Negotiations and Fieldworkings: Friendship and Feminist Research[1]

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Abstract This paper explores the micro-level operations of power where researchers speak within, rather than across, worlds. It seeks to augment geographical feminist research literature that discusses interpersonal power relations in research spaces by exploring the complexities of 'sameness' between participants and researchers on the basis of sexuality and friendships. I argue for an understanding of power relations in the research process (recruiting, research gathering/forming, feedback and writing up) as negotiable if not necessarily negotiated. This is premised on an understanding of research (and research fields) as constituted through performativities and intersubjectivities between the researcher and participants, what the paper calls fieldworkings. Research fields as formed through fieldworkings include, but extend beyond, recognised research fields/spaces, in this case focus groups, interviews and coupled interviews, to wider social and personal relations including friendships. Thus, the paper concludes by contending that rather than moving beyond research relations, dialogues regarding fieldworkings as ongoing and negotiable could be productive.

Introduction: Feminism, Fieldworkings and Friendships

Much of the feminist geographical writings on methodology has highlighted, explored and sought to address inequitable and exploitative relations of power in geographical research (e.g. McDowell 1992, Moss 2002, Oakley 1981). However, rather than searching for research spaces outside power relations, these are recognised as constitutive of research relations. Nevertheless, Gilbert (1994) suggests that whilst research may be produced through inequitable power relations, there is no need to give up

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researching; rather what is required is a search for different ways of doing research. These alternative research practices have included an examination of interpersonal relations between the researcher and researched (see for example Bondi, 2003; England, 1994; Morris-Roberts, 2001; Raju, 2002). I seek to contribute to this project by exploring interpersonal relations (namely friendships) in research with non-heterosexual women as a non-heterosexual woman.[2]

Where researchers and participants are not speaking "across worlds" (Staeheli and Nagar, 2002; Raju, 2002) and participants exist within categories of 'same' (non-heterosexual women in this case), the complexities of the sameness/difference dichotomy can be revealed. Thus, I will not address the politics of heterosexist and masculinist cultures overtly. Instead, beginning from Pratt's (2002) assertion that common experiences of exclusion do not necessarily lead to shared identities, this paper explores micro-level research practices and the potentials of (re)negotiating relations of power within and beyond research spaces, or fields.[3]

For this paper, I draw on my doctoral research.[4] Due to the emotive stories told by participants, the thesis evolved to focus on power relations in everyday life, including the negotiation of everyday heterosexisms and women's (discriminatory) experiences of being mistaken for men.[5] My awareness of issues of power in research was heightened through my experiences of this study. This occurred alongside my reading for the research. Particularly significant was Butler's (1997) discussions of the constitution of subjects through the reiteration of discourses of power. Within this approach, the constitution of

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[2] The term "non-heterosexual women" is used here to encompass a wide range of individuals but was also used to indicate the focus of the study. Here I have used the term to indicate 'sameness' not solely with those who identify as lesbian. Labels have been advocated as important in making lesbians visible and can be (re)used for particular purposes, such as contesting homophobic legislation or gaining partnership rights (Valentine, 1993). However, labels imply internal coherence and commonality between individuals. Unfortunately, I do not think I have achieved the aim of *not* categorising women and the term "non-heterosexual" is often perceived as a negative derivative of heterosexuality. Consequently, there are dangers in using the term non-heterosexual. Although I feel this term can be employed usefully, I would guard against its unconsidered use.

[3] Recognising that research fields can incorporate more than spaces where information is gathered/formed, this paper seeks to explore the fluidity and cross-overs between formal and informal research spaces. Consequently, research spaces and fields are used interchangeably and formal/informal used to differentiate times when data is being overtly formed such as interviews, focus groups and coupled interviews from more casual relations that inform the research process.

[4] The study initially aimed to explore food practices outside of the heterosexual family and in this way investigate non-heterosexual women's daily lives through mundane eating routines and the meanings of foodscapes, such as restaurants, home and work. At its conclusion the thesis centralised non-heterosexual women's experiences of othering (that is, being made to feel different from and other to a heterosexual norm) in everyday spaces. Whilst this research addressed intimate issues, friendships were not the focus.

