to recuperate the most important and painful unconscious memories. Freud's notion of 'resistance' refers to these various struggles and blockages. According to Freud, resistance mainly consisted of defense mechanisms that included rationalization, repression, regression, displacement, and reaction formation. The 'defenses' helped to protect the conscious mind from aspects of reality deemed unacceptable or dangerous. In order to overcome resistance and access unconscious material, Freud originally used the method of hypnosis and the power of suggestion. Freud, however, soon abandoned the method of hypnosis because it was unpredictable and not many patients were able to enter a hypnotic state. Freud soon turned his attention on fine-tuning numerous methods, including three methods that have become extremely important for nearly all practicing psychoanalysts. It is to the key psychoanalytic methods of free association, transference, and analytic listening that we now turn.

**Free Association**

Having abandoned hypnosis, Freud began to develop the method he called 'free association' that basically involves encouraging analysands to say whatever is in or comes into their minds no matter how silly, embarrassing, or confusing those thoughts may be. One of the main reasons analysand's lie on comfortable couches that face away from the analyst is to facilitate the process of free association. The primary goal of free association is to build a substantial amount of material in a way that unfolds an associative network of the analysand's unconscious. Freud also used free association as a method to enable the analysand to recall or accidentally come across a crucial, perhaps even pivotal for the analytic treatment, forgotten memory. The main point of free association, however, was not to discover or unearth the analysand's 'big secret', but rather, to elucidate in speech and over a long period of time the analysand's psychical
conflicts that kept at bay certain memories and wishes from the conscious mind.

**Transference**

Much of psychoanalysis relies heavily on the ‘cathartic method of treatment’, that is, the task to make patients feel the emotions of previously repressed or forgotten early childhood memories. Now, all this free associating talk about infantile memories means that the relationship between the analyst and analysand is quite a peculiar one. A common outcome of this relationship involves analysands’ reenactment of intense infantile emotions, demands, experiences, and identifications in the analytic session by projecting them onto the analyst. Freud called this process ‘transference’. When Freud first encountered transference, he initially categorized it as another form of resistance. Later, Freud regarded transference as a unique way to facilitate analytic progress. For example, the analysand may begin to transfer powerful feelings such as love and hate onto the analyst that they once directed toward their mother or father. Through transference, the analyst becomes a substitute for the analysand’s original parent. Thus, Freud believed that transference usefully revealed the analysand’s history (especially their childhood experiences) because it involved the repetition of previously learnt behavior. Freud also encountered the process of countertransference wherein the analyst may transfer their unconscious feelings back onto the analysand. Notably, there is much debate in psychoanalytic literature about the extent to which transference and countertransference aid or restrict psychoanalytic treatment.

**Analytic Listening**

The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) once likened psychoanalysis to a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’. Ricoeur’s comment brings to the fore how psychoanalysis is preoccupied with developing interpretative techniques that discern meaning in subtexts, disguises, and multiplicities. Exemplary here is the method of analytic listening. For Freud, analytic listening consisted of taking a position that adopted a meditative state of ‘evenly hovering attention’. Put differently, analytic listening is open and attentive to new observations and alternative meanings in what the analysand says. In order to achieve this openness, analysts had to avoid the following: attributing a single meaning to the analysand’s speech; succumbing to countertransferential suggestion; holding onto particular memories of what the analysand had said previously; and cultivating desire and judgment when listening to the analysand. Furthermore, analytic listening requires that the analyst listens in an engaged manner and is attentive to the numerous psychical dimensions and registers of the analysand’s speech.

When an analysand speaks, analysts are trained to listen to not just one voice, but to many voices, that is, to the polyvocality of speech. Here, psychoanalysis attends to three hermeneutic ‘horizons’ or temporalities: the time of the analysand’s discourse, the time of the analytic session, and the time of the patient’s life. For Anna Freud (1895–1982), analytic listening meant that the analyst position themselves ‘equidistant between Ego, Id, and Superego’.

Obviously, given the psychoanalytic premise that the unconscious exists and has effects, analysts themselves will always import unconscious judgments, biases, desires, etc. Methodological conundrums and inevitabilities such as these are central to the vast psychoanalytic literature on methods and one of the reasons why Freud famously dubbed psychoanalysis ‘the impossible profession’.

