



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Getting personal

Citation for published version:

Bondi, E & Fewell, J 2017, 'Getting personal: A feminist argument for research aligned to therapeutic practice' *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 113-122. DOI: 10.1002/capr.12102

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1002/capr.12102](https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12102)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Counselling and Psychotherapy Research

Publisher Rights Statement:

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: 'Getting personal: A feminist argument for research aligned to therapeutic practice', which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12102>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving."

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Getting Personal: A Feminist Argument for Research Aligned to Therapeutic Practice

Liz Bondi and Judith Fewell

Abstract

Students and practitioners tend to assume that research requires them to set aside their embodied knowledge of practice, and to produce radically different, objective, depersonalised forms of knowledge. Troubled by these assumptions, and coming from backgrounds within the humanities and social sciences shaped by critiques of this model of research, we offer personal stories through which to articulate and argue for a very different approach. Feminist critiques of science occupy a central place within our stories, which tell of the pull of the particular, the personal and the subjective, the importance of personally engaged, reflexive stories, and the influence of moving between disciplines. We understand the personal in research as inevitable, contextually located and deeply relational.

Key words: feminist critique of science, case study, reflexivity, subjectivity, Freud

Getting Personal: A Feminist Argument for Research Aligned to Therapeutic Practice

Liz Bondi and Judith Fewell

Writing some years ago Michael Rustin (2001, 69) described how many of the psychotherapists who came to him as research students felt a great deal of anxiety about entering the world of research. He also observed that they were not easily reassured when he drew attention to their existing knowledge-base and to the practice-based origins of such knowledge. Their conceptions of what research might be seemed to configure it as alien to, and separate from, the knowledge that enabled them to be confident and experienced practitioners of psychotherapy. This view of a wide, inseparable, gulf between research and therapeutic practice is of relatively recent origin but is also widespread and persistent (McLeod 2001). Indeed, in the years since Rustin's account was published, we too have found that many of our students arrive at their first formal research course, and at the task of undertaking their own postgraduate research projects, with very particular assumptions about what research is, which portray it as so radically different from therapeutic practice that it requires them to put aside everything that they already know. Central to their assumptions are ideas about research being capable of generating knowledge that is much more certain, objective, generalisable and important than the kind of knowledge generated through practice. These assumptions equate research with a popular but highly simplistic view of science as a body of incontrovertible, value-free knowledge from which the scientist-researcher is personally detached.

Unlike many of our students, we both came into counselling and psychotherapy from academic backgrounds in the humanities and social sciences in which the image of any kind of knowledge as certain, objective and generalisable had come under sustained criticism for many years and from multiple perspectives. We were familiar with debates about knowledge and ways of knowing, which accorded great value to the very opposite of the attributes popularly associated with science, that is to uncertainty, to subjectivity, to reflexive engagement, to personal commitment and to the particular. These debates had contributed to our own trajectories into counselling and psychotherapy as arenas in which we saw the possibility of deepening our own understandings of what it is to know and to

contribute to knowledge. We were troubled by the lack of familiarity with these debates within counselling and psychotherapy, and by the widespread devaluation in the field of the tradition of the clinical case study as a legitimate form of research. When the opportunity arose we sought to counter this by introducing students to robust arguments for approaching their research projects in ways that engage actively with their personal and subjective immersion in their chosen topics, and that seek to generate richly descriptive, context-specific forms of knowledge. In so doing we aimed to bring research and practice into a closer and more fruitful relationship with each other in the experience of student researchers and their potential practitioner readers.

There are many ways of making the case for research that values the particular, or the example, or the case study, and that embraces wholeheartedly the personal investment of the researcher. In the opening chapters of a recently released book that show-cases the work of some of our students, we lay out one such argument (Bondi and Fewell 2016). In this paper we offer something different but complementary. Via personal, autobiographical accounts we describe some of the influences on our own thinking, which include ideas emanating from the upsurge of feminist work within the social sciences during the last three decades of the twentieth century, as well as a complex body of psychoanalytic thought. We conclude by discussing how such personal reflections might be understood as integral to research in counselling and psychotherapy.