[5] The research project itself consisted of 28 women who participated in six focus groups, 3 interviews with couples, and 23 individual interviews. The women also completed 23 logbooks and six sets of autophotography. Participant observation was not undertaken for this research.

researchers and participants can be seen to exist within frameworks of power that are necessary in order for research to take place (Gilbert, 1994). These frameworks are made through reiterated enactments (or performativities; Butler, 1990) and consequently it is possible to explore *fieldworkings* as performativities and intersubjectivities between the researcher and participants.

The concept of fieldworkings offered here draws on understandings of performativities and power relations as constitutive of bodies, identities and spaces (Butler, 1990; Rose, 1999). As research spaces, researchers and participants come into being through what we do and the dynamics between researchers and participants, there are no pre-existing scripts, actors or spaces that are simply observed. Rather, through research performances and relations we (re)*create* research accounts, spaces, researchers and participants. Importantly, these accounts are formed between researcher and those being researched. As England (1994, 82) notes, research as a process is an "ongoing, intersubjective (or more broadly, a dialogic) activity." Thus research fields can incorporate both formal research spaces, where interviews, focus groups and coupled interviews take place, and spaces where relations (specifically friendships) extend beyond, yet inform these recognised fieldworkings.

Research fields are often seen as "elsewhere," "there" rather than "here" (Sparke, 1996); however, research can be incorporated into relationships rather than relationships being developed "in the field." For my doctoral research I recruited all 28 participants via snowball sampling beginning with my own social networks of sports teams, work and social activities (see Browne, 2003). Twenty two of the women lived in town A in England (leaving 6 women who were from town B and 2 other cities) which perhaps illustrates the place-based nature of these networks and establishes the "here" of my research field. Similar to Biernacki and Waldrof (1981), participants were friends with each other and some were in relationships with each other. I would have considered 13 of the 28 participants to be *my* friends prior to the study. Thus research fields were not only mainly located where I lived, the 'participants' were part of my everyday life. By friends I mean that we would meet regularly, outside of the research setting, share social occasions and hold a common notion of being friends. The remaining 15 were asked to participate by women who were already involved in the study.[6]

Rather than exploring the method of snowball sampling or the research outcomes of the thesis, this paper aims to explore the negotiation of power relations during the research process. I have divided the discussion into three sections that examine: the sameness/difference dichotomy in relation to the insider/outside divide; the possibilities of negotiating power in research; and research relations beyond the formal boundaries of the field.

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[6] All of those asked by people other than myself were living in the same town as the person who asked them, which points perhaps to the spatial specificity of snowball sampling. This may be because individuals were often able to introduce me to their friends in person, rather than over the phone or by email (see also Browne, 2003).

Insider and Sameness? Sexualities and Friendships

Being an 'insider' to particular communities, it has been argued, enables researchers to understand and empathise with participants' viewpoints (Oakley, 1981). In this section, I seek to problematise and deconstruct this 'insider' status in relation to assumptions of sameness in categories of sexualities and friendship relations thus permitting the exposure of an instability of dichotomies, such as powerful/powerless and sameness/difference. This is not to suggest that power relations that make differences are not salient considerations; rather, it is to illustrate that relations of power between those who are the same also require critically examination.

Shared lesbian or sexual identities are often seen as offering 'insider' status when undertaking research with non-heterosexual women. Kitzinger (1988, 74) made the participants in her study aware of her sexuality as lesbian and her participants subsequently commented that had this not been the case they would not have agreed to be interviewed. James and Platzer (1999, 79) believe that because lesbians are othered in relation to the heterosexual norm, their study benefited from an involvement by other lesbian 'insiders.' They go on to contend that because they were lesbians they had easier access to lesbian participants and the individuals involved in their study were more trusting of them than heterosexual researchers. In my case, as a non-heterosexual woman, I had access to women who would not speak to heterosexual women/men about their sexualities.