**Psychoanalytic Methods in Geography**

Psychoanalytic geographers have yet to use the key psychoanalytic methods of free association, transference, and analytic listening. As we shall see, however, the methods that are used by psychoanalytic geographers import many of the methodological commitments outlined above. To be sure, much of critical human geographical research is replete with processes that are comparable to free association, transference, and analytic listening. Think, for example, of the free association-like meandering pronunciations and spontaneous ramblings voiced during unstructured interviews. Think, for example, of the powerful transferential bonds that often develop between the researcher(s) and researched during interviews, ethnographies, and focus groups. Think, for example, of the degree to which geographers, especially feminist and poststructuralist geographers, attempt to foster data collection techniques and conditions that are comparable to analytic listening: attendance to self-reflexivity, mindful of multiple viewpoints and meanings, recognition of the situatedness and partiality of knowledge, vigilance toward power dynamics, and appreciative of the ineluctable instability of insider/outsider and researched/researcher distinctions.

It is important to recognize that psychoanalysis and its methods have at once significantly and subtly influenced how researchers in social sciences such as geography conduct and conceptualize research processes and subjects. How so? Put simply, it is difficult to underestimate the impact psychoanalysis has had on the development of the critical and social theories that infuse so much of human geography’s methodologies. It is perhaps more accurate to state, then, that geographers have yet to systematically or explicitly use the aforementioned key psychoanalytic methods. Geographers’
tentativeness toward psychoanalytic methods is neither an inevitable outcome nor has it anything to do with the intrinsic properties of psychoanalytic methods. In the discipline of sociology, for example, free association has been used to explore the emotional dynamics of small social groups such as families. Geographers' tentativeness toward psychoanalytic methods is best understood as the result of a more general hesitation toward psychoanalytic epistemologies and ontologies. Such tentativeness is marked by the inverted commas that often surround psychoanalytic concepts in geography such as the unconscious, and, as we shall see, in some of the following methods that geographers have adopted under the aegis of psychoanalytic geographical research.

The following section is not exhaustive, but rather representative of the most recent and extensive examples of how geographers have engaged with psychoanalytic methods. The first subsection exemplifies how geographers have used psychoanalysis to theoretically evaluate current methods and methodologies in geography. The next subsection illustrates how a psychoanalytic method is concretely used in a research setting. The subsequent subsection reveals how psychoanalytic theory has been used to inform interpretative and explanatory frameworks that try and make sense of complex socio-spatial processes.

Empathy and Identification

To date, Liz Bondi's work on empathy and identification is one of the most incisive and extensive theoretical assessments of the potential benefits of using psychoanalytic methods in geography. Bondi asserts that psychoanalytic understandings of identification and empathy provide 'conceptual resources' that can enhance feminist understandings of fieldwork, specifically, questions about how positionality and power infuse the dynamics between the researcher and the researched. It is important to note that Bondi does not wish to forge a distinctive form of therapeutic or psychoanalytic fieldwork, but rather, to explicate some psychoanalytic insights that can theoretically enhance already existing research methods.

Bondi primarily draws on an 'object relations' psychoanalytic approach. Briefly, proponents of object relations such as Melanie Klein (1882–1960), Michael Balint (1896–1970), and British psychoanalysts, including Donald W. Winnicott (1896–1971), Ronald Fairbairn (1889–1964), and Harry Guntrip (1901–1975) emphasize how (following Freud's notions of an 'object' and 'object relation') the psyche's interactive and intersubjective world is constituted by and through relationships 'and' objects. From this perspective, 'relations' are to be understood as interrelationships wherein the psyche not only constitutes its objects, but is also constituted by, composed of, and relates to itself through objects. 'Object' refers to how something, typically a person, body part, or a character role can become the medium, procurer, and/or locus of the drive. Very briefly, the drive is a concept that refers to how human sexuality is not entirely reducible to a biological instinct or a cultural construction. An object can be a 'part' or 'whole' object, a 'good' or 'bad' object, and an 'internal' or 'external' object. Many object relations theorists focus on how much of people's lives involve the forging of and dependence on psycho-social bonds, that is, interrelationships with other people. In so doing, object relations theorists (especially the British psychoanalysts as opposed to the 'Kleinians') de-emphasize the role of the drive by considering psychical life not so much in terms of the accomplishment of pleasure, that is, the reduction of psychical tension, but rather, in terms of the unconscious representations of objects.