Liz's story

1. Geography and a Feel for the Particular

As a child I loved maps and I learned how to read them, in the sense of coming to understand how they provided a precisely coded way of representing in miniature key elements of a real-life landscape. Many years later, I came to understand that my efforts to translate the code of a map into a mental image of a place might also speak of some of the struggles I experienced as a child and adolescent in finding a language into which to “translate” my distress so that it might be decoded by others.

Maps were closely woven into my childhood appreciation of geography, which I went on to read at university. I loved my studies and towards the end of my undergraduate degree I was especially inspired by a body of research that was explicitly driven by the political commitments of the researchers, and which provided

convincing evidence about unfair and discriminatory forces that shaped the social geography of cities (Gray 1976; Harvey 1973; Williams 1978). I noticed what I thought might be an important silence: this research addressed a variety of forms of social welfare but I found nothing about the education system. So I decided to pursue a PhD about the social geography of educational provision in cities.

During my first months as a doctoral student I read and wrote and read and wrote, developing a robust working knowledge of substantive and methodological debates in social geography. Possible research questions began to take shape, although I also felt myself to be struggling to really pin down what it was I wanted to investigate. One day in a supervision meeting one of my supervisors gave me a copy of a consultation document that had just been released by the local authority in which I was living and studying, which was about the future shape of primary school provision. He asked me to read it and consider whether the issues at stake were ones I could imagine immersing myself in for the next two or three years. I took the bait and in 1987 I was awarded a PhD for my thesis, entitled “The geography and politics of contraction in local education provision: a case study of Manchester primary schools”.

My thesis discussed, as theses do, many aspects of my methodological decision-making, but, while I wrote about my choice of Manchester as an example, I did not address the *principle* of studying a particular case in order to better understand the world. Nor was I questioned about this when my thesis was examined or when I published papers from my thesis. One reason for this was to do with the discipline of geography, in which studies of particular places (large or small) have long been regarded as *intrinsically* valuable, and in which generalising across places has been viewed critically (Massey 2005). So perhaps my “choice” of geography as a subject of study, followed from and instilled in me a feeling for the particular and about the power of examples before I consciously thought about these matters.

2. Towards a Feminist Politics of Knowledge

While the possibility of being a politically committed researcher informed my doctoral research, my political activism was not, in fact, directly connected to the focus of my studies. As a student I was involved in feminist politics but when I embarked on my PhD I had no idea that it might be possible to bring feminism into my research. However, as soon as I started attending academic conferences, I found a network of

women who were doing just that. They had an enormous influence on me, giving me the confidence to integrate my feminist leanings into my subsequent academic work.

From the late 1970s onwards, feminist geographers argued that the discipline was marked by diverse expressions of gender inequalities. Sometimes women were ignored; sometimes they were misrecognised only as housewives and home-makers (Oakley 1974). Studies of women's activities could fill in some gaps and challenge some stereotypes, but, as one leading feminist geographer put it, it wasn't enough just to "add women and stir" (McDowell 1989, 140). The impress of gender inequalities and gender power relations was much more pervasive, shaping in fundamental ways what counted as knowledge in geography as in other fields. Feminist geographers, a group with whom I came to identify, drew on the work of a diverse range of feminist scholars, to show how the theories of knowledge informing much geographical research were themselves shaped by gendered assumptions (Massey 1994; Rose 1993). In so doing, we also began to elaborate alternative ways of knowing and, therefore, of approaching research. Our work was influential, forming a vital element of a vibrant body of work in human geography that was noticed and picked up upon across the social sciences. At conferences, the sessions we organised attracted substantial audiences and I was soon involved in a new academic journal devoted to feminist geography. More personally, I began to find a language for thinking about the interconnections between personal values, political debates and academic research (for example Bondi 1990, 1997).

This exciting and academically fruitful period of my life was also a period of considerable emotional turmoil for me, which had taken me into my own personal therapy. There was a gulf between the academically successful performance I presented outwardly and my well-hidden inner life, which was often pervaded by feelings of fraudulence, desperation, chronic depression and emptiness. While I had my own very particular story to tell and to explore therapeutically, this kind of split also resonated with feminist arguments I was immersed in about the power of binary (either/or) constructs (Bondi 1999).