Valentine (2002) notes that commonalities and differences exist between lesbian women and therefore shared sexualities do not necessarily equate to sameness. She argues that in her study at times she had more in common with heterosexual and homophobic couples than with other lesbians. Thus, following Valentine (2002), shared sexualities do not necessarily result in common lifestyles, views and opinions and lesbian identities do not guarantee 'insider' status (see also Pratt, 2002). Whilst sexuality remains a salient axis of power, the assumption of equal research relations based on categories of sexual orientation should be contested (Nagar, 2002, makes a similar argument in relation to ethnicity).

Another axis of power which could grant 'insider' status is that of friendship. 'Insider' status can often be place specific. My lifestyle in town A meant I was a familiar face to non-heterosexual women in social, sport and work spaces and participants often knew me personally before being involved in the research (see Browne, 2003). A number of anthropologists have described how they became friends and intimates with their participants after entering the field (e.g. Crick, 1992; Hendry, 1992; Newton, 1993). Due to my friendships with 13 participants, I had unique access to women who may be closeted and reluctant to reveal their sexuality to strangers, regardless of the researcher's sexuality (see Browne, 2003). This contests objective notions of distance and illustrates that fieldwork does not have to be undertaken "out there" with those 'other' to ourselves (see Sparke, 1996). However, friendships are diverse and levels of sameness vary between people as well as within contexts. For example, although individuals involved in relationships as couples were my friends, while in field spaces during research with couples I was obviously not an 'insider' in their relationship. (Nor did either woman necessarily know about the friendship I had with the other. This is important because on

occasion in individual interviews issues were discussed that could not be addressed in interviews with couples (see Valentine, 1999).)

Although references to employing pre-existing friends in geographical research are relatively rare, informal conversations suggest that this practice does occur (but see Johnson, 2002). Whilst it is impossible to speculate on all research relations where friends are employed, explicitly addressing these friendships can reveal the complexity of research relations when at times one can be both an 'insider' and an 'outsider,' same and different. How these connections and disjunctures come to matter differs in relation to situations, contexts and individuals. Acker (2001, 109) details some of the typologies possible between 'insider' and 'outsider' noting that "none of us are always and forever either insiders or outsiders. Our multiple subjectivities allow us to be both …simultaneously, and to shift back and forth.". I am slow to adopt, or even to modify, Acker's typology of insider/outsider, same/different as the danger in this is that categories and boundaries will be (re)inforced and reified. Nagar (2002) contends that whilst acknowledging situated identities is important, researchers need to engage with what she terms the 'messy politics of power' in fieldwork. The messiness of the 'insider'/same status can be further explored through micro-relations of power and enactments that constitute the research field. The remainder of the paper will focus on power relations in fieldworkings that do not remain within categories of insider/outsider, same/different or even within the bounds of what I initially considered the field.

Fieldworkings and Negotiation

Understanding research in terms of fieldworkings – the processes from recruitment to writing up – can illustrate that power relations can be *negotiable* even if they are not necessarily *negotiated*. Fieldworkings as enactments are (re)produced on a situationally specific basis. This fluidity and diversity enables the micro-power relations that form research spaces, researchers and participants to be negotiated. The researcher does not *have* to be in a powerful position in order for research to be undertaken and the final write up is not necessarily distant from participants. Similarly, written accounts could acknowledge and perhaps explore the negotiations that enabled the research to be formed (see Monk *et al.*, 2003). This section, by examining research processes (recruiting, formation of research accounts, feedback and writing up), seeks to highlight the potentials and complexities of negotiating research.

Due to the sensitivity of research on sexualities (see Bell, 1997; Valentine *et al.*, 2001) and my desire to speak to women who may be reluctant to participate in research, I decided to approach my friends and ask them to participate (see Browne, 2003). I spoke about my research with my friends as part of our everyday discussions often due to engaging in similar activities in shared spaces. Questions as simple as "so what is it exactly that you do?" lead to friends either volunteering for the study or being asked to take part. I received an immediate positive response from most of those who were eventually involved. Others sought assurances regarding confidentiality and time commitments. Where women were unsure of their willingness to participate I did not pursue or pressure them. Flowers *et al.* (1998) did not have negative responses from the men they asked to contribute to their study. In contrast, because three women declined to

be involved in my study, the possibility to say no may have existed in a similar way to a friend who declines an invitation to pursue a particular activity.