For Bondi, object relations theories, with their focus on the 'richly peopled' space of the psyche, can enhance understandings of the interpersonal and dynamic environment of fieldwork because they provide a rich vocabulary in which to engage the topics of power and positionality in research practices. In addition, for Bondi, the concepts of identification and empathy can provide researchers with unique theoretical guidance on how to tackle the tricky balancing act of understanding and making distinctions between the interviewee's feelings and one's own feelings.

How so? Put simply, Bondi argues that research practices are replete with the processes of identification and empathy. The former term (following Melanie Klein) consists of, on the one hand, the projection or unconscious expulsion of aggressive impulses and 'bad' objects onto other people and, on the other hand, unconscious processes of introjection, that is, the internalization of 'good' objects. Empathy primarily involves the capacity to understand the emotional condition of another person through oneself, especially through acts of listening. Bondi addresses how the interview process (like many other social interactions) is structured by conscious and unconscious divisions and exchanges of labor exemplified by the process of one person talking while another listens. Researchers, then, are often tested on their ability to receive, process, and then give back to the researched unconscious material. As Bondi notes, the process of empathy is quite unlike identification because through empathy the researcher offers, rather than expels, unconscious material in a way that can be easily handled and 'owned' by the interviewee. Given the extent to which interviews can involve oscillatory processes of observation and participation, as well as intensely affective exchanges of anger, confusion, and sadness, Bondi makes a convincing
case that the concept of empathy is extremely useful to reflect on, if not orient, the very practices of qualitative interviews.

‘Playing’

Beginning with the object relations thesis that adults’ sensations, perceptions, and experiences of landscape are profoundly influenced by their infantile experiences of the Self with the Other (mother/primary caregiver), Amanda Bingley’s (an experienced practicing psychotherapist) research tackles the key psychoanalytic question of how to access and interpret elusive unconscious processes. For Bingley, any methodological gap preventing the import of practices of therapy into academic research is ultimately a negligible one. In order to tackle the question of the relationship between the unconscious and adults’ experiences of landscape, Bingley enlists two concepts from Winnicott: the first, ‘potential space’ or ‘intermediate space’, is a space through which meditative, fluid, transitional, and exploratory demarcations of Self and Other (e.g., person, people, landscape, object, etc.) take place during infancy. Such a space is replete with the interconnective capabilities of ‘objects’ (see above). The second concept is the ‘transitional object’ which typically includes the breast, food, a toy, and blanket. Such transitional objects are mediators and travelers between permeable inner and outer psychical worlds which, through acts of ‘playing’ (inverted commas in original), help to establish a potential space. In addition, transitional objects usher in ‘unintegrated’ states (between the capture of reality and threat of integration) for their users, mediate between fantasy and the real world, and become more sophisticated as we grow older. For Winnicott, potential space creatively infuses existing and possible cultural worlds of art, music, literature, and stories.

Bingley’s research involves the creation and maximization of the conditions of a potential space and states of ‘unintegration’. How is this achieved? Bingley’s research involves practical workshops composed of 12 adult participants. Key here is how Bingley’s research is informed by Jacquie Burgess’s use of ‘small group’ analyses that draws on the work of S.H. Foulkes (1898–1976). Notably, Bingley uses a wide range of methods of including in-depth interviews, verbal feedback, and artistic three-dimensional modeling in group workshops as a way in which to address sensory experiences from the informants’ earliest childhood to the present day. Bingley’s main research method, however, is the art therapy and Jungian technique of sandplay. Through sandplay, research participants are able to become part of a potential space. Sandplay, which involves participants playing (often with their eyes closed) with wet and dry sand with their hands, feet, and tools such as small buckets, brings to the fore tactile rather than visual experiences of the landscape. Thus, research participants can ‘get in touch with touch’, and, in so doing, attend to not only an overlooked sense, but also their overlooked emotions. In this way, sand acts as a transitional object because it is a blank canvass or screen onto and through which participants can materially enact alternative psychical and sensory registers. Sandplay opened up new sensory landscapes for the participants and prompted numerous childhood memories and hitherto fore unarticulated associations that straddled a psycho-phenomenology of being ‘in here’ and ‘out there’, identifications with sand figures, precipitation of free association.