In thinking through how a value-laden gender binary, in which women are construed as "not men" (de Beauvoir 1976), permeates dominant ways of thinking about knowledge and undertaking research, feminists have become deeply critical of abstract, objectifying, universal claims about the world. Such claims imply that it is possible to take up a position detached from the world being studied, and from which

the subjectivity of the researcher is excluded. In Donna Haraway's (1988, 582) words such knowledge claims amount to a "god trick" because they imply access to a vantage place outside the human world. But no-one has such access: knowledge is always marked by the context in which it is generated and therefore it is always a perspective that comes from somewhere in particular within the world being explored (Harding 1986; Hartsock 1983; Keller 1985). This feminist critique also means that all claims to know are implicitly political in the sense of being value-laden.

For me, these arguments enriched the feeling for the particular that came with my choice of geography as a degree, providing a robust rationale for research that locates itself specifically, that eschews the mask of neutrality and that relinquishes generalising ambition. Reformulated in the light of the feminist critique, research is a way of bearing witness and contributing to conversations about the world within which we are embedded. This requires what has become known in social research as reflexivity: careful consideration of what the researcher brings to the research, autobiographically, socially and culturally and above all subjectively (Finlay and Gough 2003; Henriques *et al.* 1984). It insists that research is always personal and that this needs to be acknowledged.

3. Embodying Theory

Supported by the feminist epistemology I have described, in the early 1990s I embarked on new research that explored interconnections between changes in women's position in British society and changes in the social geography of cities. Although I eventually produced a series of papers from this work, I also struggled with it and delayed publication. I had aspired to undertake research that would come close to the lived experience of the women I interviewed and although I knew in theory how this might be done, somehow my doing of it did not feel quite right. In the mid-1990s my quest to deepen my understanding of subjective experience helped nudge me into counsellor training.

My counsellor training enriched my thinking about personhood and subjectivity, and my understanding of what it might mean to come close to another person's experience. Central to this was being able to attend to, and reflect critically upon, my own experience not as something fixed or certain or bounded, but as fluid, always in question and as inherently embodied and relational. Personal therapy helped with this, as did my practice as a counsellor in training. Vital too was my continued

reading of feminist post-structuralist and feminist psychoanalytic literatures. Indeed scholars including Jessica Benjamin (1990, 1998), Judith Butler (1997, 2004, 2005) and Nancy Chodorow (1989, 1994, 1999) were enriching contemporary psychoanalytic as well as feminist debates about what it is to be human and the nature of subjectivity. I was coming to embrace my own sense of doubt and my capacity to get lost. Crucially I had inwardly digested and made my own the theories – feminist and psychotherapeutic – in which I had been intellectually immersed over the preceding years. Splits I had lived between head and heart, rationality and emotion, eased as I embodied my own thinking (Bondi 1999).

In a strange twist of fate, during the course of my studies, the counsellor training programme on which I had enrolled transferred from a different institution to the University of Edinburgh where I was employed. At an institutional level, my trainers became my colleagues. As my training came to an end I approached them about a possible new research project for which, after I had graduated, we were successful in securing funding (Bondi 2006; Bondi with Fewell 2003; Bondi, Fewell and Kirkwood 2003). That could have happened without the institutional transfer but working together as research colleagues also drew me into a new relationship with the teaching programme. In due course, once I had become an established and accredited practitioner, we were discussing the design of a new research course for Masters students. I had been astounded to discover that counselling and psychotherapy research was so strongly dominated by quantitative methods and utterly nonplussed by the lack of debate about epistemological and methodological questions. But now I had the opportunity to contribute to something different in counsellor education, something that entailed posing searching questions about what might be meant by facts, evidence and theories, and to promulgate research that takes the personal investment, the subjectivity and the participation of the researcher seriously.

Judith's story

1. Growing Up With and Beyond Freud

I grew up with books by Freud on my mother's bookcase and, in the way that a young adolescent might do, I read them, along with her books on Marx and socialism. Even before then I played at being a psychoanalyst with my friends, which I imagine, came from the intensive play therapy I received because I was deemed a difficult disturbed

child. So from a very young age the inner world of the mind, of the psyche, was part of my taken for granted world.