There may however be unacknowledged/unknown pressures to participate. For example, Neal and Gordon (2002; 106) question whether ties of friendship can be a form of coercion. These may include a sense of duty to the researcher or empathy related to participants own experiences of undertaking research (a reversal of the researcher empathy and identification with participants in Bondi, 2003). Moreover, because of friendships and relationships between women, there is a possibility of peer pressure. On the one hand, it may be that partners or friends were reluctant to participate in the research but they were 'convinced' by women who wished to participate. Although I did not witness overt forms of this, where participants are known to each other, their relations beyond research spaces may have influenced who was involved in the study. On the other hand, some women may not have participated, even though they wanted to, because their partners or friends encouraged them not to. These relations and interactions between participants and between participants and me illustrate the complexities of power that may not be consciously considered by the researcher or even be known to them (Rose, 1997). Whilst unknown and potentially unknowable, these relations nonetheless fundamentally shape the research process.

When participants agreed to be involved power relations were still continually negotiated. For example, people who do choose to be involved in research do not necessarily conform to researchers' schedules. In my study, this was apparent in participants' often relaxed attitudes towards formal research process. Women often postponed interviews and focus groups with little advance notice. One participant finished her interview after twenty minutes as she and I left to collect her girlfriend from the train station following a phone call she received during the interview. I could not, nor did I try to, impose my research agenda in these situations. Similarly, McKay (2002) found that formal research agendas were counter-productive to gaining insights and rich narratives of overseas contract workers. It is impossible to know how participants would have reacted had I been a stranger. For the most part I do not think many of the women in my research would have agreed to participate. I also feel that whereas arrangements between friends can be flexible and interviews and focus groups 'postponed', more formal appointments may simply have been cancelled.

Even when recorded research accounts are being undertaken researchers may not be in positions of power. The empathy and identification researchers can practice over the course of an interview (described by Bondi, 2003) should perhaps be supplemented with an understanding that researchers may not be in control of the research situation. Despite being the leader of focus groups, coupled interviews and individual interviews, I seldom felt in a powerful position (as described by Wilkinson, 1999). Additionally, research interactions may not always be empathic, they can also consist of disagreements. Friends who disagreed with me (and each other) in everyday situations, did so in couple interviews, individual interviews and focus groups. Consequently, relations with my friends (and their relations with each other), even in formal research spaces, may be similar to everyday interactions where dialogues take a variety of formats.

After the relatively formal process of gathering/forming research accounts I gave participants information both formally (sending copies of transcripts and conference

papers) and informally (in social settings or chance meetings). In these ways I sought to enable participants to express their thoughts and opinions on my interpretations of their accounts and foster the dialogic relationship discussed by England (1994, 82) beyond formal research spaces. Wainwright (1997) argues that merely accepting participants' everyday understandings may reinforce dominant power relations. For research with non-heterosexual women it is important that participants do not feel misrepresented or misquoted. This may reinforce our/their often disempowered position in relation to the public representation of our/their lives (James and Platzer, 1999). Participants engaged with these feedback processes in numerous diverse ways, a full discussion of which is beyond the scope of the present discussion. Suffice to note that not all participants wish to be kept informed whilst others actively engaged with both verbal and written feedback.

When negotiating power both researcher and research can exist in contradictory spaces of betweeness illustrating the limits of performative agency (Nelson, 1999). Whilst attempting to create less hierarchical relationships with participants, as a researcher within the structures of, and under the pressures of, academia, I (re)created alternative position(ing)s of power. I designed the research and asked the majority of questions in the focus groups and interviews. Moreover, although I did discuss findings with participants, I control(led) the interpretation and distribution of the accounts formed by the participants along with the final write up. Issues of power became obvious in unexpected ways. My control over the final write up was evidenced in the anonymising of the participants. Whereas some participants would not have participated unless this was the case, Pat wanted to be identified in the study.