Bingley notes that much of the entire project worked through what Winnicott calls a ‘facilitating environment’ or ‘holding environment’: a space that thrives on and fosters trust, empathy, and knowledge building. For example, Bingley traveled to potential participants’ homes in order to ensure they felt secure and thus hopefully willing to be involved in the research. In addition, like the analyst, Bingley did not seek to impress her judgments or even observations on the results of the participants’ sandplay. By creating a facilitating space and ‘holding’ the research group, Bingley not only brings to our attention the relevance of various psychoanalytic concepts for methodological discussions, as well as our questions about society and space more generally, she also provides one of the most focused methodological accounts of how to conduct psychoanalytic methods in geography.

‘Tracking’ and ‘Mapping’

The final two psychoanalytic methods discussed in this article, ‘tracking’ and ‘mapping’ (inverted commas in the originals), are exemplary of how geographers adopt a psychoanalytic framework in order to interpret socio-spatial phenomena. Mapping and tracking, used by Heidi Nast and Steve Pile respectively, are both used to elaborate socio-spatial analyses, rather than subject-based research.

In Real Cities, Steve Pile toys with our assumptions about what is ‘real’ in urban life. Pile’s central thesis (following the sociologist Robert Park) is that a city’s state of mind or personality is as important, that is, as real as its built environment. Inspired by the rebellious methods of the Situationist International and several contemporary novelists, Pile aims to reveal why urban imaginations, fantasies, and emotions matter because they are thoroughly material and political. Pile’s notion of the real city brings to the fore how cities are unsettling and overdetermined, that is, the outcome of multiple social, psychical, and political forces. To illustrate this thesis, Pile uses the Freudian–Marxian analytic
categories of ‘city work’, ‘magic work’, ‘dream work’,
‘emotional work’, ‘time work’, ‘blood work’, ‘grief work’,
and ‘space work’ to show how emotions and fantasies do
ideological work in city life.

The main method in Pile’s empirical analyses is what
he calls ‘tracking’ which aims to ‘get at the circulation
of urban imaginaries’ and things such as postcards, bill-
boards, advertisements, architecture, shop windows, cer-
eal boxes, graphic novels, (installation) art, tourist leaflets,
newspapers, theater sets, buildings, graffiti, fantasies,
information, stories, and ideas that circulate in cities,
including London, Singapore, New York, and New
Orleans. Tracking, then, is a method that is open to the
contingency and multiplicity of possible objects, scenes,
events, and processes. As a result of ‘tracking’, Pile’s
interpretations and narrative, echoing Freud’s dream
analyses (a topic that Pile has previously explored),
focus on the spaces of short-circuits, disconnects, and
coincidences.

Pile posits that it is not sufficient to simply ‘ground’
our theories vis-à-vis the method of grounded theory.
Put differently, Pile rejects the idea that when we do
research we must bring into concrete realms our abstract
concepts and theses. An adequate understanding of the
material, Pile asserts, demands an adequate understand-
ing of the immaterial. Alongside extensive archival
research, Pile uses 82 black and white illustrations
that are as sparkling and flat as the urban spaces they
underscore. By addressing the visual, Pile’s maneuver
(in contrast to Bingley’s) echoes Gillian Rose’s work on
methodology and her use of psychoanalytic concepts
such as ‘lack’ and the ‘gaze’ in order to examine the
visual.

As mentioned earlier, a key motive for geographers to
adopt a psychoanalytic theoretical framework is because
of its explanatory power of seemingly irrational behavior.
Exemplary here is Heidi Nast’s work on the segregated
spaces of racism and racial fear in the context of US cities
and the fears of black men raping white women during
and after transatlantic slavery. For Nast, the causes of
racist violence such as lynching are not entirely caught
up in the social. Rather, racist violence emerges precisely
because there are limits to the social: not everything can
be socially articulated or collectively put into words and
collectively acknowledged.