The freedoms of the sixties called me to London in 1967, aged 18. Soon I found myself having a classical Freudian psychoanalysis, three times a week on the couch. This was also the time of encounter groups, self-development, R D Laing and the anti-psychiatry movement, and Women's Liberation. Influenced by my experiencing these various alternative groups I criticised my analyst, challenging her to engage in a real relationship with me, insisting that she meet me as a person. During my last six months we did sit opposite each other. But still I wanted something livelier and more intimate. I wanted to be free, to be liberated. And so I gave up on Freud and over the next ten years engaged in the women's movement and its literature. I found a language that legitimised my experiences of being a woman, that gave me a voice, that validated my desires, and that enabled me to bring that which is female from the side-lines into the centre (Greer 1970; hooks 1984; Millet, 1970). I studied English Literature and Education and wrote about the absences of women. I qualified as an English teacher, taught in a large comprehensive school and observed how girls were treated, how they behaved and what kind of physical and emotional spaces they took up. And because I was committed to being in relationship with the pupils I taught I listened to them.

A few years later I was back at university on a course called "The Teacher as Counsellor". Not only was I immersed in the humanist counselling literature of Rogers (1951, 1967), I was also for the first time required to study sociology and specifically the sociology of education. Theories of power and control, and the distributions of knowledge, were central. Something was beginning to come together. English literature, feminist literature, therapeutic theories and practices, and the sociology of education were no longer isolated, self-contained subjects: the connections were tumbling out.

2. Getting Personal

After graduating I went to live in the USA for a couple of years. I decided one day to investigate postgraduate opportunities at the local university and discovered to my delight that there was a Women's Studies department, which provided me with exciting opportunities to read, talk, explore and share feminist critiques of mainstream academic subjects such as sociology, anthropology, history and social

theory and research. Increasingly I was becoming aware of the absence of women and women's voices from these mainstream subjects. Women had rarely been a focus of study as participants and they had equally rarely been the researchers. I longed to read papers and books where women's experience and concerns were a legitimate form of study and where specific women's voices were given a central place. I wanted to read about the particular, about a woman's life as well as women's lives.

This became an actuality for me when I returned to live in Edinburgh in 1982 and pursued a Masters and PhD in the sociology of education. I wanted to understand the place of women teachers in the Scottish educational system from 1918 to 1945 especially from a feminist perspective. Research in the sociology of education in the 1980s was still dominated by positivist, objective, quantitative methodologies. However, feminist critiques at that time, as Liz has described, argued that this paradigm perpetuated a distorted model of the social world, one in which, under the cover of scientific objectivity, the male was privileged as being the norm against which all else was compared, and one from which women were virtually absent. This gendered model seriously inhibited the sociological understanding of women's issues and experiences (Stanley and Wise 1983).

In order to address these concerns I chose to do what was then called an oral history. I interviewed 11 women teachers who had taught in the 1930s and 40s. I also wanted to acknowledge the subjectivity of the researcher, and how I was an active participant in the research whose experiences and interpretations would inevitably influence the knowledge I produced. But more than anything I wanted there to be a place where the women teachers I interviewed were able to tell their stories and be heard. In effect I was collecting and investigating case studies (Fewell 1985).

One aspect of what I learned surprised me. I came to recognise that the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is inevitably one of power. Sometimes it seemed to evoke the same intensity and intimacy as a therapy session. An apparently innocuous question could solicit a deeply emotional response. A number of the women I interviewed commented that this was the first time that they had ever been asked to tell their story. A few were moved to tears. I recognised that to tell one's story in the presence of an interested other could be a powerful and emotional experience that required a delicate awareness and sensitivity from me. I was drawing upon my counselling skills to elicit my participants' stories.

Realising that I wanted to explore the power of telling one's story and having it witnessed in a more appropriate context, I became involved in setting up one of the first free counselling services in Scotland. And so my PhD, in which I was investigating gender relationships in the Scottish education system, ran concurrently with my work as a volunteer counsellor. It did not take long for me to realise that I needed more training. For the next seven years I studied with the Scottish Institute of Human Relations, a training organisation committed to bringing psychoanalytic theories and practices to the communities of Scotland (Cullen *et al.* 2014). In due course I entered into a training analysis and the complex world of competing psychoanalytic theoretical perspectives in order to qualify as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. I engaged with the thinking of Freud, Klein, Winnicott, Bion and the Scottish analyst Fairbairn. Something resonated deep within me: their elaborations of our internal psychic reality and its complex and ambivalent relationship with external realities, their exploration of the dynamics of intra and interpersonal relationships, their recognition of the significance and influence of early relationships on our development and capacities, the place of unconscious phantasies in our lives; all these and more felt simultaneously familiar and utterly unfamiliar to me. I felt like I was gathering up my emotional and intellectual experiences from my childhood, adolescence and early adulthood and beginning to make links between them. Theory became lived experience in the moments of incomprehension, recognition and reprieve. I read and learned about both classical and contemporary psychoanalytic theories and practices from case studies. I discovered that theory, without my embodied lived experience and those of others, was dead on the page.