> KB: Well it will all be, everything you do will be completely confidential and all that. Do you want to do, do you want to pick another name for yourself?
>
> Pat: No
>
> KB: Okay I'll do that then
>
> Pat: No Pat Butcher
>
> KB: Okay
>
> Pat: Can I, can I?
>
> KB: Okay I'll call you
>
> Pat: Can't I just be real me?
>
> KB: Amm no because if you are the real you then everyone else has to be the real them as well so …
>
> Pat: Can I be Pat Butcher?

(Pat, individual interview)

Sarankatas (1998, 23) argues that participants have a right to anonymity but does not specify whether the researcher should impose this 'right' where it is not desired. Although I use a pseudonym for Pat, I am uneasy about this choice. On the one hand, I chose this option because academic convention suggests that in sensitive research all participants should be given pseudonyms (Punch, 1998) and I was unsure of the

consequences of defying this convention for both Pat and those around her (including her girlfriend at the time, her friends and her family). By naming Pat I may have inadvertently identified other women who may wished to remain anonymous. Conversely, in removing Pat's autonomy to choose whether she was named in the study, I feel I have redeployed the potentially negotiated power relations and not enabled Pat to make her own choice. On the other hand, Pat informs her friends and acquaintances of her participation in this research and "Pat" is a nickname she has been given by her friends prior to the study. She is thus identifiable to her friends. This situation shows that whilst I do have a certain amount of power (control) in the formal spaces of research distribution, in a social context this 'power' can be/is ongoing and renegotiated. The intersecting relations that make research spaces, social spaces as well as participants and friendships are located within wider social and personal relationships. Thus, when considering the intersubjective formation of the 'field', relations beyond the research spaces can be just as important as those within formal research 'fields'/spaces.

Reciprocity: Negotiating Power Beyond the Formal Research 'Field'

The relationship between ethnographer and informant is more accurately seen perhaps as a mutual exploitation.

(Crick, 1992, 176)

Oakley (1981) contends that finding out about people is best achieved through developing relationships between participants and researchers. Where individual contexts are diverse, how *feminist* research *should* be conducted cannot be proscribed. Here I wish to suggest that social relations beyond formal data collection at times may be an important aspect of negotiating power in fieldworkings. Crick (1992) illustrates that the creation of the field is often contextualised within wider social relations. Ali (a central figure in Crick's study) enabled Crick's research and in return Crick directed business and commission towards Ali. Social relations may also be sexual and intimate illustrating the negotiable possibilities and messiness of research relations. This messiness can be further illustrated in the diverse spatial crossings that refuse to remain within the boundaries of the field. The relations of power that form research are not necessarily negative for those involved in the research, the research itself or the researcher.

Over the course of my study, the women, particularly friends, often perceived their involvement in the research as "doing Kath a favour." Consequently they felt they could ask me for favours in return. These took a number of different forms, from sharing a drink in the pub, to doing numerous odd jobs. These requests were not unusual in our friendships and often, because I lived in the same town as participants, these actions and gestures did not have to be undertaken at the same time as the interview. However, when I did not live close to participants the reciprocal actions were more immediate and perhaps more obvious. For example, Andie lived in City C she had participated in a focus group and I had asked her to be involved in an individual interview. She offered to have me stay with her over a weekend where I could help her move her belongings from her ex-girlfriend's flat and over the course of the weekend we would find time for the interview. However, her ex-girlfriend had not lived at the flat for two months, the food in Andie's freezer was rancid and all the dishes were unwashed since Andie had left. Andie, her mother and I cleaned and packed Andie's belongings. The following morning Andie and I

conducted an individual interview after cleaning her new flat and going shopping. As a friend I would have helped Andie move even if I was not undertaking the study. However, this is a good illustration of how interview spaces can be contained within the context of my friendships. This context can in some ways be seen as "mutual exploitation" (as Crick noted above) in that Andie gained a mover and I received data for my doctoral thesis. Taking the context into account means that although methods such as interviews and focus groups can be used in a "hit and run" framework (Skeggs, 1999), they do not *have* to be used in this way. This illustrates the potential for negotiating power in and through wider social relations. Because participants were friends I was able to repay them for their involvement in my research and negotiate potentially one-way exploitative relationships.