Underpinning Nast’s research is the psychoanalytic
idea that in order to explain phenomena, one focuses not
so much on the links between the Particular (e.g., diverse
locales) and the Universal (e.g., global forces), but rather,
on the links between the Singular and Universality, that is,
on how a detailed phenomenon marked by excess, ex-
ception, and intangibility reveals a universal logic. For
Nast, there are three interrelated singular events vis-à-vis
the lynching of black men in post-Reconstruction settings.
First, of the thousands of black men who were lynched,
many of them were castrated. Second, many lynchings
were celebrated publicly with hundreds and thousands of
white children and family members in attendance. Third,
many lynchings of black men were justified as a response
to the alleged rape of a white woman. Nast argues that
these three singularities are indicative of the universal
logic of the Oedipal family via a hegemonic mode
of socio-spatial organization that legitimates racist
violence.

In order to explicate these points, Nast adopts the
method of what she calls ‘mapping’ – a mélange of
theoretical and empirical investigation that is sensitive to
historical geographic contexts and highly informed by
psychoanalytic theories. Like Pile’s method of tracking,
Nast’s mappings focuses on specific material objects that
include white colonial mother dolls, frontispiece illus-
trations, films, poems, and a magazine cover. Unlike Pile’s
‘tracking’ which predominantly embraces the magical
(sur)realism of space, Nast’s mapping is primarily an
interpretative strategy through which to explain the
causes that infuse the irrational violence of racist land-
scrapes. In so doing, Nast addresses questions about the
repression of geopolitical mechanisms and forces and the
circulation of desire. Nast also takes her cue and expands
upon two methodological sources: First, Fredric Jame-
son’s notion of the ‘political unconscious’ that seeks
to methodologically avoid the alleged apolitical indi-
vidualism in psychoanalysis. Second, Gilles Deleuze and
Félix Guattari’s critique of what they see as psycho-
analysis’s all-too routine uncritical acceptance of the
Oedipal family as a unit that structures and defines de-
sire. Much of Nast’s method of mapping is informed by
what she calls ‘nodal thinking’ which involves attending
to spaces not so much as parts of larger story, but rather
as spaces through which stories are (un)told and struc-
tures can take hold.

**Conclusion**

In the beginning of this article, the author argued that
one of the reasons for geographers’ hesitations about
using psychoanalytic methods is the idea that psycho-
analysis and its methods are best left lying on the couch,
rather than brought out into social scientific research
arenas. There is a certain irony here of course, because
Freud did not want psychoanalysis and its methods to be
left to a cadre of expert physicians. What mattered to
Freud was good training and experience rather than
professional diplomas. This is not to say that it is high
time geographers began to psychoanalyze their research
subjects, nor is it to dismiss the profound ethical ques-
tions about the use of methods that may usher in forms of
therapy. Rather, the question of psychoanalytic methods
in geography prompts us to remember that much of the
value of research coincides with the extent to which the research embraces new questions and theoretical frameworks.

It is only very recently, via the work of Mary Thomas and other geographers, that the long-held critical axiom that research questions, theoretical frameworks, and methods are fundamentally inseparable is finally being considered in geography from a psychoanalytic perspective. This work is extremely important not only because it promises to enrich how human geography is 'done', but also further explicate the methodological distinctions between data generation and data analysis. In so doing, geographers may begin to formulate exciting and truly radical research projects wherein psychoanalytic methods are as equally relevant and valuable as the psychoanalytic concepts that they ultimately depend on.

See also: Affect; Critical Geography; Feminist Methodologies; Grounded Theory; Interdisciplinarity; Language and Research; Other/Otherness; Polyvocality; Psychoanalytic Theory/Psychoanalytic Geographies; Psychotherapy/Psychotherapeutic Geographies; Reliability and Validity; Self-Other; Situated Knowledge; Reflexivity; Situationism/Situationist Geography; Subjectivity; Surrealism/Surrealist Geographies; Uncertainty.

Further Reading