3. Rethinking the Case Study

After editing a book on women's experiences of Scottish education (Paterson and Fewell 1990) I made the painful decision not to complete my PhD thesis. I could no longer move between two very different fields, one informed by social sciences, the other by psychoanalysis. However when invited, in 1997, to give a paper at a psychotherapy conference about my clinical work with a client I found myself first offering a critique of how case studies were conceptualised within the psychotherapy world. In addition to the well-rehearsed ethical dilemmas that case study writing evokes (Polden 1998), I was, and still am, concerned by how the very act of writing can make the client an object of study rather than the subject. This has the potential

to put the client “out there” rather than in relationship with the practitioner. I was making use of feminist critiques within the social sciences, which have drawn attention to the treatment of women as objects of research. The compound word “case study” is itself problematic invoking as it does a pseudo-scientific voice, implying that the researcher has an objective relationship with the person or entity that is being researched. It also implies a form of knowing that is located in the counsellor or therapist, as if she or he knows what is happening in the therapeutic process. To write a case study in the classical sense is to assume an orderly and systematic form for the encounter between client and practitioner thus giving it a coherence and clarity that belies the messiness and uncertainties of this most peculiar experience. As my critique made clear, I had not abandoned my engagement with feminist thinking nor my immersion in the sociology of power and the relationship of and to the “other”.

When I was involved in the development and teaching of the Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling at the University of Edinburgh I was confronted yet again with the dilemmas of case study writing. As we have indicated above, engaging with research seemed to be an anathema for most students, who tended to approach it as fundamentally alienating and irrelevant to their own struggles to become counsellors. This became particularly potent when we extended the programme to a Masters and needed to develop a research course that honoured students’ experience whilst at the same time offering a critique of traditional forms of research and possibilities of alternatives, which were meaningful and relevant for the students and the field.

We were not alone in this endeavour. In response to the feminist critiques of the 1970s and 1980s, qualitative research within the social sciences had grappled with issues of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity for both researcher and those being researched (Holstein and Gubrium 1995); the power dynamics of the therapeutic relationship was up for investigation (Kahn 1997; Maguire 1995); debates about reflexivity were very prevalent (Finlay and Gough 2003; Hertz 1997); the researcher as an objective scientist/observer was fundamentally challenged (Flyvbjerg 2000). All this was congruent with both humanistic approaches to counselling and psychotherapy and contemporary psychoanalytic worlds of theory and practice, a world in which I was very comfortable (Bollas 1987; Greenberg and Mitchell 1983; Mitchell 1993). Teaching and supervising research in the context of these debates was familiar to me and it brought together all the various intellectual, practical and

psychic engagements of my past going right back to my childhood and the discovery of Freud's (1900) *Interpretation of Dreams* on my mother's bookcase, where he uses himself as a case study in order to elaborate his original and creative thinking about the meaning of dreams and the unconscious.

On the Centrality of Personal Stories

We have two reasons for offering personal stories of our routes into working together to introduce to students ways of approaching research informed by feminist critiques of mainstream (or malestream) social science. One is to provide a sketch map of powerful arguments about what we mean by knowledge (and therefore research), which have received very little attention in the literature about research in counselling and psychotherapy but which have much to offer the field. The second is to exemplify a methodological approach in which the personal is central. We conclude this paper by reflecting on and developing these twin purposes.

The arguments we have outlined come from a multiplicity of sources. Liz has described how valuing the particular was so embedded in her initial discipline of geography that it was barely noticeable. Feminist critiques of knowledge subsequently provided a robust underpinning for her orientation. Initially, for Liz, the particular was not necessarily personal, but feminist debates helped to open up spaces in which subjective experience became increasingly central in her research. For Judith, the pull of the particular was explicitly linked to the importance of personal accounts by, about and for women. Again, it was feminist critiques that furnished resources for thinking about this.