Where repeat methods were used, helping participants with their chores or sharing a social occasion meant that they felt more comfortable with me. My status then changed often from acquaintance to friend by virtue of our reciprocal relations. This (re)created the accounts told.

> KB: What did you think of like the, first interview and this interview and stuff … were they okay? Were you nervous?

> Leanne: Yes, no I was much more comfortable in this one [interview]. The first one [coupled interview] I was a bit nervous cos I was like 'oo I don't know what she's going to ask me.' And I still I guess didn't know what you were going to ask me but I guess *I didn't care cos I thought I think it has probably helped that amm you are not a complete stranger now*. Cos it was like you were a complete stranger before it was like 'this complete stranger is coming to my house asking me questions [about] what I do. (KB: laugh) I don't know what to say' sort of thing (KB: yeah). And now it's just like ahh she's asking me questions it will be fine

> (Leanne: individual interview, six months after coupled interview with Nat, my emphasis)

I initially met Leanne through her partner who was a friend of mine. Over the course of six months, between the coupled interview and the individual interview, we became friends. It was partially through this research that our friendship developed illustrating the fluid boundaries of relationships that can move between categories of friend/stranger. Research relationships in the same way vary across time. Leanne and I developed a friendship which altered how she felt in and about the interview compared to the coupled interview. These feelings in turn influenced what she said and the accounts formed. Consequently, negotiating power outside the research process can (in)form research spaces. The dialectic relationship between research and everyday life, research relations and social relations thus blur the boundaries of the field.

This is not to suggest that there are no limits to reciprocal relationships. During my doctoral research I restricted my reciprocal gestures to those I considered appropriate for friends. On two occasions it was either overtly stated or implicitly suggested that potential participants wanted something other than friendship in return for their participation in the research. On both these occasions I felt it would be misleading to include these women as I did not wish to take up their offers of dates. Sparke (1996)

highlights a 1970's example of the sexual (exploitative?) relations that male researcher(s) had (have?) with their female "subject(s)." In these fieldworkings sexual encounters with women were seen as part of men "conquering" the field (Sparke, 1996, 217). Cupples (2002, 368) sometimes took advantage of men's sexual interest to "further her research and make connections with places and people." This is vastly different from the conquering and penetrative discourses associated with masculinist research. However, for me using sexual/romantic interests in this way would have been inappropriate because in contrast to men's positions of power in Nicaragua (Cupples, 2002), non-heterosexual women in England are often disempowered (Valentine *et al.*, 2001). Moreover, whereas Cupples (2002, 386) enjoyed "male attention" I was uncomfortable with these women's offers and concerned with the complex ethical dilemma should participants realise my purely academic (selfish?) reasons for pursuing the dates. For the reverse reason (using academic endeavours to get dates/relationships) I did not involve partners or ex-partners in the research. Creating these boundaries excluded particular women from the research in a way that I had, perhaps naively, not anticipated.

Whilst I would not have been comfortable with these encounters, where I lived, worked and socialised was also important. I would not be exiting these research fields for a number of years and consequently, my boundaries were both a personal and a professional decision. I decided to preserve my close emotional spaces as 'outside' research fields. In addition, I was unsure of the risks to the 'credibility' of my research should I include those with whom I had a sexual or intimate attachment. I should emphasise that often my decisions regarding personal and research boundaries were made without a vast amount of reflection, or what Aitken (2001) refers to as "needs of the moment." Because I did not want to lead women on, I felt the need to react immediately to specific situations (in contrast Morris-Roberts (2001) carefully considered "politics of intervention" were difficult to implement in her research practices). Therefore, boundaries that are (re)formed through our research practices and reflections, can be ad hoc and situationally specific.