As we have outlined, these critiques provide a basis for an alternative model of research to the one that appears to dominate the perceptions of many practitioners and students in counselling and psychotherapy. The model that is so off-putting to practitioners and students is very much in evidence in many of the articles published in counselling and psychotherapy research journals. It even looms menacingly over the majority of published articles that draw on qualitative methods, but which nevertheless exclude so much of the personhood of authors in favour of a detached, objectifying, depersonalised stance. Ironically, this stance also drastically diminishes the humanity and personhood of the clients (and potential clients) in the research that is produced, although it is presumably therapeutic work with these clients that inspires students and practitioners to enter into the world of research in the first

place. We have been careful to describe this model as a popular view of science. This is important because we are not seeking to criticise science in general, and because this popular view is also strongly criticised from *within* the natural and medical sciences (for a fuller account see Bondi and Fewell 2016). Scientific researchers in these fields are often very far from certain in the claims to knowledge that they make and very often think in terms of stories that can be told.

The scope for synergies at the interface between medicine and psychotherapy is easy to see in burgeoning fields such as that of narrative medicine (Charon 2006). Ironically, much of what is now seen as cutting edge in narrative medicine was already present in Freud's work, especially his case studies. When people read Freud's case studies for the first time they are often amazed by what they find because they are so different from what they had imagined. Freud valued the narratives his patients offered, and when he wrote about them he realised that he was writing stories that seemed to have more affinity with literature than with science (Phillips 2014). His writing is tentative and exploratory, it expresses his intense curiosity and questioning, and it is richly reflexive in the way he articulates the development of his thinking (Ogden 2002). However much he thought of himself as a scientist (Schwartz 1999), this did not prompt him to remove himself from his texts: he is present in a multitude of ways including as a thinker, as an interlocutor and above all as a personal presence. We are not seeking to defend Freud's theoretical claims but rather to suggest that the idea of knowledge (and its development through research) as intrinsically personal, subjectively engaged, reflexive and rich in stories has long been exemplified by Freud and his contemporaries. More than this, the history of our field began with case studies: it is our collective foundation (Rustin 2001). This shared history is repeated in the personal histories of individual practitioners for whom deep immersion in therapeutic work with clients (cases) is how we learn to become practitioners.

We are not arguing for a return to case studies as Freud and his colleagues thought about and presented them. As Judith's story indicates, although clinical case studies focus on particular people, they too often objectify clients. This objectification arises when practitioner-researchers exclude themselves from their accounts and write as if they were utterly neutral within, or even absent from, their therapeutic relationships. (It also occurs in moves to standardise case studies in order to make them more amenable to the application of positivist methods (McLeod 2010).) Again,

feminist critiques of science have much to offer to support us in honouring and working with our deep, personal and intimate involvement in the work about which we write. Acknowledging this involvement necessarily makes our research personal and it brings the focus to the embodied, relational experience of therapeutic work. We have both written of how important it was for us personally to be able to embody the ideas with which we work. Embodied knowledge is always personally felt, particular in its form and shaped by the contexts in which we live. This, we argue, has to be true of research that is consistent with the values and principles of counselling and psychotherapy, just as it is true of therapeutic work itself.

Personally engaged, embodied research is always messy, although its presentation in narrative form produces at least a degree of coherence that belies this messiness (Tamas 2009). The stories we have told of ourselves are crafted. We both began with far more written material than we could include in this paper. In cutting and editing we sought to generate accounts that would be accessible to readers and that would evoke feelings and atmospheres, at the same time as weaving in ideas and citations that contribute to our overarching argument. Consequently many of the ambiguities, uncertainties and doubts that are integral to our experiences disappear from our narrations. The same kind of exclusions arise in accounts of therapeutic relationships. In arguing for research that attends to the personal and the particular we are not striving for pristine representations that capture everything but instead for contributions to conversations that expand, enrich and shed new light on our capacity to stay with the inevitable uncertainties of what we do.

Our autobiographical accounts emphasise the importance of the opportunities we have had to move between different disciplinary fields. This has been enormously enriching for us, and has perhaps facilitated a sense of research as entailing conversations between people and ideas. Openness to ideas from other fields was a hallmark of Freud's scholarship too (Bondi 2014) and we would argue that interdisciplinary encounters are often enriching of research and practice. No field has a monopoly on conceptions of personhood or the personal and therefore valuing the personal within research calls upon us to engage with ideas from different fields. Traversing different disciplines will not be possible for all practitioner-researchers but for counselling and psychotherapy educators, especially those teaching research courses, encouraging and modelling openness to ideas from different fields is vital.

The stories we have narrated move freely between what might be called the personal and the professional. In so doing they illustrate how that which is personal is woven into the fabric of our so-called professional lives, encompassing our work as counsellors, psychotherapists, educators and researchers. We cannot be detached and uninvolved as researchers any more than we can as practitioners. This is one way in which we have illustrated the methodological inevitability of the personal in research (Bondi 2013). It is also a key point of convergence between research and practice. Because of the ascendancy of technocratic and instrumental approaches in the provision of state-funded therapy services, practitioners, researchers and educators may feel under very considerable pressure to compromise in some way on their practice wisdom concerning the centrality of the personal. Such compromises may be unavoidable but it is important to remember that is what they are, to be aware of the losses they entail and to remain aware that what we do as researchers as well as practitioners is inherently deeply personal. If we want to avoid the alienation so often associated with research and to remain true to our underlying values then we have no choice but to locate the personal at the core of research as well as practice.

Our accounts show how our lives are lived in particular social, cultural and historical contexts (Steedman 1986). As women coming into adulthood in the UK in the late 1960s and early 1970s from backgrounds in which higher education was highly valued, we had privileged access to college and university programmes at home and abroad. Likewise we were both young adults during what has become known as the second-wave of women's liberation, and were involved in higher education when feminist scholarship began to flourish. And, while we encountered psychotherapy at different times in our lives and in different forms, we both found aspects of ourselves, as well as inspiration for our personal-and-professional lives, through our engagements with the relational emphasis of humanistic and contemporary psychoanalytic perspectives. Our accounts therefore speak to ways in which our experiences are formed by the interplay between our interior lives and the social, historical and intellectual environments that simultaneously constrain and make available to us unique assemblages of resources with which to develop our thinking. Others who have lived through different circumstances will have different stories to tell.

Our sense of being formed through our relations to intimate others, and to our socio-cultural contexts, reminds us that the personal always also carries within it many others, proximate and distant, familiar and strange. The first person singular is never a solitary self-authorising voice, but the stories we tell of ourselves are always richly peopled with others, named and unnamed (Cavarero 2000; Speedy 2008). By working personally we cite connections with others, and locate ourselves in relation to others, some explicitly and some implicitly. Stories, including those that adopt the first person voice, are offers to myriad others to use in a multitude of ways. That, we argue, is what research is for.

References

- Benjamin, J. (1990) *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination*. Virago, London.
- Bennjamin, J. (1998) *The Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis*. Routledge, London.
- Bollas, S. (1987) *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*. Free Association Books, London.
- Bondi, L. (1990) Feminism, postmodernism and geography: space for women? *Antipode*, 22, 156-167.
- Bondi, L. (1997) In whose words? On gender identities and writing practices. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 22, 245-258.
- Bondi, L. (1999) Stages on journeys: some remarks about human geography and psychotherapeutic practice. *The Professional Geographer*, 51, 11-24.
- Bondi, L. (2006) A changing landscape: voluntary sector counselling in Scotland. In D. Conradson and C. Milligan (eds) *Landscapes of Voluntarism: New spaces of Health, Welfare and Governance*, pp. 247-265, Policy Press, Cambridge.
- Bondi, L. (2013) Research and therapy: generating meaning and feeling gaps. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19 (1), 9-19.
- Bondi, L. (2014) A Liminal Practice? Making Inter-Disciplinary Spaces for Psychoanalysis. In K. Cullen, L. Bondi, J. Fewell, E. Francis and M. Ludlam (eds) *Making Spaces: Putting Psychoanalytic Thinking to Work*, pp. 37-54, Karnac, London.
- Bondi, L. and Fewell, J. (eds) (2016) *Practitioner Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy: The Power of Examples*. Palgrave, London.
- Bondi, L. with Fewell, J. (2003) "Unlocking the cage door": the spatiality of counselling, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 4, 527-547.
- Bondi, L., Fewell J. and Kirkwood, C. (2003) Working for free: a fundamental value of counselling. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 3, 291-299.
- Butler, J. (1997) *The Psychic Life of Power*. Stanford University Press, Stanford CA.
- Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing Gender*. Routledge. London.
- Butler, J. (2005) *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Fordham University Press, New York.
- Cavarero, A. (2000) *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*. Routledge, London.