Separating research and romantic/sexual relationships may not always be desirable. Both Newton (1993) and Lambeviski (1999) found that their research was enhanced through their romantic and sexual relations with participants. There is no single answer to the issue of intimacy and sex in research. I instead would point to the potential of sexual and intimate relations as offering valuable research insights. Researchers should however recognise that such sexual and personal relationships/encounters could lead to the exploitation of individuals for research purposes and these should not be an aspect of 'conquering' research fields. From the researcher perspective we should be aware of participants' expectations such that we do not inadvertently offer what we are unwilling to give. As personal, sexual and social boundaries can be (re)negotiated, the power relations in specific and individual contexts need to be carefully, and continually, (re)considered.

Cupples (2002, 383) notes that an important part of positionality is how other people see us and Edwards *et al.* (1999), in their study of lone parents, found that participants can also negotiate the boundaries of research. Taking this argument a step further it may be possible for researchers to be 'exploited' by participants. The potential does exist for participants to take advantage of the feelings of in-debtedness many of us have for individuals who have helped us in our studies. Whilst this may be extreme, it

leads us to consider participants' negotiations of research relations. Here, I have written from a researcher's perspective because I am wary of speaking about participants' perceptions and appropriations of the field without asking them. These, along with our own feelings, perceptions and motivations, are never fully knowable (Rose, 1997). However, this should not prevent us from examining "mutually exploitative" research relations from the participant's perspective (see Domosh, 2003).

Understanding fieldworkings as constitutive research fields can be contextualised within everyday spaces and relations. Thus, research does not have to be exploitative or elsewhere. By integrating my research with my everyday life not only did I gain access to participants who may have been reluctant to speak about their sexuality, I was also on occasion able to repay participants for their involvement in my research.

Conclusion

> *The recognition of difference and positionality, of the embodied nature of knowledge, and the key theoretical advances here, make it clear, however, that the search for what methods text books call 'scientific' knowledge, for 'objectivity' and non-involvement in the lives and feelings of the people we study must also be abandoned.*

(McDowell, 1992, 413)

This paper has sought to explore the personal nature of knowledge through an examination of micro-scale relations of power in the field. Incorporating personal and social relations into conceptualisations of fieldwork can reveal the complexities of research relations that refuse to be bounded within formal research settings or within dichotomies such as insider/outsider. When we consider power relations between sameness and difference the negotiable possibilities of research practices can become more visible. Examinations of fieldworkings, as constitutive, can thus illustrate how research spaces are (re)formed through our interactions and practices. Using England's (1994) conceptualisation of research as an ongoing activity, these fieldworkings occurred both within and beyond the formal research spaces. Rather than setting political agendas, I hope this paper will open up dialogues regarding negotiated research relations between and beyond dichotomies, including that of the research field/non-field.

The complexities of research relations and practices (fieldworkings) that could inform these discussions can never be fully known and the messiness of research is only partly expressible (Rose, 1997). Whilst undertaking empirical research, I found each encounter different. Through my own personal involvement in research and friendships I moved outside logical and coherent research practices (see also Aitken, 2001; Morris, Roberts, 2001). Nevertheless, in order to write this paper, and the thesis more generally, complex and messy research relations have been placed within a logical, rational and exclusionary frame. In turn, I am placed within accepted writing conventions and in a position of power over participants as the author. These academic structures may illustrate the limits of negotiable power relations. In writing of research relations and research practices, I situate myself and my participants in a somewhat powerless position in terms of how we are read. This paper can now be scrutinised in the public domain. Thus, power relations in a plethora of ways continue to reproduce knowledge. This is not to say

that we should not write, debate or consider innovative ways of doing research and addressing inequitable power relations (see Bondi, 2003). On the contrary, I wish to finish with the thought that power relations, as negotiated within and beyond research spaces, are in progress and therefore offer rich possibilities for dialogues and actions.

Acknowledgments

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