- Charon, R. (2006) *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Chodorow, N. (1989) *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Polity, Cambridge.
- Chodorow, N. (1994) *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond*. Kentucky University Press, Lexington KY.
- Chodorow, N. (1999) *The Power of Feelings*. Yale University Press, New Haven CT.
- Cullen, K., Bondi, L., Fewell, J., Francis, E. and Ludlam, M. (eds) (2014) *Making Spaces: Putting Psychoanalytic Thinking to Work*. Karnac, London.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1976) *The Second Sex*. Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Fewell, J. (1985) *Women school teachers and gender in Scotland between the wars*. Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, The University of Edinburgh.
- Finlay, L. and Gough, B. (2003) *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in the Health and Social Sciences*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2001) *Making Social Science Matter*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Freud, S. (1900) The Interpretation of Dreams. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume IV, ix-627.
- Gray, F. (1976) Selection and allocation in council housing. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series 1 (1), 34-46.
- Greenberg, J. and Mitchell, S. (1983) *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.
- Greer, G. (1970) *The Female Eunuch*. MacGibbon and Kee, London.
- Haraway, D. (1988) Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14 (3), 575-599.
- Harding, S. (1986) *The Science Question in Feminism*. Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
- Harvey, D. (1973) *Social Justice and the City*. Edward Arnold, London.
- Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C. and Walkerdine, V. (1984) *Changing the Subject. Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*. Methuen, London.
- Hertz, R. (ed.) (1997) *Reflexivity and Voice*. Sage, London.
- Holstein, J. and Gubrium, J. (1995) *The Active Interview*. Sage, London.
- hooks, b. (1984) *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Cambridge MA, South End Press.

- Kahn, M. (1997) *Between Therapist and Client. The New Relationship*. Macmillan, London.
- Keller, E.F. (1985) *Reflections on Gender and Science*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Maguire, M. (1995) *Men, Women, Passion and Power: Gender Issues in Psychotherapy*. Routledge, London.
- Massey, D. (1994) *Space, Place and Gender*. Polity, Cambridge.
- Massey, D. (2005) *For Space*. Sage, London.
- McDowell, L. (1989) Women, gender and the organisation of space. In D. Gregory and R. Walford (eds) *Horizons in Human Geography*, pp. 136-151, Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- McLeod, J. (2001) Developing a research tradition consistent with the practices and values of counselling and psychotherapy: why *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* is necessary. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 1 (1), 3-11.
- McLeod, J. (2010) *Case Study Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy* Sage, London.
- Millet, K. (1970) *Sexual Politics*. Rupert Hart Davis, London.
- Mitchell, S. (1993) *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis*. Basic Books, New York.
- Oakley, A. (1974) *House Wife*. Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Ogden, T. (2002) A new reading of the origins of object relations theory. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 83 (4), 767-782.
- Paterson, F.M.S. and Fewell, J. (eds) (1990) *Girls in Their Prime: Scottish Education Revisited*. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh.
- Phillips, A. (2014) *Becoming Freud. The Making of a Psychoanalyst*. Yale University Press, New Haven CT.
- Polden, J. (1998) Publish and be damned. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 14 (3), 337-347.
- Rogers, C. (1951) *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory*. Constable, London.
- Rogers, C. (1967) *On Becoming A Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Rose, G. (1993) *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. Polity, Cambridge.
- Rustin, M. (2001) *Reason and Unreason*. Continuum, London.

Schwartz, J. (1999) *Cassandra's Daughter: A History of Psychoanalysis in Europe and America*. Allen Lane, London.

Speedy, J. (2008) *Narrative Inquiry and Psychotherapy*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1983) *Breaking Out. Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Steedman, C. (1986) *Landscape for a Good Woman* Virago, London.

Tamas, S. (2009) Writing and righting trauma: troubling the autoethnographic voice
Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 10 (1) Article 22

Williams, P. (1978) Building societies and the inner city. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series 3 (1), 23-34.